

STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOL. 50

No. 597

SEPTEMBER

1996



'GUSSY LENDS A HAND'

(H.W.)



**COLIN CREWE
COLLECTORS BOOKS**

12B WESTWOOD ROAD, CANVEY ISLAND, ESSEX, S88 0ED
TELEPHONE: 01268-693735 EVENINGS BEST
**OLD BOYS AND GIRLS BOOKS SOLD, BOUGHT AND
EXCHANGED WITH ENTHUSIASM**
YOUR WANTS LIST WELCOME. SUITABLE COLLECTIONS WANTED



'KING CRICKET' - 'KING CRICKET' - 'KING CRICKET'

Friends and Collectors from the dawn of time in the pre-Greyfriars School era, I am proud to offer from the pen of Charles Hamilton 22 episodes of his famous cricket story contained within the Boys Realm year 1907, issues 256-270 and 272-278. Treasure Trove this! Price £250.00

THE GEM, original issues. Be charmed all over again by Arthur Augustus Darcy, Tom Merry et al. By jove! 'What fun we shall have'. Issues of the 1930's @ £2.95 each. 1920's @ £3.95 each. 10% discounts given on all orders of 10 plus. 580,626,627,632,633,635,637,644,788, 845,893,894,896,901,904,905,913,914,936,984,997,1021, 1025,1280,1298,1299,1301,1324,1342,1369,1387,1405, 1407,1409,1411,1419,1421,1430,1431,1435,1438,1441, 1450,1451,1454,1455,1456,1457,1459,1471,1474,1479, 1481,1486,1498,1499,1501,1510,1516,1525,1531,1532, 1534,1535,1536,1537,1538,1539,1540,1541,1542,1543, 1544,1546,1553,1554,1555,1557,1558,1559,1562,1566, 1567,1568,1569,1570,1571,1572,1575,1576,1577,1578, 1580,1582,1586,1587,1588,1589,1590,1591,1592,1593, 1594,1595,1596,1599,1600,1601,1602,1603,1604,1605, 1606,1611,1613,1616,1617,1619,1620,1621,1622,1623, 1624,1625,1626,1627,1629,1632,1634,1635,1638,1639, 1640,1641,1642,1644,1656,1646,1647,1648.

THE POPULAR 1924-1931. Kio Kid, Rookwood, St. Jims, St. Franks, Greyfriars & much more at £2.25 each. 10% discount given on all orders of 10 plus. 272,273,276,279,288,293,294,365,397,423,424,429,432, 437,438,453,454,489,490,491,492,493,494,495,496,497, 498,499,500,519,520,521,522,523,524,525,526,527,528, 529,530,531,532,533,534,535,538,570,572,573,574,575, 576,577,578,579,580,581,582,583,584,585,586,587,588, 624,627.

THE SKIPPER No. 196, June 2 1934. V. good. £12.95
THE SKIPPER No. 198, June 10 1934. V. good £12.95
THE SKIPPER No. 226, Dec 29 1934. V. good £12.95
THE THRILLER, 2d, early issues of this great detective paper years 1929/1930 @ £4.95 each. 32,33,39,46,64,69, 70,78,81,83,87.

PLUCK 1d. Historic issues of this early boys paper, circa 1905/1915 @ £3.95 each. 10% discount on 10 plus copies. 52,142,198,279,292,299,283,284,287,309,460,487, 488,489,490,512,560.

BOYS CINEMA 2d. Thrill to those old time stars of yesteryear @ £2.95 each. 10% discount on 10 plus. 52,384,404,467,470,472,489,493,537,549,817,859,900,904, 905,943,950,1061,1066.

BOYS FRIEND WEEKLY. All contain stories of Jimmy Silver & Co at Rookwood School at £3.95 each. 10% discount on 10 plus. 859,879,881,895,913,926,927,930, 933,954,1009,1014,1023,1027,1034,1047,1083,1174, 1255,1282.

DIXON HAWKE LIBRARY No. 416. V. good. £14.95
DIXON HAWKE LIBRARY No. 478. V. good. £14.95
DIXON HAWKE LIBRARY No. 489. V. good. £14.95
SCHOOLGIRLS 4d POCKET LIBRARY No. 10 (G.G. Swan). SLIM GIRLS SLIM! by Pamela White. V. good. £7.50

HOTSPUR No. 2. Yes, two! Sept 9 1933. Good. £45.00
THE MAGNET ORIGINAL, issues between years 1914-1929, 'lovely to hold'. Issues of 1920's £3.95 each, issues before 1920 @ £4.95 each. 10% discount on 10 plus. 355,405,465,469,475,498,800,507,509,510,512,514, 524,528,531,532,536,537,540,542,545,550,553,554,555, 563,625,626,689,733,734,735,760,769,790,792,802,804, 805,820,836,838,840,891,895,903,940,943,986,987,988, 989,990,993,1003,1015,1033,1041,1046,1048,1049,1059, 1066,1078,1082,1084,1085,1091,1098,1108,1109,1118, 1119,1121,1127,1128,1129,1132,1136.

THE HOTSPUR No. 58, Oct 6 1934. V. good. £14.95
THE HOTSPUR No. 71, Jan 5 1935. V. good. £14.95
THE HOTSPUR No. 97, July 6 1935. V. good. £14.95
PUCK 1d. Superb children's comic of years 1915/16 with those delightful colour covers @ £4.95 each. 548,595,606, 615,616,617,619,621,622,623,624,627,629,630,531.
GIRLS CRYSTAL, year 1958 @ £1.95 each. 1165,1166,1167,1168,1169,1170,1171,1172,1173.
SCHOOLDAYS No. 107, Nov 15 1930 (party Number) £3.95

THE SCHOOLGIRLS WEEKLY 1929-1931. 331,380,381,400,438. Superb covers. each £3.95
THE SCHOOLGIRL 2d 1933-1938. 21,3,364,365,366,451. each £2.95

THE SCHOOL FRIEND 2d, years 1925-1928 @ £2.95 each. 10% discount on 10 plus. 7,8,11,12,13,14,16,17,20, 21,38,46,47,48,51,52,53,56,58,59,73,74,75,76,77,78,79, 81,82,83,84,85,86,87,89,92,93,95,96,97,98,99,100,102, 103,105,107,108,109,110,111,112,113,114,115,117,119, 120,121,159,184.

THE SCHOOLGIRLS OWN 2d (Morpeth School). 655,656,673 (Join the Chums) each £2.95
THE BOYS FRIEND LIBRARY 4d Pre-War 2nd series @ £3.95 each, 1st series @ £4.95 each. 10% discount on 10 plus.

Second Series 43,135,404,556,581,591,635,672,685
First Series: 5,7,12,23,31,32,37,40,43,53,56,58,59,95, 115,116,133,140,166,227,247,267,305,349,372,386,400, 401,430,505,519,527,537,548,580,585,602,642,676,681, 698,715,728,730,732.

SCHOOLBOYS OWN LIBRARY 4d (all Greyfriars issues) @ £3.95 each. 10% discount on 10 plus. 301,304,307,313,316,322,325,328,331,334,337,340,343, 346,349,352,385,358,361,364,367,370,373,376,379,382, 285,388,394,397,403,404,406,407,409.

THE ROVER No. 304, Feb 11 1928. V. Good. £14.95
THE ROVER No. 333, Sept 1 1928. V. Good. £14.95
THE ROVER No. 599, Oct 7 1933. V. Good. £12.95
SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY BUMPER PARCEL, 50 different issues from 3rd & 4th series in very good condition. Sent anywhere in U.K. Post free. £60.00

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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

COLLECTORS' DIGEST
Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

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

VOL. 50

No. 597

SEPTEMBER 1996

Price £1.20

BETWEEN FRIENDS

How quickly the months pass from Spring to Autumn every year! Once again I am writing about our C.D. Annual which will, as usual, be published in December. I shall start to 'trail' its very attractive contents next month, and I now enclose an order form for it. As I am sure you will all understand, it is helpful to me, and to our printers, if you can order your Annuals well in advance so that we soon have an idea of the numbers required.

I am afraid that both printing and postal costs have risen since our last Annual appeared, but I have, of course, tried to keep the price as low as possible.

Already I have been sent a fine crop of articles, stories and illustrations, but I am looking forward to receiving further items from you, my dear readers and contributors. Please put your pens, typewriters and word-processors to paper,



TIGER TIM'S ANNUAL.

1922

A NEW
PICTURE &
STORY BOOK



- FOR BOYS
AND GIRLS
OF ALL AGES



and let me have your contributions without delay (mid-October is our 'deadline'). I hope to perpetuate the tradition of writing in my Editorial for the Annual that, yet again, it is 'One of the Best Ever'!

Happy Reading to you all.
MARY CADOGAN

SALE: Pre-war boys papers. ANNUALS, Film Annuals, and mags. 1930's & 40's, Picturegoers, Picture Show, etc. Many items, also pre-war cigarette cards, film, sport, mid-thirties. L. MORLEY, 76 ST. MARGARET'S ROAD, HANWELL, LONDON W7 2HF. Tel. 0181-579-3143.

“A MATTER OF LOGIC”

by Anthony E.L. Cook

Part One

As Mr. Quelch alighted from the train at Wimford he breathed a sigh of relief. Normally he would have been elated upon his arrival in the knowledge that he was to spend Christmas at Wharton Lodge in the convivial company of Colonel Wharton, his sister and their guests. The journey however had seemed interminable, the compartments crowded with both military and civilians making their way home for the festive season. The master of the remove would have been the first to acknowledge the fact that such inconvenience was to be viewed with toleration and a certain amount of good humour considering that there was a war on, but his mood was of complete irritation.

The truth of the matter was that it had been a hard and tedious year at Greyfriars, and there is no doubt that 1940 held a story of its own. In the first place the school, despite its standing in the ranks of public schools, had been forgotten! Forgotten, that is, in a certain area of government and in particular by the department which dealt with the evacuation of schools from endangered areas. Although Greyfriars was tucked away in its own spacious grounds, it was close to the south coast which was surrounded by RAF fighter stations. Between June and September what was known as the Battle of Britain was fought in the skies above them. Yet, considering this, no damage had been sustained by the school or its environs. Damage had indeed been sustained by a few stray bombs in both Redclyffe and Friardale, but there had been no loss of life. While negotiations had been in progress to evacuate the school, pressure was mounting from pupils, parents and the Board of Governors. After much urgent contact with the government department concerned who classed the matter as ‘an unfortunate departmental error’, an offer had come out of the blue from an old boy of the school, Sir Geoffrey Carrington, whose ancestral home some twenty miles from Worcester was offered for the duration. After rapid action on the part of all concerned and visits to the property the offer had been accepted and the school was to move after the Christmas vacation.

There had been many changes in the school during that eventful year by virtue of wartime conditions. Air raid shelters had been constructed on Little Side and part of Big Side. The allotments had been extended as had also the kitchen gardens. The added burden of administration too had been heavy, with rationing, fuel shortages fire watching rotas (which included most of the sixth form) and many other internal matters. One of the most important changes was due to the fact that Dr. Locke felt unable to shoulder all these added responsibilities alone and so, after consultation with the Governors, Mr. Quelch had been appointed assistant head for the duration of the war. The provision ‘for the duration’ was made in order that there would be no unrest between the other senior members of staff. In other circumstances the appointment might well have been one of some contention.

