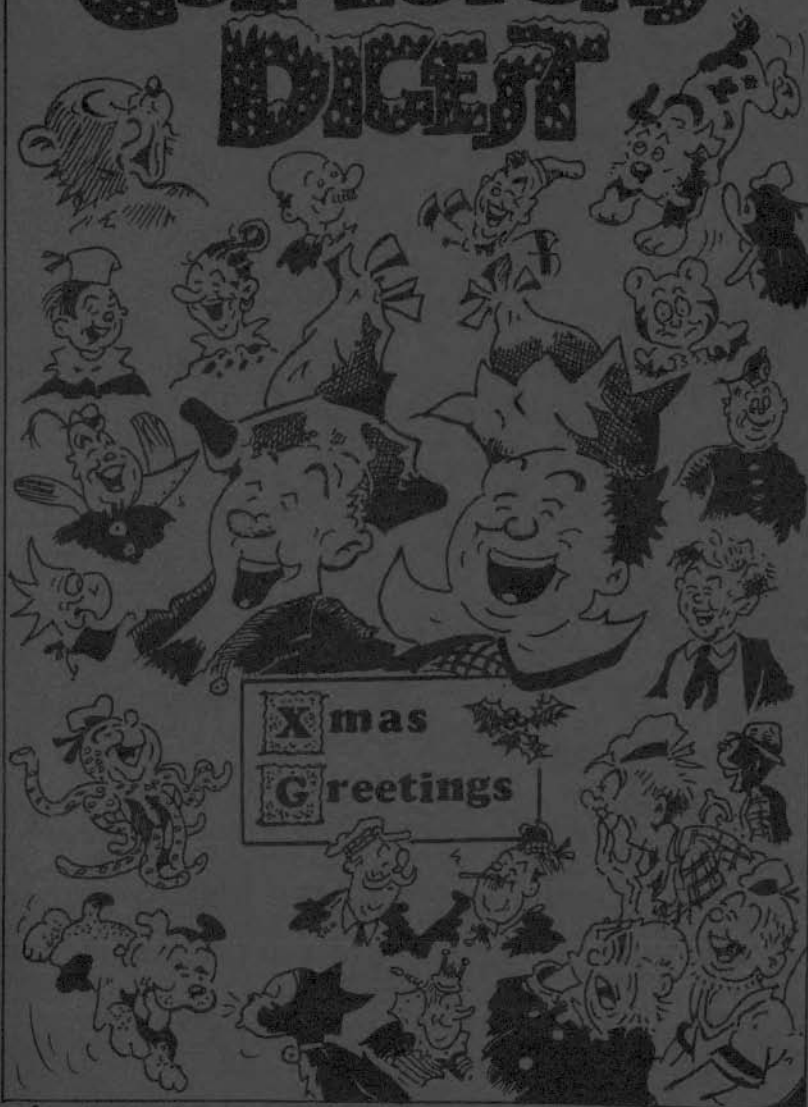


DECEMBER 1996

STORY PAPER

VOL.50. No.600.

COLLECTOR'S DIGEST





**COLIN CREWE
COLLECTORS BOOKS**

12B WESTWOOD ROAD, CANVEY ISLAND, ESSEX. SS8 0ED
TELEPHONE: 01268-693735 EVENINGS BEST
**OLD BOYS AND GIRLS BOOKS SOLD, BOUGHT AND
EXCHANGED WITH ENTHUSIASM**



YOUR WANTS LIST WELCOME. SUITABLE COLLECTIONS WANTED

TOP SPOT DECEMBER

VOLUME 18 THE STACY SERIES SPECIAL (GREYFRIARS DOUBLE) MINT @ £148.00
VOLUME 25A "GREYFRIARS CHUMS IN CHINA" MINT @ £198.00

TOP SPOT DECEMBER

TRIUMPH FAMOUS PRE-WAR BOYS STORYPAPER
FROM AMALGAMATED PRESS VG COPIES EA £7.50
447,450,524,526,559,563,574,575,580,582,583,585,593,604,60
6,623,666,743,747,766.

SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY 3RD SERIES ISSUES OF
96 PAGES GEN V.G. @ £3.50 EACH 10% DISCOUNT ON
ORDERS OF 10 OR MORE

21,28,31,36,38,40,44,49,52,54,55,58,61,62,67,72,76,79,83,87,9
0,92,96,97,98,102,103,1,05,109,110,111,115,117,120,121,122,
123,124,125,126,127,130,132,134,138,140,141,144,147 & 148.

SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY 3RD SERIES ISSUES
FROM NUMBER 150. GEN. V.G. @ £1.95 EACH

10% DISCOUNT ON 10 OR MORE ISSUES

151,154,155,157,158,159,161,164,167,171,175,177,178,179,18
0,193,195,196,198,199,200,201,202,203,204,205,207,210,211,
212,214,215,217,218,219,221,223,224,225,231,232,234,235,23
6,238,241,245,249,250,251,252,253,254,255,256,257,258,259,
260,262,263,264,265,266,267,268,269,271,272,273,274,275,27
6,279,277,278,279,280,281,282,283,284,285,286,287,288,289,
291,292,293,294,296,298, & 299.

SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY 3RD & 4TH SERIES 300-
526 INC. MOST ISSUES AVAILABLE @ £1.35 EA.

10% DISCOUNT ON 10 PLUS ISSUES

SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY NEW COLLECTORS

BUMPER CHRISTMAS PARCELS 3RD & 4TH SERIES

25 ISSUES MY SELECTION LOT £20.00

50 ISSUES MY SELECTION LOT £35.00

100 ISSUES MY SELECTION LOT £69.00

NELSON LEE LIBRARY ISSUES OF YEARS 1929/1933

NELSON LEE LIBRARY ISSUES OF YEARS

1929/1933 VERY GOOD COPIES @ £2.25 EACH

10% DISCOUNT ON ORDERS OF 10 PLUS ISSUES

176,177,178,179,180,181,182,190,191,192,193,194,28,29,30,3
1,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41,51,52,53,54,55,56,57,58,59,60
61,62,63,64,65,66,67,68,69,70,71,72,73,74,75,76,77,78,79,80,
81,82,83,84,85,86,87,88,89,90,91,92,93,94,95,96,97,98,99,100,
101,102,103,104,105,106,107,108,109,110,111,129 & 130.

YEAR 1933 FINAL SERIES

1,2,3,4,5,20,21,22,23,24,25.

SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY 5TH MAYFLOWER

SERIES FINE COPIES @ £2.95 EACH

2,3,8,10,11,28,39

MODERN BOY 97 YEAR 1929 BUMPER CHRISTMAS

NUMBER WITH 48 PAGES £5.00

MODERN BOY 99 YEAR 1929 28 DEC. HOLLY &

SNOW DECORATED COVER £4.27

MODERN BOY 306,307 & 308 YEAR 1933

ALL HOLLY & SNOW DECORATED COVERS EA £4.25

MODERN BOY 462 1936 & 514 1937

GREATLY ENLARGED CHRISTMAS NUMBERS EA £5.00

TOM MERRY'S OWN 1950 DUST WRAPPER SCENE

OF GHOST AND A BURGLAR £12.50

TOM MERRY'S OWN 1951 DUST WRAPPER

SCENE OF SEVEN SHIELDS V.G. £12.50

TOM MERRY'S OWN 1953 DUST WRAPPER SCENE

OF FOOTBALL GOAL MOUTH V.G. £14.95

TOM MERRY'S OWN 1954 DUSTWRAPPER

SCENE OF SCHOOLBOYS SKATING £14.95

YAROOH! PUBLISHED METHUEN 1976 A MINT

COPY IN ATTRACTIVE D/W £9.95

THE WORLD OF FRANK RICHARDS 1975 BY W.