Mr. Quelch then had been under a great deal of pressure, and it was this, coupled with the fact that he might not see the Greyfriars that he had known and revered for so long until the war ended, that now added to his sense of unease and irritation. He arrived in Wimford not knowing what the future held for himself or the school. After some delay he managed to procure a cab and make his way to Wharton Lodge. With his driver being a man of few words Quelch was able to concentrate on his surroundings. He was more than gratified to see that “The Cherry Orchard”, his favourite tea shop, was still operating despite the criss-cross of green tape that decorated the windows. Everything had the drab and unreal air of wartime about it. Some of the offices sported half hearted layers of sandbags and in the centre of the town air raid shelters were to be seen. He noticed too that all the familiar signposts had disappeared. It was when the car turned into Wharton Lodge that he had the biggest surprise. To the right of the driveway there was what

appeared to be a small hut outside which stood a uniformed figure. Across the path was a barrier, and a fence divided the west wing from the main house. His driver must have seen the puzzled look on his face for as they stopped he grunted, "Army offices, the old Colonel enjoys it they say."

Mr. Quelch paid his fare and did not reply. With a curt nod and 'thank you' he presented himself at the main door. Almost immediately his ring was answered by Wells, not the immaculate, liveried Wells but a slightly flustered butler wearing a large striped apron in place of his jacket. "Good afternoon sir, the Colonel is expecting you".

"It is a pleasure to see you again Wells!

"Thank you sir, please excuse my attire but we are rather short staffed. Now sir," he continued, assisting the master of the remove off with his coat "I will show you where these garments, together with your gas mask, are kept. In the event of an emergency you are requested to collect everything from this cloakroom. We... that is, Colonel Wharton apologises for the inconvenience but as you realise times have become a little difficult."

While Mr. Quelch was being shown his peg he was thinking that times had indeed changed. "Please do not give it another thought Wells. I feel sure that you have enough to worry about in these trying times."

Wells managed a thin smile of gratitude. "I will look after your luggage sir, if you will kindly follow me I will announce you to the master."

Sill the same old Wells, Quelch thought, as he followed him through to the great hall. He also wondered when it might occur to the faithful retainer that days for men like himself were coming to an end for the wind of change seemed to be blowing very hard towards attitudes that would bring the end of what was being seen as 'the old order'. During the last year Mr. Quelch had been pitch-forked from a world that had been almost monastic, but being a man of perception, and appreciating this new role, he had come to see signs of great change in many fields and the reasons behind them. He had, in short, come out of a world which was purely academic and had become very much aware of what many would term the real world.

Colonel Wharton greeted him with his usual enthusiasm. Here were two men from differing backgrounds, yet bearing a great deal of mutual respect and amazingly having a lot in common.

"My dear Mr. Quelch," the Colonel beamed "Always a pleasure to see you again."

They shook hands.

"As always Colonel it gives me pleasure in accepting your kind invitation."

"Nonsense my dear fellow, you are always welcome for the festive season, it would not be the same without you. I'm afraid things are a bit different this year though". He waved the master of the remove to a chair "Short staffed for one thing. The damned war! Poor old Wells is doing far more than he should, stout fellow, and we are depleted in numbers as far as house guests are concerned."

Mr. Quelch greeted this news with raised eyebrows.

"Only yourself, Sir Oliver and Lady Carstairs. Y'know them of course. The young people have gone off to, I believe, his niece, and some of her friends are joining them too."

Mr. Quelch digested this piece of news with some satisfaction, it would be a quiet Christmas with the Famous Five and some Cliff house girls spending the vacation with Marjorie Hazeldene's uncle.

"Can't see how the Hazeldenes are coping with the rationing and all that."

"I presume, Colonel, that some of your staff have been called up?" Colonel Wharton grunted: "Huh, two of the outside staff have gone into the army while two of the inside staff, girls, have gone to war work, more money and shorter hours. What with that and the restrictions on food and fuel, it gets worse by the day. Did you see the security barriers when you arrived?"

Mr. Quelch acknowledged the fact and enquired the reason.

"It's the government. They wanted to get their hands on the lot but I managed to get away with it by offering them the west wing. Got to do something for the war effort. Don't ask me what goes on there, old chap, I have no idea; offices of some kind. Luckily one of the senior men is a friend of mine, you know him I think, but wait and see."

The two men talked for the next half an hour until Mr. Quelch went to his room to unpack and make himself ready for what the Colonel called a light lunch. He was pleased, however, to find himself in his usual room for he enjoyed the outlook on to the gardens and across to the woods beyond. He was a little disappointed to see that they flower-beds had been put down to vegetables, but his general view was unimpaired. A log fire burned in the grate beside which was a basket of logs instead of the usual coal. Lunch was taken in the small dining room in the company of Colonel Wharton and his sister, and proved to be a pleasing repast. Soon after lunch Sir Oliver and Lady Carstairs arrived. Although Mr. Quelch had not met Lady Carstairs and he had never found it easy to converse with the opposite sex, he took to her immediately. Lady Diana Carstairs turned out to be a most charming and intelligent woman without any "side" or pretentiousness, and she treated the remove-master as though he was an old friend.

It appeared that the ladies were helping in the preparations for the children's Christmas party in the nearby village. They disappeared quite soon to make their various arrangements. At this point Mr. Quelch thought it prudent to leave the Colonel and Sir Oliver to their own deliberations, for they were deep in conversation and he wished to take an afternoon walk as was his custom on the afternoon of his arrival. Having made his excuses he collected his coat and stick (not forgetting his gas-mask) and made his way down the driveway of Wharton Lodge, turning towards the nearby woods which he knew by experience would lead him eventually back to the town of Wimford. The weather was still brisk and it was some two hours later that he reached the town and, more importantly, "The Cherry Orchard" tea-shop. Unbeknown to him or to his host and his other guests, the scene was now set for another mystery at Wharton Lodge in which he, H.H. Samuel Quelch, was to take a leading role.

(To be continued)

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 Ashendene Road, Bayford, Herts. SG13 8PX.



MOOR VIEW TO THE RESCUE

by Ray Hopkins

Tom Burton, aka the Bo'sun, of the West House, is bound to win in the swimming race against the Ancient House because of his seafaring background but he personally isn't so sure as he is more at home swimming in the sea, whereas the race is to be in the River Stowe which runs beside the St. Frank's playing fields. But swimming in the sea can only have increased his muscle power and two Ancient House chums, Duncan and Dodd, assure him that he will beat their own team consisting of Nipper, Tregellis-West, Handforth and Church. It was a close finish between Nipper and the Bo'sun, but Tom Burton forged ahead right at the end and won.

Handforth couldn't believe that he, the best swimmer in the Ancient House, according to his own verbal publicity hand-out, had come in last but was able to cover his disappointment by blaming his minor for having put him off his stroke at the beginning of the race. Willy had offered to race his major and give him twenty yards start! Handy turns him down until a suggestion is made that he has a race with the Moor View girls who have swum down from their own part of the River Stowe to watch the St. Frank's House races. He knows that Irene Manners and Doris Berkeley are fast swimmers and in a race would undoubtedly beat him and can't face the possibility of all the rude remarks and cackling that would ensue.

Willy says they won't need to go far, just down to Willard's Island and he'd be glad to take any message for Irene that Handy might want to send on ahead, the implication being that Willy will have reached Willard's Island while Handy is still floundering along in his wake. The girls have already swum off to the island and might be glad of a message while he's still on the way! Edward Oswald gets well ahead in the first ten yards but is disconcerted when Willy, forging ahead quickly underwater, suddenly pops up in front of him, then swims right round him and disappears beneath the surface again, only bobbing up at the finishing point with his major ten yards behind him.

Willy is so elated by all the fuss that is made of him, by the girls especially, that he cannot but continue showing off. He swims to the centre of the river and performs what he thinks of as rather clever tricks such as diving, then shooting up through the surface, turning a cartwheel and then disappearing below again. The surface of the river becomes quite smooth again before he bobs up, waving at the St. Frank's juniors and Moor View girls who are watching from the bank and, in the case of his major and Doris Berkeley, becoming decidedly disturbed when it seems as though his dives beneath the surface are becoming of longer duration. It is probable that Willy is doing this deliberately to show how clever he is and how at home he is in the water.

Handforth can stand the suspense no longer and he swims to the spot where Willy was last seen. He is quickly followed by Doris and several of the other juniors and Moor View girls.

What none of them know is that Willy is still right at the bottom of the river but not below the point where he was last seen. He had allowed himself to relax and enjoy the undertow which took him right to the bottom and where a jagged piece of timber lurked embedded, but jutting out of the mud. Willy struck this menacing object with some force,

losing control of his extremities. The trailing weeds rapidly become entwined around one of his ankles. He comes to himself quite suddenly with a dull pain in his head and strikes upward to get to the surface, but the weeds cling to his ankle. For the first time, Willy feels panic surging inside him and realises he is in danger of losing his life. He struggles against the strangling weeds and in so doing some air is jerked from his lungs.

It is Doris Berkeley who spots the bubbles as they reach the surface but they are twenty yards from where they are all searching and she is the first to dive down into the murky waters. By this time Willy's lungs have inevitably taken in water and he is unable to help himself. He seems to realise that someone is tugging at him and grips Doris' arm. She wants to get to the surface and gulp in more air but knows she would never find Willy again if once she leaves him.

Above, the rescuers, including Handforth, whose diving efforts are becoming less effective the more frantic he becomes, are sure that they are going to be faced with a double tragedy: the rescuer and the victim will both be found dead. Doris breaks the surface of the river still clinging to Willy. She releases him as she herself goes limp and Willy commences to slide back beneath the surface. Handforth dives and pulls his minor up and sees Doris begin to slide beneath the waves, eyes closed. What can he do? He wavers, still supporting Willy. Reggie Pitt, however, has seen what has happened and dives so that he is able to reach Doris before she disappears completely into the dim reaches below.

Doris opens her eyes as they break the surface and enquires after Willy. She's afraid that she was too late and Willy will be lying dead on the bank. But he is in the hands of his major and others who are pummeling him and holding him, feet in air, to get the river water out of his lungs. By the time Reggie and Doris reach him he has recovered enough to ask who got him up from the bottom of the river.

Willy is rather abashed to find that he has had his life saved by a girl and embarrasses Doris by showering her with thanks and worrying about how he is going to pay her back. Doris tells him to hush! All the reward she wants is for Willy to promise never to do anything so foolhardy again.

His major wants to carry him back to the school, shove him in bed and send for the doctor. Willy feels dizzy and weak and much less lively than he is pretending but cautions letting those in authority know of the happening. Fortunately all of the observers had been juniors and keen swimmers and Willy puts paid to any fuss being made. Willy says if anyone higher up hears he almost drowned the river will be put out of bounds and that'll be the end of swimming at St. Frank's, and also at Moor View if the headmistress, Miss Bond, hears of the incident and what happened to Doris Berkeley. Just keep mum about the whole thing, he advises sagely, then no one will be disappointed by forbidden joys and yes, he will promise always to be extra careful in the water in future, with no more deep dives ever!

(The above incident is taken from NELSON LEE LIBRARY, First New Series No. 3, 15 May 1926, entitled "The Folly of St Frank's".)

WANTED: original artwork W.E. JOHNS related. Biggles, Worrals, Gimlet, Space, drawn by H. Leigh, Stead, Studio Stead or of course by Johns. **Christmas cards** or **prints** advertised in *Popular Flying* in the 1930s illustrated by Johns, Leigh or Stanley Orton Bradshaw. **Playing cards**, with Aircraft design signed Johns. **British Air League** albums illustrated by Leigh. **Skybirds** magazines, models. **Skyways** magazines. **Murder at Castle Deeping** by W.E. Johns, J. Hamilton Edition. JOHN TRENDLER, 4 ASHENDENE ROAD, BAYFORD, HERTS, SG13 8 PX. Tel: 01992 511588.



NIGEL BLAKE - BROTHER AND SCOUNDREL

by Duncan Harper

When the Amalgamated Press finished the thirty year run of the Union Jack in 1933 and launched the new larger format Detective Weekly, they were obviously looking for a remarkable story to launch the new paper.

Jack Lewis, the creator of Leon Kestrel, was chosen as the author and under his Lewis Jackson pen-name wrote a series of three stories published as numbers one, two and four of the new paper. The covers focus is on Blake, showing three action scenes from the stories. To tempt new readers, free gifts of a pocket wallet and a razor blade were given away with the first and second issues respectively. The stories themselves are more in the form of a serial than a series of separate stories, with the plot continuing from one to another with little pause to draw breath.

The inside front cover of the first issue of the Detective Weekly gives a lengthy introduction to the detective's career which includes brief details of his allies and assistants, outstanding names in the realms of crime that he has encountered, and personal details about the great man himself.

Blake is described as *"In the prime of life, grey-eyed, and just six feet tall. The various portraits of him give a good idea of his spare, athletic figure, and the distinction of his lean and intellectual face, from the high brow of which his dark hair is brushed back. His normal expression is serious and thoughtful, but the suggestion of the gaunt ascetic in his face is often belied by a spontaneous smile that discloses even, white teeth, and a side to his nature poles apart from that of the grim man-hunter which his criminal quarry knows."*

The story concerns the activities of Nigel Blake, the second son of old Berkeley Blake and brother of Sexton Blake. Both brothers went to Cambridge to study medicine as the Blake family had devoted itself to the medical profession for several generations. Sexton came down with honours whilst Nigel failed and turned waster.

This information contradicts previous information in the various chronicles of Sexton



Nigel Blake

Blake's career. Firstly Blake already had a brother called Henry, created by Norman Goddard some twenty years before, and secondly the Boys' Herald and Boys' Friend Library record his time at Oxford rather than Cambridge.

Nigel had ended up in West Africa where his rough treatment of his wife Clare had forced her to return to London with their young son, Garry. Destitute, Clare sought support from Sexton, who provided for them and then travelled to Africa to confront Nigel. In return for his efforts all he received was verbal abuse with Nigel calling him a "sniffing, self-righteous Bible-puncher", as well as a few other choice phrases.



Clare



Garry

The plot then moves on a few years with Garry now a young man and a Detective-Constable at Scotland Yard. Nigel fakes his own death in Africa and returns to London, committing crimes which swiftly lead to both Blake and Garry hunting the perpetrator without realising his identity. The stories also include some notable passages of dialogue involving Mrs. Bardell, where the author appears to have taken a leaf out of Gwyn Evans' book and attempted to continue her murdering of the English language. Mrs. Bardell seems to have taken young Garry very much to heart, treating him in the same manner as Tinker. In fact, Garry and Tinker have developed a strong friendship which causes Sexton Blake significant problems later in

the story.

Having traced the lair of the perpetrator of the crimes, Sexton Blake sends Garry to make the arrest but realises the identity of the criminal in the nick of time and beats Garry to Nigel's lair to spirit him back to the safety of Baker Street away from the long arm of the Law. Nigel escapes from Baker Street, taking with him the contents of Sexton Blake's safe. Somewhat unfortunately Sexton Blake has just finishing writing a "Manual of Crime" based on his own experience, which Nigel also pinches. This manual contains instructions for any electro-magnetic lock pick, which Nigel uses to start a one man burglary wave across London. Murder and violence follow with Sexton Blake desperately trying to stop Nigel before the police catch and expose him as Sexton Blake's brother, thereby ruining Garry's promising career and Sexton's reputation.

The stress under which Sexton Blake is placed by being unable to confide even in Tinker, by being falsely arrested by the police and his usual friends at

Scotland Yard becoming very suspicious of his actions, reveals a different side to his character. This makes this series of stories both interesting and informative as well as being laced with the usual excitement which makes great Blake stories.

(The writer of this article is the Honorary Librarian of the London Old Boys' Book Club's Sexton Blake Library. Details of the facilities of the Library may be obtained from him at Sydney House, 23 Algernon Road, Loughton, Essex, IG10 4NG.)

HAMILTON, BROOKS AND CRICKET

by Peter Mahogany

Cricket loomed large in the writings of Charles Hamilton and Edwy Searles Brooks. Both authors had a great awareness of the summer game's attraction to their readers; both appreciated its scope for dramatic clashes - on and off the field!

Unfortunately, neither author was particularly good at team selection. Generally speaking, each of the big four schools - Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood, St. Frank's - had seven or eight characters who were automatic choices. The remaining places were a lottery to the author's whim of the moment. Consequently, picking their "best elevens" is a fraught business. (Rather like selecting a Test Team!)

At Greyfriars, Frank Richards imposed a disconcerting - and irrational - restriction by confining himself to a Remove XI. At least three - possibly four - of his other characters merited inclusion in a proper Greyfriars Junior XI. Fry and Scott of the Upper Fourth and Hobson and Stewart of the Shell were clearly better cricketers than the Nugents, Hazeldenes and Russells who made up the Remove numbers. Their inclusion would have made a good team much more formidable.

Wharton, Cherry, Tom Brown, Vernon-Smith, Todd, Field, Linley and Hurree Singh were clear choices for any Greyfriars team. Johnny Bull and Dick Penfold were also regular members of the side. That left one place for Nugent, Hazeldene, Bulstrode (in the early days), Russell, Redwing, Ogilvy and even Bolsover Major to contest.

Of this bunch, I would plump for Bulstrode, because he would give the team a much-needed regular wicket-keeper. (Both Hamilton and Brooks were very negligent in nominating players for this vital position.) A batting order of: Wharton, Cherry, Brown, Vernon-Smith, Bull, Field, Linley, Penfold, Todd, Bulstrode and Singh is just about the best the Remove could offer. With Singh, Field, Brown, Penfold and Todd to bowl, and Bulstrode as stumper, they are well-served in all departments. Dropping Bulstrode from the stories seriously weakened the Remove teams (he was also a very competent goal-keeper). I suspect Hamilton got rid of him to create the weakness which he could exploit dramatically by filling it with the unreliable Hazeldene or the 'rabbit' Nugent.

If Hobson had taken Bulstrode's place and Scott and Fry had replaced Bull and Penfold, Greyfriars would have fielded a truly representative XI.



St. Jim's was a different scenario altogether. Tom Merry's selections ranged over the whole Middle School and his teams were usually very well-balanced. Merry, Blake, Figgins, Talbot, Noble, Redfern, Fatty Wynn and Ernest Levison (after his reform) were indisputable choices. Monty Lowther and George Kerr also appeared regularly. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy often provided comic relief by collecting 'ducks eggs' at inappropriate times, but there is enough evidence in the stories to justify his selection. A batting order of: Talbot, Redfern, Noble, Merry, D'Arcy, Blake, Figgins, Lowther, Levison, Kerr and Wynn looks solid. Wynn, Levison, Talbot, Blake and Redfern make a strong attack. Again the stumper's spot is vague: Kerr could be the answer, but I would prefer Harry Noble. In some stories, George Herries was named as wicket-keeper, but his inclusion would mean dropping Lowther or Kerr.

The enigma of Ralph Reckness Cardew was the only disturbing feature in St. Jim's cricket. Though as unreliable as Hazeldene, Cardew's cricketing ability was beyond question. Probably, Monty Lowther, a steady, average player, was the better alternative, but Cardew at his best added an extra dimension to the team. Nevertheless, St. Jim's always looked a better-balanced side than Greyfriars.

Rookwood suffered from Owen Conquest's (Hamilton's) penchant for a steady stream of new boys. At first the Fistical Four and the Three Tommies occupied places in the team, but Mornington, Erroll, Conroy, Van Ryn, Oswald, Rawson and Teddy Grace arrived in turn to contest selection. A team of 14 players could not be tolerated, so some of the old hands had to go. Cook, Doyle, Raby and Newcome found their places at risk. In addition, the claims of Towle of the Modern Fourth and Selwyn of the Shell added further complications.

Eventually, a batting order of: Erroll, Conroy, Silver, Grace, Dodd, Rawson, Mornington, Lovell, Towle, Van Ryn and Cook would seem the best combination. Bowling by Silver, Mornington, Rawson, Van Ryn, Towle and Cook constitutes a varied attack, with Tommy Dodd keeping wicket.

Though Hamilton's schools had their selection problems, St. Frank's seemed to operate in a constant confusion. Over the years, at least 22 players - two full teams! - represented St. Frank's, and not one of the 22 was a fleeting character. Dick Hamilton, Tregellis-West, Watson, Pitt, Grey, Jerry Dodd, Handforth, Church, Christine, Yorke, De Valerie, Oldfield, Brent, Hussi Khan, Charlie Bangs, Travers, Forrest, Gresham, McClure, Boots, Singleton and one of the Trotwoods had their spells in the side, an embarrassment of riches. Hamilton, Pitt, Grey, Christine, Travers, De Valerie, plus Handforth, Tregellis-West and Watson seemed to be regular choices, but I must object to the last three holding permanent places. Gresham and Bangs both featured as demon bowlers, while Jerry Dodd was an all-rounder *par excellence*. Alfred Brent and Hussi Khan could also "turn their arms". The only mention of a wicket-keeper was Harry Oldfield of the College House, so surely his place must have been unchallenged; and Bernard Forrest, despite his caddish tendencies, was no fool with the bat.

Consequently, the light-weight West and Watson would have to make way for better men. So, in my opinion, would Handforth. Like Hazeldene and Cardew, Handforth was undependable. His hot-headed behaviour at River House on one notorious occasion cost St. Frank's not only the match, but a lengthy ban on the



Frank Richards and Martin Clifford were now together, and batted very steadily until Frank Richards was smartly run out!

whole Junior XI. Brooks really had little concept of team requirements when he automatically included Handforth in the sides. I would not have let the over-bearing lout occupy even the 12th man role.