LOFTS & DJ ADLEY V.G. IN D/W £25.00

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF FRANK RICHARDS

MEMORIAL EDITION 1962 PREFACE BY C SKILTON

& EXTRA MATERIAL FROM ERIC FAYNE V.G. IN A

VERY ATTRACTIVE D/W £25.00

GREYFRIARS SCHOOL - A PROSPECTUS

PUBLISHED BY CASSELL & CO MINT IN D/W £9.95

GREYFRIARS FOR GROWN UPS BY LAWRENCE

SUTTON V.G. COPY IN D/W £12.00

ANTHONY BUCKERIDGE'S 'JENNINGS' BOOKS

OF THE 1950'S & 1960'S

ALL ARE ORIGINAL COLLINS EDITIONS FROM THIS

PERIOD IN V.G. CONDITION WITH THOSE SUPER DUST

JACKETS BY MAYS AND ARE PRICED AT £6.95 EACH

JENNINGS GOES TO SCHOOL (Collins)

JENNINGS FOLLOWS A CLUE (Collins)

JENNINGS' LITTLE HUT (Collins)

JENNINGS AND DARBSHIRE (Collins)

JENNINGS' DIARY (Collins)

ACCORDING TO JENNINGS (Collins)

OUR FRIEND JENNINGS (Collins)

THANKS TO JENNINGS (Collins)

TAKE JENNINGS (Collins)

JENNINGS, AS USUAL (Collins)

THE TROUBLE WITH JENNINGS (Collins)

JUST LIKE JENNINGS (Collins)

LEAVE IT TO JENNINGS (Collins)

JENNINGS OF COURSE! (Collins)

GREYFRIARS BOOK CLUB

SPECIAL OFFER FOR CHRISTMAS

ALL THE FOLLOWING VOLUMES INCLUDED

VOLES:

14,17,19,20,21,22,24,25,26,28,30,31,32,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,4

1,42,43,44,45,46,47,48,49,50,51,53,54,55,56,57,59,60

3 vols for £36.00 + postage £5.65

6 vols for £66.00 + postage £6.25

10 vols for £98.00 + postage £9.00

20 vols for £179.00 + postage £10.00

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. 600

DECEMBER 1996

Price £1.20



DISTINGUISHED CONTRIBUTORS

During its 50 year run the C.D. has attracted a wide range of authors, and we can reflect with pride that Frank Richards, Richmal Crompton and P.G. Wodehouse have been amongst our contributors. We are delighted too that in this issue, Anthony Buckeridge, another immensely popular author, has written for the C.D. He has, of course, almost single-handedly carried the boy's boarding-school story forward from the early 1950s to the 1990s

with the exuberant adventures of his schoolboy hero Jennings, who appeals to young - and not so young - readers from many different countries and backgrounds. His article appears on page 5 and we are grateful for his kind words about the C.D.

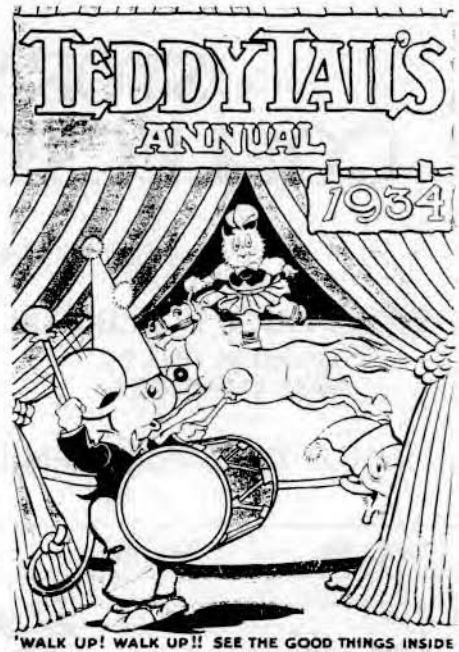
Anthony has for some years been Vice President of the Northern O.B.B.C. and it was at the October Club meeting that he informed me of the passing of David Davis earlier this year. Surprisingly, until then I had been unaware of this sad news. As so many C.D. readers will have fond memories of BBC Children's Hour and 'David', I have asked Brian Doyle to provide an obituary tribute to that celebrated broadcaster for this month's C.D.