A batting order of: Pitt, Grey, Hamilton, Travers, Christine, Dodd, De Valerie, Oldfield, Gresham, Bangs and Khan has an impressive look. With Gresham, Bangs, Dodd, Khan, De Valerie and Pitt to bowl, the St. Frank's attack is probably superior to any of the Hamilton schools. Certainly, games between the Big Four would provide exciting tussles. I would rate St. Jim's - because of their stronger batting - the best of the four, with St. Frank's pressing them closely. Rookwood's longer 'tail' makes them vulnerable, while Greyfriars' confinement to a Remove XI weakens their potential. Hobson, Scott and Fry would have made a considerable difference to their strength.

Finally, a team of 'casual' cricketers could - almost - be picked from the Hamilton stories. Without intensive research, I have come up with 8. Victor Cleeve at St. Jim's, Jack Manders at Rookwood, plus the redoubtable Ralph Stacey, Arthur Da Costa, Jack Drake, Dick Rodney, Bertie Vernon and Walter Bunter at Greyfriars provide a strong nucleus. Could any reader complete the side for me?

CATALOGUES

REGULARLY ISSUED

BRITISH COMICS

INCLUDES PICTURE & POCKET LIBRARIES
 LOTS OF BILLY BUNTER, SEXTON BLAKE, D.C. THOMPSON, FLEETWAY AND RELATED ITEMS

ANNUALS, SUMMER SPECIALS, FREE GIFTS & GIVEAWAYS, RELATED BOOKS, ETC.

SHERLOCK HOLMES & CONAN DOYLE

FROM POCKET MONEY PRICES TO SCARCE FIRST EDITIONS.

LARGE CATALOGUE OF RELATED ITEMS INCLUDING : -
 BOOKS, MAGAZINES, COMICS, CERAMICS, POSTCARDS, PHOTOS, AUTOGRAPHS, RECORDS, ETC.

INTERESTED? EACH CATALOGUE COSTS £1 (UK) (ONCE ONLY PAYMENT) OR \$5 (USA - CASH PLEASE) OR DM5 (CASH PLEASE) OR 6 IRC'S OVERSEAS.



PLEASE SEND TO: **BLACK CAT BOOKSHOP**
 36-39 SILVER ARCADE, LEICESTER, LE1 5FB ENGLAND. TEL (0116) 251 2756

WANTED: Original Magnets, not printed in fascimile, between numbers 204 and 702. Must be complete. Also "The Boys Magazine" 1922 to 1934. "The Pink One", and "Boys Friend Library" by Charles Hamilton, Edwy Searles Brooks, Murray Roberts, Murray Graydon, and "Schoolboys Own Library" **not** containing stories of Greyfriars. W.L. BAWDEN, 14 HIGHLAND PARK, REDRUTH, CORNWALL, TR15 2EX.

“YESTERDAY’S HEROES”

BRIAN DOYLE begins a new series dealing with fictional characters, both heroes and villains - even some villainous heroes or heroic villains - in books and stories that were popular best-sellers in their day and which are still fondly remembered by many people today. Apart from the books, he will also spotlight films and plays, radio and television productions, based upon them. It is largely a factual series, intended basically to answer such questions as ‘Who wrote about so-and-so?’ or ‘Who played him (or her) in the film or TV version?’ or ‘How many books were written about this character?’ or ‘What else did the author write?’. And so on.

Brian starts his series with a look back at Russell Thorndike’s once-popular and remarkable ‘Dr. Syn’, who led an astonishing double-life (like several other well-loved characters, from ‘The Scarlet Pimpernel’ to ‘Raffles’...)

There were seven deadly Syns - and Russell Thorndike wrote them all...

I refer, of course, to the cycle of seven novels written about the famous (or perhaps infamous) late-18th century smuggler-parson of Dymchurch, on the Romney Marshes of Kent, and which were among the most popular and best-selling adventure stories of their day, which was mainly in the 1930s.

They were, in order of publication: “Dr. Syn” (1915), “Dr. Syn Returns” (1935), “The Further Adventures of Dr. Syn” (1936), “Dr. Syn on the High Seas” (1936), “The Amazing Quest of Dr. Syn” (1938), “The Courageous Exploits of Dr. Syn” (1939) and “The Shadow of Dr. Syn” (1944).

For those interested in reading of the good Doctor’s adventures in their proper, chronological order, they run thus: “Dr. Syn on the High Seas”, “Dr. Syn Returns”, “The Further Adventures of Dr. Syn”, “The Courageous Exploits of Dr. Syn”, “The Amazing Quest of Dr. Syn”, “The Shadow of Dr. Syn” and “Dr. Syn”.

As will be seen, “Dr. Syn”, the first book to be published (in 1915) comes chronologically last in the saga; this was because Russell Thorndike ‘killed off’ Syn in that first novel and, when he decided (after a busy acting career) to revive the character twenty years later, he had to write a series of six ‘prequels’ telling the events and adventures leading up to that dramatic and climactic book. A sort of literary equivalent to the cinema ‘flashback’...

But who exactly was Dr. Syn and why did he win such notoriety?

Young Dr. Christopher Syn (he is a Doctor of Divinity from Oxford University) pursues his beautiful wife, Imogene, when she runs off to America with his erstwhile best friend. But (after events too complex to outline here) he becomes a ruthless pirate captain, known as ‘Captain Clegg’, and has many adventures. Eventually, after ‘Clegg’ has been ‘killed’, he becomes the Vicar of Dymchurch, on Romney Marshes, in Kent, where he becomes well-loved and respected. His old ‘bosun, Mipps, a trusty friend, becomes his Sexton, general factotum - and the village undertaker.

But Syn, though he has left ‘Clegg’ far behind, is not an entirely reformed character. He still yearns for excitement and danger and, though a devoted man of the cloth by day, at night he leads his band of daring smugglers (known as the ‘Night Riders’), carrying out dare-devil raids and deals to obtain illicit rum, brandy and silks. At times he stands, disguised as a Scarecrow in a field, in order to watch local events undetected. As the dashing and mysterious leader of the smugglers, he becomes a famous and national legend, and drives the authorities mad with his nefarious activities - ‘Syn abounded’, as the Bible

didn't quite put it. He remains undiscovered in his double-life and even becomes a friend of the Prince Regent (Syn, he says, is the only man to make him laugh). But eventually...

Much of the interest and enjoyment in the Dr. Syn saga lies in the 'hero's' character and personality. Though he was a tough, at times ruthless, smuggler and ex-pirate chief, he could also be a kind and generous man. He liked to help his parishioners and took his religious and church duties seriously. He had a sense of humour, though a grim one at times. And he was well-loved and liked by the local people of Dymchurch. He also got along well with the local 'gentry' and law officers, with whom he mixed freely, and joined in their rueful complaints and savage jokes about the elusive smuggler-chief. He could be as sophisticated as an aristocratic lord when he chose, or drink cheap ale with his men. He was a highly-intelligent, indeed intellectual man, a skilled horseman (he rode a black stallion named Gehenna), a brilliant swordsman and seasoned duellist. Some said the secret of his success was his uncanny knack of knowing what his enemies were up to and what they would do next. He was also a master of disguise.

One of his publishers' 'blurbs' ran: 'Dr. Syn - Oxford Scholar - Ace Duellist - Pirate Captain - Parson Extraordinary - Smuggler-in-Chief - Alias 'The Scarecrow' - and Vicar of Dymchurch - he has his own special place among the most beloved of our literary characters.' (Arrow paperback reprint, 1963.)

Russell Thorndike dedicated "Dr. Syn on the High Seas" (1936): 'To the memory of John Buchan, under whose auspices 'Dr. Syn' was first published, I respectfully dedicate this volume...' I have not been able to trace the meaning of this Dedication, despite much research; Thorndike is not mentioned in Buchan's own autobiography or in any books about him. I can only assume that Buchan helped Thorndike with an introduction to a publisher back in 1915 when the first Dr. Syn novel appeared. Buchan was a director of Nelson's Publishers, but they had no apparent connection, since all the 'Dr. Syn' books were published by Rich and Cowan, part of the Hutchinson Group. (It is interesting to note, incidentally, that Buchan's own most successful book, "The Thirty-Nine Steps", was published in 1915 too...)

By the time the final 'Dr. Syn' book ("The Shadow of Dr. Syn") appeared in 1944, his publishers were able to state on the dust-jacket, that 'over 600,000 Dr. Syn novels have been sold'. They were extremely popular during the 1930s and (counting reprints) in the 1940s; I remember reading some of them myself, from the local public library, when I was a schoolboy during the war years.

Russell Thorndike's distinguished actress-sister, Sybil Thorndike (later Dame Sybil), once explained in a Preface to the first 'Dr. Syn' novel, how the original idea (the 'original Syn...!') of the story was born. She and Russell were staying in an hotel in Spartanburg, South Carolina, in the United States, when Fate arranged for an actual murder to take place on the front steps right beneath their windows, and the corpse lay there all night. Russell and Sybil were too nervous to go to bed and sat up as Sybil made countless pots of tea - and as Russell made up the story of Dr. Syn and his smuggling cronies on the lonely, misty Romney Marshes of Kent, to while away the night. Later, Russell wrote the story down. "I envy those who are to make his acquaintance for the first time... he was above the ordinary standards of right and wrong..." wrote Sybil, of Dr. Syn.

Russell Thorndike, who was to become one of the leading actors of his generation, was a remarkable man. He was born in 1885, in Rochester Kent, where his father was the Canon of Rochester, and his uncle was a Bishop. After being educated in Windsor and Rochester, he, together with his elder sister Sybil, trained for the stage at Ben Greet's famous Drama Academy in London. He made his stage debut in 1904, and thereafter did much theatre work until he saw military service in Egypt and Gallipoli, 1914-16; he was invalided out after being badly wounded at Gallipoli.

He subsequently joined the Old Vic Company in London and, in his first two seasons there, played no fewer than 19 major Shakespearean roles, including Hamlet, King Lear, Richard III, Macbeth, King John, Mark Anthony, Caliban and Iago, as well as Peer Gynt and Wat Tyler. "He knew them all perfectly and acted with great wit and drive," recalled Sir John Gielgud, who was then 'walking on' in tiny parts.

In 1925 he played the title-role in his own play "Dr. Syn", based, of course on his own novel, in London's West End, later touring with this over the next three years or so. (Future comedy star Ronald Shiner made his stage debut as 'Mipps' in this play at the Hippodrome, Margate, in 1928.)

In 1932, Thorndike played Shylock, Macbeth, Jacques, Hamlet, Sir Toby Belch and Petruchio, all in one season at London's Kingsway Theatre. As a feat of memory alone these classical theatre seasons must stand as a record! He was probably the most prolific and hard-working leading actor of his generation (even more than the late Sir Donald Wolfit!).