YOUR LETTERS

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking all readers who have written enthusiastically to me about our enlarged November Golden Jubilee number. Your support and encouragement, as always, are much appreciated.

OUR ANNUAL

As promised, I am trailing further items from the Annual's attractive contents. Des O'Leary has vividly described the life and times of a D.C. Thomson hero in an article on Matt Braddock, while Nandu Thalange and Donald V. Campbell deal with a far from heroic figure in an illuminating article on Ponsonby the Psychopath! Tony Glynn introduces us to an engaging author who deserves a great deal more attention than she generally receives, Bill Lofts shares his memories of the early C.D. Annuals and Ian Bennett writes about the republishing of the Captain Justice Saga. And there is still more! If you have not ordered your copy of the Annual there is still time: the cost is £10 for U.K. Residents and £11.50 for overseas readers (postage and packing are included in each case).



S.P.C.D. - THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS

The demand for our Golden Jubilee book, published by the Museum Press, has been so great that the initial stock is now completely sold out. However, the book is being reprinted, and any outstanding orders should soon be filled. This book can be ordered from me at £20.00, for U.K. and £21.00 overseas (postage and packing included).

SEASONS GREETINGS

It only remains for me to say that I hope you will all enjoy this Christmas number of the C.D. As ever, this is a time when I like to convey warm thanks to our contributors, our printers and the C.D.'s loyal and ever-supportive readers.

I wish you all a right Merry Christmas and a Happy, Peaceful and Prosperous New Year.

MARY CADOGAN

I GUESS I'LL RECOMMEND
THE MAGNET COMPANION
TO ALL YOUSE GUYS!

**THE COMPLETE
MAGNET
COMPANION 1996**

is now on sale! It lists all 1,683 MAGNET stories in chronological order and alphabetically. It's quite new: totally revised and reset. Details of writers (including Hamilton!); maps, plans and a Who's Who! 96pp A5, it costs £9.00 inc. post (overseas £10.00) Send to:
QUATERMAIN PUBLICATIONS (A), 48 KINGS DRIVE
SURBITON, SURREY, KT5 8NQ

CONFESSIONS OF A NON-COLLECTOR

By Anthony Buckeridge

First, let me admit that I have never been a serious collector. In my schooldays, of course, I collected everything - stamps, conkers, match-box labels, the lot. These were ephemeral hobbies soon to be abandoned: so far as books were concerned I read books, I bought books, I gave books away, I borrowed books and over the years I amassed a sizeable library without deliberately doing anything about it: and though this sounds like sacrilege to a collector, when the dust-jackets became dog-eared, I threw them away, first editions or not.

I had been earning my living as a writer for some years before I realised that people not only collected children's books (preferably first editions with tidy dust-jackets) but actually paid good money for them - and that went for manuscripts too.

Light dawned when I was asked to donate a few pages of manuscript to an auction in aid of medical relief to Nicaragua. I had just finished writing a new JENNINGS book and I handed over the whole hand-written script of about three hundred pages, plus notes, for auction.

It was so untidy, and in parts almost illegible that I had been about to consign this historic piece of writing to the dustbin, which is what I had always done in the past as soon as my latest book had passed the proof-reading stage.

To my astonishment the manuscript, instead of being auctioned, was sold to the British Library for what I considered to be a very large sum. Too late I realised that for twenty years or so I had been waste-paper basketing material which would have enabled me, to some extent, to butter my bread and pay the gas bill. Though late in the day, I acted upon this surprising information and took note of the book-collecting scene. I consulted Mary Cadogan's essential Collectors' Digest which has ever since become required reading. I learned, too, from Joseph Connolly's Children's Modern First Editions and from David Schutte's indispensable catalogues.

So it is with profound gratitude that I salute Mary's Collectors' Digest. All praise for its last fifty years, and all good wishes for the next fifty.



THRILLS BY INSTALMENTS

By J.E.M.

When we go back to our copies of the Union Jack and Detective Weekly how often do we dip into the serial stories they carried? Very rarely, I fancy, maybe because they did not feature the great detective himself. Yet those long-running tales were no doubt as eagerly followed in their day as the old cliff-hanging film serials of Pearl White fame.

UK offerings on the instalment plan included classic adventure tales like Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, Sabatini's *Captain Blood* and Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's *Dead Man's Rock*. In the early days, school stories were also serialised, E.S. Brooks himself contributing with *Curtis of the Fifth* and *The Worst House at St. Wolstan's*. Later years were dominated by crime with favoured yarns by Edgar Wallace, Francis Beeding, Gerard Fairlie and Margery Allingham (introducing her top-drawer 'tec, Mr. Champion), while from America came two magnificent serials by the great Frank L. Packard, creator of gentleman cracksman, Jimmy Dale. In the DW, Leslie Charteris popped up with one of his earlier tales, *The White Rider*, a non-Saint story that also proved very popular.

What I want to take a special look at here, though, is a serial which appeared seventy-two years ago and, for a number of reasons, was probably unique. Blakians have always noted that our detective was well up-to-date with the latest science and technology. Nearly a century ago, he was swiftly on the scene of early cinema and aeronautics and even turned up in a story predicting television, many years before it became a reality. I have to say, however, that few Blakian adventures were more original or uncannily prophetic, than *The Atom Smasher*, a non-Blake story from America by L.H. Robbins, published in the UK in 1924 (note the date).

As far as I can discover, this was the only H.G. Wells-type futuristic story ever to be serialised in the UK and is of compelling interest because of the very remarkable prophesies it makes. It is set in the year 1940 when, and I quote from the preamble, "America is in the grip of two gigantic forces." One of these is terrorism, the other "the newly discovered power of the Atom - the result of years of research, in which the scientists of our own day are even now engaged."

1940 is predicted to be a period of great social strife and unrest, during which a group possessing an Atomic Gun (!) offers to sell the invention to bankers and industrialists to use against "mobs and rioters". One shrewd banker opposes such a purchase, pointing out that this might play into the hands of the terrorists and, at worst, could lead to total chaos.

The large scale terrorism referred to in the story is familiar enough today (it has even reached America) but did not exist anywhere in 1924. The year 1940 did, of course, see the terrorism of Nazism and war. Atomic violence, forecast for that particular year by The Atom Smasher, came just five years later with the first A-bomb. Not a bad bit of prophecy, when you come to think about it.

I have had access, alas, to only one instalment of Robbins' story but there is enough material in this episode, along with the usual summary of what has gone before, to indicate the general theme. One would only like to know how it all ended. The little I have read certainly had enough pace and incident to satisfy any reader. Here was clearly a thriller of the first order.

In the words of the UJ Editor himself, *The Atom Smasher* was "an unusual tale" - perhaps the most extraordinary ever to have appeared in a Blakian story-paper. Very probably it had first been published in book form. If so, is there anyone who can tell us anything about the first appearance of L.H. Robbins' strange, exciting and unforgettable story?

FOOTNOTE: As we have seen at least three serials to appear in *The Union Jack* were American stories, or at any rate were by American authors (Frank L. Packard and L.H. Robbins). All these tales appeared in the UJ's last decade. *Detective Weekly* also came up later with a short American serial (strictly a two-parter), Shouts of Silence by David R. Solomon.

It is interesting that American fiction was being syndicated in Blakian periodicals, and no doubt it made good business sense to The Amalgamated Press. It certainly brought us some pretty exciting fiction.

YVONNE - IN ANOTHER LIGHT?

From Donald V Campbell

How much I enjoyed the October CD cover ("Yvonne in her native element.") It raises a question about the old paper illustrators and their women. However hard they tried illustrators were, seemingly, incapable of an injudicious line when it came to portraying young girls and young women. Yvonne nicely points up the notion.