Much more could be written about his astonishing stage career, but space precludes this. In later years he made the role of the comic pirate Smee, in "Peter Pan" very much his own and played it in the play's annual London production (and on tour) from 1950-61 (as well as making his debut in the part in 1941). He also appeared in several films, including Olivier's Shakespearean trilogy, "Henry V", "Hamlet" and "Richard III". He was something of an amusing eccentric too. One of his tricks was to queue up at the London theatre at which he was appearing and demand tickets to see 'this remarkable actor, Thorndike, everyone's talking about.' He was, by all accounts, a marvellous raconteur too, and a colourful, larger-than-life personality in all departments.

He was busy in all spheres, it seems. As well as having five children, he wrote many books (apart from the 'Dr. Syn' saga), including novels, biographies (including one of his famous sister), two books about Shakespeare (on whom he was an expert) and at least one chilling thriller, which I recall vividly from my youth; this was "Show House - Sold", based loosely, I seem to remember, on the real-life Wallace and Crippen cases (I've been trying for many years to find a copy, but without success!).

Thorndike's "The Amazing Quest of Dr. Syn" (1938) was dedicated: 'With gratitude to George Arliss, who so brilliantly brought Dr. Syn to life on the screen.' This referred to the British film "Dr. Syn" released in 1937 and starring that great old star George Arliss in the title-role (the operative word, I fear, being 'old' for George was far too old for the role). Directed by William Neill, it also starred John Loder, Margaret Lockwood, George Merritt (as Mipps) and Graham Moffatt as Jerry Jerk. Lockwood's performance won her a 3-year contract with Gainsborough Pictures. In December 1937, Queen Mary attended the London Charity Premiere, when Lockwood presented HRH with a bouquet. Critics thought that Arliss was 'too genteel to fully impress as a ruthless ex-pirate who had sliced off men's ears.' But it was apparently a reasonable success. It was also Arliss's last film.

There were later two more films about 'Dr. Syn', both strangely released in the same year, 1962. One was Hammer's "Captain Clegg" (titled "Night Creatures" in America), directed by Peter Graham-Scott. It starred Peter Cushing as Syn (called 'Dr. Blyss' for some inscrutable reason) with Yvonne Romaine, Oliver Reed and Michael Ripper as Mipps. The other 1962 film (not, sadly, in Syn-ema Scope) was "Dr. Syn - Alias the Scarecrow", a British Disney Production, directed by James Neilson and starring Patrick McGoohan as Syn and George Cole as Mipps. It was shown in three episodes on American TV as "The Scarecrow of Romney Marsh" in 1964. The screenplay was listed in the credits as being based on the novel "Christopher Syn" by Russell Thorndike and William Buchanan - a novel that never existed! Both pictures suffered due to the practically simultaneous release of both. Movie buffs tend to prefer the Hammer version.

which had a good sense of place and mystery about it (though it was criticised in some quarters for its violence).

The 'Dr. Syn' saga is largely set, as I've said, on and around the Romney Marshes, in Kent, and the books have a very strong sense and atmosphere and *awareness* of surroundings and place and weather. The area is fog-shrouded, dank, sinister and depressing. Even the footpaths sometimes lead into mud and water and dead-ends; maybe, in the old days, into deadly quicksands. Romney Marsh, where Kent ends and Sussex begins, is really land reclaimed from the sea. It's desolate, lonely, bleak and windy. Dickens described such a marsh (though not this one, since his was near Rochester, in another area of Kent) in his magnificent "Great Expectations" (and director David Lean captured it brilliantly in the early-sequences of his unforgettable 1946 film version); Sheila Kaye-Smith painted a graphic picture of Romney marsh in her novel "The Loves of Joanna Godden" (again superbly filmed in 1947).

Old Romney, once a port, now a scattered village, has a 13th-15th century church (the box-pews were once painted pink for one of the 'Dr. Syn' films!). The Rev. R.H. Barham, author of the famous "The Ingoldsby Legends", was Vicar of Shargate, Romney Marsh (and later Canon of St. Paul's, London). His book comprised stories, poems and verses set mainly in and around the villages of Romney Marsh. Barham wrote: "The world is divided into five parts, namely Europe, Asia, Africa, America - and Romney Marsh."

And, of course, Romney Marsh was, in the 18th and 19th centuries, smuggling country - in fact, as well as in the fiction of 'Dr. Syn'. "Watch the wall, my darling, while the gentlemen go by!" said Kipling in the "Smugglers' Song" (though those chilling words are much older than Kipling's verse). The words meant that if you turned your face to the wall, you could not recognise the 'gentlemen' (smugglers) if called upon to give evidence against them.

Russell Thorndike himself lived in an old lifeboat house in Dymchurch around 1914 and wrote his first 'Dr. Syn' book there. He and sister Sybil often spent childhood holidays there. And later, in the 1960s, Thorndike returned to live again in his beloved Dymchurch.

Thorndike took many names for his fictional characters in the 'Dr. Syn' books from old gravestones on Romney Marsh. Devoted readers who subsequently visited the area on a sort of 'Dr. Syn' literary pilgrimage, found the names recorded on the same local gravestones and concluded that the stories were based on fact and that the names in the stories were those of actual people - but, of course, they and the stories were all created by Thorndike in his fertile imagination. But many readers really thought that 'Dr. Syn' had been an actual, real-life person (or parson)...!

When a 'Dr. Syn' book was serialised in a national newspaper, the 'Daily Herald', in the 1930s, it all added to the legend and the popularity of 'Dr. Syn' and his exploits and it also probably did wonders for the tourist trade in Dymchurch and the Romney Marsh area of Kent.

One of the locomotives running on the world-famous 'Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway' - the world's smallest public railway - which opened in 1927 and is still going strong today, is called 'Dr. Syn'. 'Dr. Syn's Guest House and Restaurant' flourishes in Dymchurch. Mipps' favourite pub was 'The Ship Inn' and it's still thriving in Dymchurch High Street; they'll even give you Bed and Breakfast! And in the bar, they say, a 'Syn and Tonic' goes down very well...

And 'The Day of Syn', a biennial day of fun, festivity and profit for local charities, is held on every other August Bank Holiday Monday (in the 'odd number' years), when local residents dress as characters from the books and thousands of visitors attend. Local Press, TV and radio cover it widely - yet you can't buy the books anywhere, since they're all out-of-print. The last time they saw light was when they were all re-issued as 'Arrow' paperbacks in the late-1950s and mid-1960s, though the first book "Dr. Syn" was again

reprinted in Arrow in 1972. So if you want them today, it's best to keep an eye on the second-hand bookshops and charity shops.

Russell Thorndike was still appearing in TV productions in the 1950s (and, of course, in "Peter Pan"!). His last book was "The First Englishman", an historical novel published in 1949 - but he never wrote another 'Dr. Syn' book after 1944.

He lived in Mortlake, South-West London, during his later years, and died at the age of 87, on November 7th, 1972. He is remembered today (if he *is* remembered at all) for his remarkable theatre performances and for his 'Dr. Syn' novels. They may not have been great literature (though they were very well written and had some memorable set-pieces) but they were rattling good swashbuckling, action-packed yarns, well in the tradition of Robert Louis Stevenson and Samuel Walkey (who wrote all those marvellous pirate serials in "Chums" magazine many years ago).

As Lord Byron didn't quite say: "Pleasure's a Syn - and sometimes Syn's a pleasure..."

(Next in the series: "Captain Kettle")

GUSSY IN MY HOME TOWN

by Tommy Keen

Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again" - such, or similar, words began Daphne du Maurier's famous novel, *Rebecca*. So, last night, I dreamt I went to Aylesbury (well perhaps not last night), so, recently, a very kind friend drove me there. How can Aylesbury possibly interest the readers of the Collectors' Digest one might ask? I will try and explain. Aylesbury is the town where I was born (centuries ago) and where I discovered the Magnet and the Gem, and on the recent trip where I visited an old school chum in the village of Weston Turville.

Several years ago after joining the O.B.B.C., I discovered Gem No. 600, Vol 13, August 1920, in which Tom Merry & Co. are on a caravanning holiday, and in this issue the location is Buckinghamshire featuring Aylesbury and the surrounding district. The title of the story is 'Foes of the Fifth', in which Tom Merry & Co meet their old enemies, Cutts & Co of the Fifth Form of St. Jim's, who were evidently staying nearby with one of their relatives. Enough of Cutts & Co.

The chums need more provisions and when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy volunteers to cycle into Aylesbury to obtain them, on his arrival in that town, he is surprised to see so few people about or any shop open where he could buy food. "Excuse me", he asks the few he does see, "Pway, can you tell me where I can buy food?". The only reply he gets is "It's Thursday". At last he realises that Thursday is early closing, and finds the entire town is seemingly deserted.

A lovely illustration shows Gussy talking to an elderly yokel, but I am almost certain that such characters as the yokel did not dress like that in 1920.

So Tom Merry walks to Weston Turville to buy eggs and ham from a farm. The cover of this Gem is marvellous too. It shows a sign pointing to Wendover. Lovely nostalgia!

Now from 1917 to 1919/20, Charles Hamilton lived in a cottage on the outskirts of Aylesbury. I read somewhere that two children played in the garden whilst he was indoors busily typing as Martin Clifford (*Gem*) or Frank Richards (*Magnet*). Some decade or so ago, I heard from one of the children, and of course a child no more. To my amazement, he did not even know that the man (always typing) was the creator of Billy Bunter. When I spoke to him over the phone, he was living in Scarborough and said, "Why not come up sometime for a chat and have a round of golf". I declined with thanks - a round of toast is more in my line!



Arthur Augustus halted to address a ruddy-complexioned native who was smoking his pipe in the square. "Pway excise me," he said politely. "Are there any shops open in Aylesbury?"

Then in Magnet, No. 1120, August 3rd 1929, Harry Wharton & Co are in Bucks with Bob Cherry's ghastly old motorbike called 'Methuselah'. Chapter 3 begins, "Bucks is a beautiful Country". In this story, Harry Wharton & Co meet up with Coker & Co in a (fictitious) village called Greenleaf [although there is a village called Whiteleaf in Bucks]. In Greenleaf, Coker ends up in a huge box of eggs outside the village store.

I also remember reading at one time, I think in the *Popular*, that Martin Clifford and Frank Richards were playing billiards in a house in Tring, also near Aylesbury, and wait for it, Hilda Richards was doing the scoring. Imagine that!

FOR SALE: Bumper catalogue of boys' school stories. Includes huge selection of Hamiltonia - Bunter and Tom Merry hardbacks, most volumes from the Howard Baker Press (including scarce Bookclub volumes), S.O.L's etc. Very reasonable prices. SAE to Robert Kirkpatrick, 244 Latimer Road, London W10 6QY.

JEMIMA'S VITAL HOLIDAY MISSION

by Margery Woods

(Conclusion)

Settling down to sleep proved more difficult than Jemima had anticipated. Instinct began to nag; she should be trying to rescue Toby. Goodness knows where his ghastly Uncle Perc had imprisoned the small boy. Jemima sat up and deposited Oscar on the warm pillow and rapidly donned her clothes. Armed with a torch, a candle and matches and, with an afterthought, a length of coiled clothes line, Jemima set out for Home Farm. After two false turnings, one of which almost deposited her in a ditch, she came to the big darkened farmhouse. Somewhere distant a dog barked and Jemima fervently hoped that Uncle Perc wasn't a Pit bull fancier. After a stealthy circuit of the building that revealed every window and door to be securely fastened, Jemima adjusted her monocle and tried not to admit that rescue might just be a bit of a problem. Which room was Toby in and which rooms housed the four enemies? Jemima moved back towards the front of the house and froze as a crackle of twigs underfoot sounded behind her. She spun round and was knocked flying by the impact of an assailant.

"What the dickens...?" Jemima raised the torch and gasped.

"Jimmy! I mean aunty --- Gosh, I'm sorry!" Toby held out a helping hand. "I thought---"

"I came to rescue you!" Jemima dusted herself down. "How---?"

"I escaped!" he hissed breathlessly. "Lennie was snoring like a porker so I sneaked out the landing window and down that big tree. Come on," he urged, "in case Lennie wakes up."

Lennie had, judging by the sudden commotion, angry voices and dazzle of lights that burst upon the night. Jemima and Toby fled but had scarcely reached the shelter of the wood before the voices and noisy feet in pursuit sounded dangerously close. Toby seized her hand. "I know a short cut if you can jump a little stream."

"Lead on, young spartan---if they don't know it as well," exclaimed Jemima ruefully. She stopped. "Quick, Toby, take one end of this line. Tie it round that tree." Blessing the impulse that made her stuff the line in her pocket, she secured the other end. It just reached across the path, a perfect tripwire. Jemima purposely raised her voice as they scrambled onward and within a few moments dismayed cries and angry shouts accompanied by crashing noises filled the night. Then Uncle Perc's voice was urging his family to get up while Millie was screaming that she'd broken her leg---and her arm---and Aunt Gloria cried that she was stuck. "It's that wretched girl! She's got the kid out."

The arguments and rage faded into the night as Toby and Jemima quickly made their way home, chuckling to themselves. Toby was still giggling next morning while they waited for the locksmith to arrive. His advent sobered Jemima's merriment a bit as he inspected the two heavy old doors and said doubtfully: "This'll be a listed house, you know. You have to be careful putting even a tintack in these days."

"I'm sure you'll cope admirably," Jemima beamed. "It's essential, for jolly old security. Someone's got a key who shouldn't have one."

"Oh, right-o, miss. I'll replace the old ones with new ones the same size. All right?"

"Fine." Jemima went to telephone Miss Millicent Lincliffe and received a gracious invitation to visit any time. This afternoon would be perfectly convenient.

"She's frightfully grand," Toby informed Jemima as they partook of a snack lunch after the locksmith had departed, leaving two sets of shiny new keys. "Last time we were there I had to wear a suit."

"Then you'd better wear it today, old scout."

"Can't. It's too tight."

"Well don the nattiest that does fit," Jemima bade the youngster and nodded approvingly when he re-appeared in neat dark trousers, white shirt and well polished shoes. Oscar's approval was not so forthcoming, though, when he realised they were about to leave him. He slid away from Jemima's stroking hand and went sulkily into his favourite chair. "You can't come with us," said Toby to his pet. "You know Great Aunt Millicent hates cats. She's got a parrot and a cockatiel. Oscar would have them in two seconds flat," he added for Jemima's benefit.

Jemima was looking forward to meeting Great Aunt Millicent and she was not disappointed. Certainly the house was grand and the tea delicious, served from a silver service and such fine bone china that Jemima held her breath every time she picked up her cup. But there wasn't a scrap of pretentious nonsense about Aunt Mill'cent, as Toby called her. Eighty years young, she was slim and elegant in Wedgwood blue linen and her still pretty face was delicately made-up. It soon became clear that she wasn't averse to a spot of gossip, and equally clear that she had little time for Uncle Perc and family.

"I don't know where he gets it from," she sighed after recounting a few choice morsels of scandal from the misspent youth of her nephew. "I'm the last of the senior Lincliffes and we all took the management and care of the estate very seriously. Yet he got into appalling debt, from which dear Peter had to rescue him, then Peter allowed him to take over the Home Farm three years ago when old Jake Weathers retired. Now it's so run down it's a disgrace. I don't know where he gets it from," she repeated sadly.

"Only takes one jolly old black sheep to ruin a family," murmured Jemima in sepulchral tones.

"But I never dreamt he'd behave like this. His own brother's family." Great Aunt Millicent compressed her lips. "He **kidnapped** you?" She darted a sharp glance at Toby, who was on his best behaviour.

"Yes," he said indignantly. "He's trying to frighten mum into leaving our house."

"Perhaps you'd better come and stay with me," suggested his aunt. But Toby shook his head. "I've got to stay and help Jemima. And I can't leave Oscar."

Great Aunt Millicent rang the bell to summon her house-keeper to remove the tea things. "I'm sorry I can't provide you with transport home but it's Albert's day off, unfortunately." The friendly little session was over, and the two young people prepared to take their leave. At the door Great Aunt Millicent paused. "I wish I could do more to help but Peter was very secretive about the legal matters before he died. I hope your mother has succeeded in recovering the deeds. If she hasn't, then you'll have to hunt for them, young Toby. They must be in the house somewhere."

"But we did!" he protested. "Mum hunted everywhere. There were reams of papers in his study and the safe. We even searched the attics and the old Folly."

Jemima's monocle glinted in the sun and her eyes narrowed. So this was why Uncle Perc and Millie were so determined to get into the house while Aunt Louise was away. And hadn't the Folly shown signs of a hurried search last night?

"Tell your mother I shall visit her as soon as she returns," Aunt Millicent was saying. She turned to Jemima. "Do keep me informed, my dear, and keep Perc at bay." Her dark eyes sparkled maliciously. "That trip wire was a brilliant idea."

Jemima was considerably cheered by the encounter. They had another ally, she reflected on the bus ride back, while Toby chattered away at her side. Now the old grey matter needed a spot of exercise, she decided, already planning an exhaustive search for the missing deeds. Unless Uncle Perc had already got possession. The dreadful possibility of this faded before the unpleasant shock awaiting them at the manor. At the front door Uncle Perc and his unlikable tribe were there, stony-faced. With them was a police constable.

"There she is!" cried Uncle Perc. "That's the interfering chit who has barred me from my own property." He glowered at the constable. "Well, aren't you going to do something about it?"

"And what about my property that she stole," screeched Millie.

Jemima frowned. "Elucidate, fair one, instantly."

"Eh?" Millie looked blank, and her brother chipped in. "She means that you pinched her stereo cassette player."

"Oh!" Jemima's brow cleared. "You don't mean that tinny old ghetto blaster left in the hall? We put it in the bin to be collected for recycling. Thank goodness the van hasn't been. So sorry, old thing. Of course Toby will go and retrieve it."

"And damages as well," boomed the now florid Uncle Perc. "She tripped us all up last night."

"I'm covered in bruises," cried Millie.

"And my best lace negligee was torn to shreds on the brambles," fumed Aunt Gloria."

The young constable had begun to show signs of bewilderment. "Where did this--this alleged assault take place?"

"In the woods! Last night!" they chorused."

"You were out in the woods in your-your night attire?" The constable's pencil hovered over his notebook.

The exchange was proving too much for Toby. He dissolved into uncontrollable giggles, while the four complainants began to shout all at once. The constable turned to Jemima. "Is this true?"

"I believe they did stumble in the darkness. Not looking where they were going while they pursued us." Jemima regarded him owlishly. "Do I really look strong enough to trip three large adults and a child, during their little midnight gambols in the woods?"

The constable decided to defer this line of questioning. He returned to the main theme. "Mr. Lincliffe complains that you and the boy are trespassing. In illegal possession of their property."

"Fibber!" yelled Toby. "It's ours!"

United clamour broke out from the would-be new owners and the constable raised his hand for silence. He said to Jemima, "Are you in charge here?"

"You are clever," she beamed, "recognising true authority when you see it. Yes, and Toby's in my care until his mother returns tomorrow."

"Well," the constable did not seem to be very happy. "There does seem to be a dispute over ownership and I'm afraid it looks as if from today you are in unlawful possession of this property."

"Pa's got the solicitor's letter to prove it," cried Lennie triumphantly.

"I'm afraid you'll have to admit them, Miss," said the constable.

Toby's mirth died instantly. He moved closer to Jemima, his face apprehensive. Jemima surveyed the group coolly, giving no indication of any concern. "Then we had better contact the local office of social services. Don't look so worried, Toby--I'm sure they'll find us a cupboard somewhere to sleep in tonight. Maybe not up to Oscar's standard, though." Jemima brightened. "Then we'll go and see the editor of the local paper. A ten year old boy and a fourteen year old girl, cast out homeless on to the streets, destitute! Have you any money, Toby? I haven't. Won't it make a great story? You'll have your names in the headlines, Aunt Gloria and Uncle Perc. You'll enjoy that, I'm sure."

There was a sickly silence.

The constable looked round them all before he said: "As the boy's mother is returning tomorrow perhaps we can postpone things until then. Then we'll sort it out. You see, sir,

juveniles are concerned. That makes a difference. And the disputed charge of kidnapping."

"It's a possible form of abuse," Jemima said softly.

Uncle Perc visibly deflated at the dread word, even as he wondered about the limits to that infernal girl's knowledge. Who knew what awful things she might put that child up to. He said unwillingly: "Very well, until tomorrow."

"That's very sensible, sir," said the constable, "best to let the legal experts deal with all this. Good evening." He watched the disgruntled family move away, then said to Jemima, "Will you be all right, miss?"

She recognised a faint light of admiration and respect in his eyes, and beamed. "We shall. And thank you, constable."

He departed and at last Jemima let herself and Toby in with the new key. "Wow!" said Toby. "You really scared Uncle Perc. But he never hurt me, you know."

"He laid hands on you to carry you by force last night," she reminded him. "You should know, Toby that there are exceptions to the rules of fair play. This was one of 'em, old bean, when you have to be more unscrupulous than the enemy. Now," she said briskly, "skates on. You feed Oscar while I make something for us, then we've got a very busy night in front of us. Okay?"

The task of searching the manor was greater than she had imagined. There was so much of it. Putting qualms aside about delving into people's personal belongings, Jemima and Toby ransacked the place from roof to cellar. Several hours later they were dusty and tired and unsuccessful. "Sure there aren't any more secret hidey holes, Jemima asked. Toby shook his head. "Only that one I showed you in the hall. Gosh, Jimmy---sorry---Aunty---" "Forget it, old spartan," she interjected, "Jimmy is fine. You were going to say..."

"We've left an awful mess everywhere. Hope mum isn't furious."

"We'll tidy up later. We'd better start on the old dairy and the old servants' quarters."

"Oscar's gone. I must find him. He's not allowed to roam out after dark," said Toby worriedly.

So there was another delay while they searched through the fading light for one very wilful Siamese. Jemima decided they should have another look in the Folly but again they failed to find anything remotely resembling legal documents.

"What if Uncle Perc really has them," Toby sighed despondently. "He'll never give them up, and possession is nine points of the law."

"But we are not going to give up," Jemima said stoutly. "I think he's bluffing. I think the only thing he has is that solicitor's letter telling him about the entail and the year and a day business. I don't think Uncle Perc even knows about the legal changes your father made---unless he is in cahoots with all three sets of solicitors," Jemima added darkly.

"But why didn't Dad tell us?" groaned Toby. "Why the secrecy?"

"I don't know. Let's hope your mum has found something out." Jemima closed the door of the Folly, then started as a fierce squawk shattered the air and an indignant owl soared overhead through the gloom. Another slightly different squawk sounded and Toby grabbed her arm. "That's Oscar! Come on, I know where he is."

Toby led the way through the copse behind the Folly until he reached a small clearing. In it stood an old bird house with a ramshackle feeding tray and little cote above, all atop a stout rustic post at least six feet high. On the feeding table, his pale fur strangely luminescent in the gathering dusk, sat Oscar, looking as if he were modelling the base for an elaborate table lamp. "Come on, Oscar," Toby called.

Oscar regarded them aloofly and moved not a muscle. "Bother," groaned Toby. "I'll have to get the ladder. He'll not come down until he's ready."

By the time the light ladder had been found and carried back to the bird house, Oscar, needless to say, had vanished. Jemima walked round the post then chuckled and put her fingers to her lips. A board at the back of the little cote had rotted and fallen away, and dangling over it was a long brown tail. Oscar was inside, lying doggo. Quietly Jemima began to climb the ladder and reached for the truant Siamese. There was a bit of a scuffle then Oscar decided to come quietly, after showering Jemima with the dust and detritus of years. Then she caught her breath with disbelief and descended the ladder, thrusting Oscar into Toby's arms. "Hang on to him, I'm going up again."

Toby watched with puzzlement as Jemima mounted the ladder again and groped inside the cote, to draw out a dark shape. "What is it?" he demanded, hanging on to the struggling Oscar, and Jemima shook her head. "I don't know but let's get back and find out."

"It's a bundle of old black plastic," Toby protested.

"Yes, but there is something inside. Don't hope too much," she warned. But they did, during the scamper back to the house and the investigation of the packet on the kitchen table. Slowly she peeled off the layers of an old bin bag and drew out a strong manilla folder bound round with pinkish tape. Both gave a tremendous sigh as the ancient documents and the newer crisper ones came to light, along with a sheaf of legal correspondence.

Long into the night Jemima and Toby pored over their find, the find that should assure Toby and Louise of their inheritance for as long as they lived. There was also a note about a copy at a London bank, and a second copy in a safe deposit box in the local bank.

"That'll be the key mum puzzled over," cried Toby. "There was one key on his ring that didn't fit anything when mum was trying to sort out his affairs. But why did he put them in the bird house? They could have been chewed or pulled out and lost. A whole year."

"He probably only intended to leave them there a day or so, and we know he was suspicious of Uncle Perc and the local lawyers. Certainly nobody would ever dream of looking in the bird house." Jemima petted Oscar, who was sitting on the table looking very smug, as though taking full credit for the momentous discovery. "We'll probably never know for sure why your father acted so secretively, but then he didn't know he had so little time left."

"No," Toby said sadly, then brightened. "Isn't mum going to be thrilled? Oh, I wish she was home."

"She won't be long now," said Jemima, and, as usual, was right.

Aunt Louise arrived at dawn, having travelled back through the night, a lonely and despairing woman, but not for long. Joy and thankfulness transformed her when the folder was put into her hands. But the excitement was not all over. At noon a car pulled up outside and Jemima exclaimed: "It's the Guv! Oh, yoicks, as our Diana would say," as she rushed out to greet Colonel Carstairs when he stepped out of the car, somewhat worried not to have arrived sooner.

"Too late! It's all done," crowed his daughter, although this was a slight exaggeration. For the Guv would guide Aunt Louise and Toby through all the legal formalities ahead and ensure that Uncle Perc would never get his grasping hands on the wealth of riches within the manor.

A party was planned, Babs and the chums were to be invited, and Oscar treated to all his favourite foods. Jemima polished her monocle and allowed herself a little smile of satisfaction.

Things hadn't worked out too badly at all--except of course for Uncle Perc!

GEORGE BEAL WRITES:

I was very saddened to read Bill Lofts' item about the death of Jim Stagg. He was a colleague of mine at Fleetway House. Indeed he and I shared a study for some time when I was running the Annuals there. Jim (he didn't like 'Gilbert') was a prolific writer, and scribbled away almost non-stop. He was one of the few journalists I have ever met who wrote by hand. He refused to learn to type, and so far as I know, never used a machine. He passed his manuscripts on to a typist, whom he paid for transcribing his work into typescript.

We were both busy, but found time to chat, of course. I remember, on one occasion, Commander Campbell, of 'Brains Trust' fame, called into my office. I knew him from some work he had done for me at the *Daily Mail*. He was no longer working for the BBC, and wrote about his adventures and travels. I viewed a great deal of this with some scepticism, but that's another story! In fact, he had come to see Monty Haydon, our director, whom he knew. Monty was busy, so Cam (as he liked to be called), decided to use me as second best.

He was, of course, a great talker, and I introduced him to Jim Stagg, who enjoyed his chatter, but, like me, was anxious to get on with his work. After a couple of hours, I was obliged to get him to leave, so I told Cam some story, and he departed. He later wrote to Jim Stagg, saying how much he had enjoyed meeting and talking to him. In fact, he wrote "I would love to have gone on with our talk, but Beal, of course, hustled me out of the office!"

Jim left to go freelance, and I moved over to what had been Hulton's, so our ways parted. However, on a later occasion, my late wife and I were in Devon, and we visited him and his second wife, Joyce, when they lived near Newton Abbot. He had been writing a whole series of short stories for the London *Evening News*. The stories were set locally, and had great charm. I remarked on this when we were in his house, and he winked. "Good stuff, isn't it? I get it all from old Fred, the cowman down the road. He's a real Devon character, and the best of it all is that it's true!" I pointed out the world's best writers had done exactly the same thing. Somerset Maugham was a prime example.

We kept in touch for a bit, but eventually lost contact. I am sorry to hear of Jim's passing. He was quite a character.

WANTED: ALL pre-war Sexton Blake Libraries. **All** Boys Friend Libraries. **ALL** comics/papers etc with stories by W.E. Johns, Leslie Charteris & Enid Blyton. **Original artwork from Magnet, Gem, Sexton Blake Library etc.** also wanted. I will pay **£150.00** for original Magnet cover artwork, **£75.00** for original Sexton Blake Library cover artwork. **NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 EASTBURY ROAD, WATFORD, WD1 4JL. Tel: 01923 232383.**

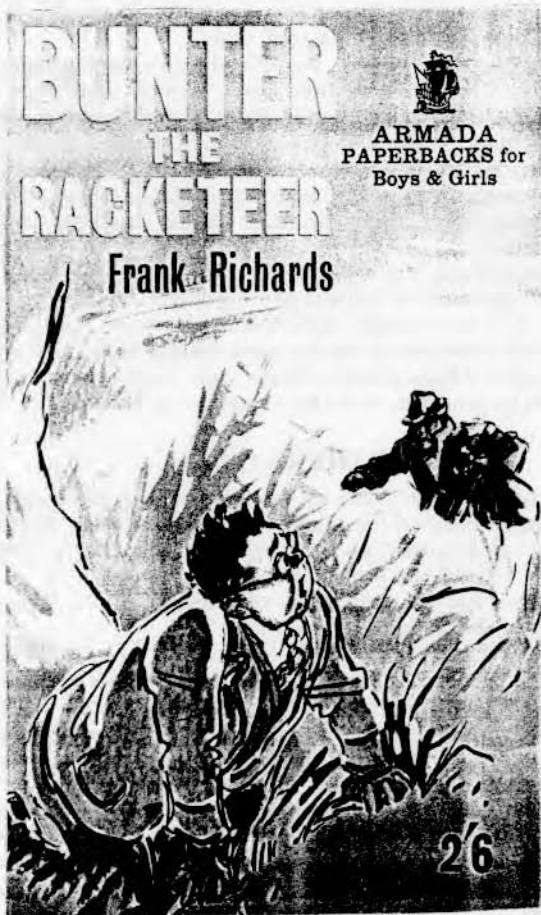
ANOTHER FACE OF WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER

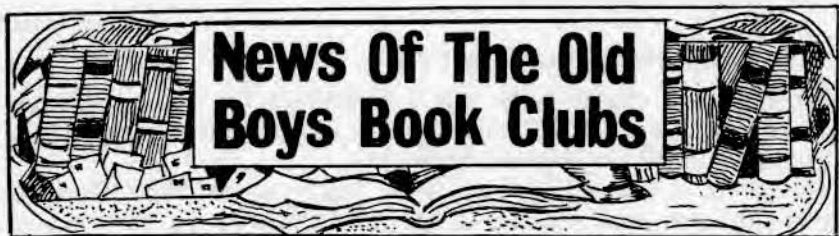
by Reg Hardinge

(See C.D. August 1995, pages 28 and 29).

Recently at a church book sale I picked up for a song 'Bunter the Racketeer' one of the Frank Richards stories in the Armada series. This was first published in 1965 by Mayfair Books Ltd.

The cover is interesting because a fourth artist, Mary Gernatt, the designer, has conveyed through it her impression of the Fat Owl of the Remove. There are some excellent drawings by C.H. Chapman between the covers too, and I was fortunate, indeed, to have acquired this edition which is in tip top condition.





LONDON O.B.B.C.

Despite the absence of a number of "regulars", away on holiday, we mustered 20 members at Eltham on 11th August. It was also a welcome appearance of Mark Jervis and Laurie Sutton, whom we had not seen for several years.

The theme of the meeting was sport. We opened with a short synopsis of "Spedegue's Dropper" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle from Derek Hinrich, which first appeared in *The Strand* in October 1926. This was followed by Peter Mahony giving his selection of Junior cricket teams for Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood and St. Franks, and detailing reasons for same. We were then invited to see how our own choices tallied with Peter's. Our Hamiltonian experts excelled themselves, with Ray Hopkins, Roger Jenkins, Mark Taha and Roy Parsons respectively leading the field. Some, including your correspondent, hardly got a bat to the ball!

After demolishing Dorothy's as always enjoyable "spread", we had a Quiz from Mark Taha, consisting of 10 questions on fictional sporting characters and events and 10 more on factual ones. Peter was a clear winner, with Roy and Laurie as runners-up. Finally, Alan Pratt talked of sporting characters in his boyhood reading days, with references to D.C. Thomson and Amalgamated Press papers reviving many memories for those present.

Our next event is the luncheon on the 8th September at The Bull & Crown, Chingford.

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

A warm welcome was given to the ten assembled during this holiday month. It was reported that the first meeting of the proposed Jennings Society will take place at the Belmont House Hotel in Leicester, on Saturday, 21st June, 1997. (Please write to 27 Tinsill Lane, Leeds LS16 6BU for further details.)

Geoffrey Good said that the whereabouts of letters from P.G. Wodehouse, originally in the Club's possession, will be located, if possible.

The new O.B.B.C. lapel badges should be ready in time for the C.D. Anniversary Luncheon on 8th September and the colour artwork on view looked very attractive.

Some new books were on display: *The Magnet Companion* for 1996 by George Beal, *Radio Comedy 1938-1968* (as reviewed in the C.D.), *The Lone Pine companion* by Mark O'Hanlon and *Let's Be Controversial*, an index of the L.B.C. columns in the C.D., compiled by Naveed Haque.

Donald Campbell provided an original puzzle/quiz. Using advertisements from copies of "The Strand" and "Windsor" magazines, he had compiled a crossword, letters from which then composed a sentence. Keith Atkinson was the winner, appropriately as he is our expert crossword and puzzle-solver and he and Margaret often contribute to "Puzzler" and similar magazines.

Geoffrey read the armchair episode concerning Mr. Lazarus, Bunter and the Famous Five from *Magnet* 1311, thus rounding off a most enjoyable evening.

Our next meeting is on 14th September with Clarissa Cridland and Ann Mackie-Hunter. We meet at 12.30 p.m. at our Secretary's home in Wakefield to have informal lunch at a local hotel.

The October meeting is the main one of the year, with our President Mary Cadogan attending, and we hope our Vice President, Anthony Buckeridge, and Eileen will be with us too. We have lunch (meeting at 12.30 p.m.) at the Swallow Hotel, Wakefield followed by an informal afternoon at our Secretary's home and then our normal evening meeting at our venue in Leeds. Please write to the above address if you feel you can join us.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

C.D. HALF-CENTURY

Many C.D. readers will be familiar with the excellently produced quarterly magazine called THIS ENGLAND, which is one of the few periodicals which I regularly buy. It always provides a feast of fine coloured pictures and articles which, both nostalgic and contemporary, celebrate British achievements and the beauties of our countryside. I am delighted to be able to report that the Autumn edition currently on sale carries on its *Cornucopia* page a feature about the *Collectors' Digest* and its half-century.

Next month I shall be giving details of the truly bumper book from the Museum Press entitled COLLECTORS' DIGEST - THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS which has been compiled by John Wernham and myself. Watch this space. M.C.

THAT MISSING 'PUNCH' PIECE

Last month I published in the C.D. the first part of an article from a 1953 PUNCH about Greyfriars Nationalised, hoping that readers might send me the part which was missing from my cutting. Brian Doyle has now provided the last part of this article, which appears below. As he points out, it is by the distinguished author Anthony Powell, who is famous for his long sequence of novels under the general title of 'A Dance to the Music of Time'. His first novel in this series was 'A Question of Upbringing' published in 1951, and largely about the schooldays (in a fictionalised Eton) of the hero. Powell was educated at Eton and Oxford. His sequence of novels was completed in 1975. Brian says there is a rumour that some of them will be adapted soon as a T.V. serial.

It is strange that, in this article, Greyfriars has "houses" and even stranger to think of Prout as Housemaster to Harry Wharton & Co!

If it's any of us guys quittin', it'll be Inky here."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur, denied this suggestion vociferously!

"My esteemed Fisher!" Inky reiterated, "since the implementiveness of the Education Act of 1944, the barkfulness and bitefulness of Privilege had its teeth removed by the painless dentalism of Equal Opportunitiness. As the English proverb has it, Leftfulness has become Rightfulness. Besides, my esteemed family is far too lovesome with the esteemed Mr. Nehru for any troublesomeness."

"But what a thump!" groaned Harry Wharton. "Will Prout remain our housemaster? I jolly well hope not!"

"I read a letter on Prout's desk applying for a post at the British Council!" asserted Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of the Remove, "I 'spect he'll go! The giddy Council's always looking for new personnel!"

The Honourable Arthur Augustus could not contain himself at this!

"Oh cwumbs! You wottah!"
 "Go and eat coke!" riposted the millionaire's son and heir. "If your father's really on the Coal Board, you'll probably get it more easily than the rest of us! As a matter of fact, I bet your Guv'nor just does low-level House of Lords committee work on things like Cost of Living!"
 "Ha! ha! ha!"
 "Groo!"
 "Yaroooh!"
 "You uttah boundah!"
 "Anyway, I'm leaving this term!" groaned Bunter, as he spread wads of marmalade on thick slices of meat loaf. "I've passed the interview for the Ministry of Food! And the Intelligence test, too! They say the elevenses there are simply frabjous!"

ANTHONY POWELL

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL COLUMN

An index compiled by Naveed Haque. (Reviewed by Mary Cadogan).

Eric Fayne's popular *Let's Be Controversial* column spanned almost three decades in the C.D. and covered with depth, style and affection an extraordinary range of Hamiltonian aspects. Many C.D. readers, including myself, were prompted by Eric's musings in this column to buy or borrow various stories and series for further enjoyment and study.

Naveed Haque has now prepared a complete index of this series in a booklet which also carries a Foreword by Eric Fayne. Many Hamiltonians will wish to have a copy of this most useful listing, so that they can quickly look up in the C.D. *Let's Be Controversial* articles on specific themes, characters or events. As I wrote in a short Introduction to this booklet: 'Eric's outstanding devotion to the hobby is matched by his truly impressive and detailed knowledge of the stories that form its heart and root. It is particularly fitting that this volume marking one very important aspect of his work should appear in 1996 when the C.D. is celebrating its half century of publication'.

Copies can be obtained from Happy Hours, 37 Tinshill Lane, Leeds LS16 6BU at £2.70 for Britain and Europe, postage included. Copies can be sent elsewhere overseas by air mail for £3.50 inclusive.

COLIN MORGAN WRITES

I read with much interest in CD 596 your review of 'The Wizard Index 1944-63' by Martin & Hazel Trowse, but was amazed to read that, in their opinion, 'the best stories ever published in The Wizard appeared in these years'. It would seem that they have little knowledge of the first 22 years of the paper (it began in 1922) so how could they form such an opinion?... Without the full knowledge of what had gone before, a statement such as this can only alienate prospective purchasers of the Index whose own reading of the paper ended before 1944.

Are the authors aware, for instance, that many of the 'later' stories they revere are actually reprints from the 1930's? At random, I could mention some of The Wolf of Kabul stories such as 'The Stone Man Marches', or the cricket serial, 'The Blind Bowler', both of which originated in the paper in 1939. Then there are stories of The Red Macgregor, printed first in 1938, but repeated twice after 1944. 'Thruster John' is another - his adventures were first published in 1934. Perhaps we shouldn't forget those early Wizard stories which transferred to The Rover after 1944, epics like 'Pony Express' and the tales

of the tough schoolmaster, 'Thick-Ear Donovan'. I could go on, but I don't think that's necessary.

There is no doubt of the excellence of some of the stories in *The Wizard* after the War, but the Trousers should not dismiss so decisively what went before - especially when their knowledge of that period of the papers, as revealed by their comments, appears to be so incomplete.

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

The current issue of this American equivalent of the C.D. deals most interestingly with the Stratemeyer Syndicate, which has long been responsible for the stories of the Hardy Boys, Nancy Drew and other famous series. **DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP** is edited by J. Randolph Cox, who is also a C.D. subscriber, and details of his excellent publication can be obtained from him at P.O. Box 226, Dundas, MN 55019, U.S.A. In fact, like the C.D., this magazine is celebrating a very long run; it has been in existence for 65 years although, unlike the C.D., it is not a monthly but comes out six times each year.



A magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and study of old-time dime and nickel novels, popular story papers, series books, and pulp magazines

Vol. 65, No. 4

August 1996

Whole No. 640

STRATEMEYER EDITION



Edward Stratemeyer in 1891

This portrait accompanied the installments of "Jack the lawyer of The Trials and Triumphs of a Young Merchant" which appeared in *The Mailer*, April 25 to June 3, 1891. Editor: Edward S. Ellis. The serial was published in its entirety in *Good News*, January 23 April 2, 1892.

DUPLICATES OF SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY, 3rd Series, also a few 2nd Series. **BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY**, bound volumes, 3 to 7 copies in each. 1st and 2nd Series. Various other duplicates. Offers, would prefer to exchange. **FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE:** Book, Magazine Collector, No. 67 to 149, (73). 60p each, plus post. K. TOWNSEND, 7 NORTH CLOSE, WILLINGTON, DERBY, DE65 6EA. Tel. 01283 703305.

GEMS OF HAMILTONIA

from Peter Hanger

"Do you think you will really want toppers in the van?" asked Tom.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"People don't go vanning, as a rule, in toppers, you know."

"An occasion may awise when a toppah will be essential, Tom Mewwy. I am only takin' two."

A caravanner wearing two toppers will look rather odd, won't he?" asked Monty Lowther.

GEM 595

Coker frowned. Like many great leaders and captains, he had to contend with obtuseness and slackness on the part of his followers. It was one of the penalties of greatness.

MAGNET 704

It was a Gargantuan dinner - such a dinner as made school dinners at Greyfriars look like the diet of an anchorite.

As soon as Bunter had eaten enough for one he felt a little better.

When he had eaten enough for two he felt much better.

By the time he had eaten enough for three he was growing quite comforted. And when his inner Bunter had disposed of enough for four he felt that life was worth living again. Having by this time taken the edge off his appetite Billy Bunter proceeded to enjoy his dinner.

MAGNET 1071

"My uncle, Colonel Bunter, is simply rolling in it," said the Owl of the Remove. "You've heard of him - he's the one who got the D.S.O. in the War. He captured a German trench single-handed.

"If you said a German tuckshop I'd believe you," yawned Skinner. *MAGNET 1056*

An exact and meticulous regard for the truth never had appealed to Bunter. He was above petty consideration of that sort.

MAGNET 1068

Only Billy Bunter knew what a fascinating fellow he was, and what pleasure was to be found in his company.

Other fellows had no idea of it.

MAGNET 1059

Once upon a time Mr. Prout had played football; had been, indeed, a giant at the game; if fond memory did not deceive him. He had long passed the footballing stage in his career; indeed, the plump Form-master, at the present stage of his career, resembled a football more than a footballer.

MAGNET 1199

"Wemarkable!" said Arthur Augustus. "Vewy wemarkable!"

It seemed difficult for Gussy to realise that he had a big round nought to his credit.

"Did you fellows see that?" he inquired as he joined the waiting batsman at the pavilion.

"Duck's eggs are cheap!" remarked Blake.

"The pwospect looks wathah wocky now, I feah!" said Arthur Augustus sadly. "Not much change for yoy fellows, I'm afraid."

"Oh, we'll try to stop one or two," said Blake sarcastically.

"Yaas, wathah! Twy your hardest, old chap!" said Arthur Augustus. "Nothing' like twyin', at any rate, even if it isn't any good."

GEM 1637

(COPYRIGHT. This non-profit making magazine is privately circulated. The reproduction of the contents, either wholly or in part, without written permission from The Editor, is strictly forbidden.)

Editor: Mary Cadogan, 46 Overbury Avenue, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 6PY.

Printed by Quacks Printers, 7 Grape Lane, Petergate, York, YO1 2HU. Tel. 635967.