Not having read the G.H. Teed story I am in no position to comment on the accuracy of Val Reading's drawing compared with the story's content but on that question I will make the following observation:

The snippet from J.K. Melling in the same issue on ONE Holiday Annual (1921), and the inaccuracies perpetrated therein, points up the fact that it is easy to snipe from afar. What all the paper writers and artists suffered from was DEADLINES. Hardly surprising if one artist in one publication made one or two errors.

But this is not my main thrust. Yvonne is wonderfully portrayed by Reading and has the charm and vivacity that so epitomised many girls as illustrated in the papers. Yvonne though does pose a few irreverent questions:

That whip! Is it to beat the dogs with? Is it to fend off the male of the species behind her? Is it to flog natives with?

Whatever the whip is for it seems that this young girl - "Riding astride in a dress, sir!" - is going a bit too far for 1913. Or are Val Reading and G.H. Teed getting to the "cutting edge" of fiction as we would say today?

The artist has pictured a pretty girl on horseback and Tinker is subsequently astonished when he sees her as a "beautiful woman" and more formally dressed. The woman looks the same - is it the clothes and the coiffure that so blind Tinker?

Can Reg Hardinge please supply us with a picture of Yvonne disguised as "a ragged, slim, red-headed boy"?



KIDDIE WIX - THE ACE OF TECS.

By Bill Lofts

Kiddie Wix had started out in No.1 of the boys' paper Surprise 1932, in an orphanage where she had been since an early age. This was a grim looking place run by a tyrant of a mistress, Mrs. Boomer, who found fault with everything the girls did. Kiddie had been placed in charge of the younger girls, who all adored her. Mrs Boomer was extremely jealous of Kiddie's high popularity. Kiddie was a pretty girl with a knack of keeping the others in order. This was noticed by Lady Harlow of the school Governors, who visited there.

After some adventures that were of great service not only to Starke House Orphanage but to Lady Harlow, Kiddie reached the age of 18 and so had to leave.

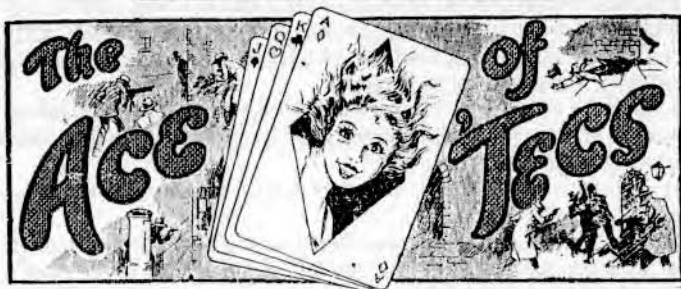
Being extremely intelligent she obtained the post of assistant to Barrington Clive, a famous detective who ran an agency in London. She became so successful that her fame soon outstripped that of Clive, and she was known to almost every policeman in the West End of London.

Freed from the old orphanage's drab uniform she had blossomed into English beauty, with a mop of golden hair, deep blue eyes, and a perfect figure. She could drive a racing car, and even pilot a plane. Completely fearless against law-breakers, she brought many a criminal to justice.

The stories appeared in the first 30 issues and finished on September 24th 1932.

THE SURPRISE is Everybody's Favourite No. 1

Ment Kiddie Wix, the pretty little flapper who proved the greatest SURPRISE of all! Kiddie Wix was a little orphan without relations or friends to help her—so she helped herself! Don't miss this ripping long complete yarn of the lonely little lady who became THE ACE OF 'TECS.



CATALOGUES

REGULARLY ISSUED

<p style="text-align: center;">BRITISH COMICS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">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.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SHERLOCK HOLMES & CONAN DOYLE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FROM POCKET MONEY PRICES TO SCARCE FIRST EDITIONS.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">LARGE CATALOGUE OF RELATED ITEMS INCLUDING : BOOKS, MAGAZINES, COMICS, CERAMICS, POSTCARDS, PHOTOS, AUTOGRAPHS, RECORDS, ETC.</p>
---	--

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

Please indicate clearly which catalogue is required.

For Sale: Collector's Digests: Nos.97-120, 133-300, 313-372, 385-405, 493-552, (Vols. 9,10, 12-25, 27-31, 33, 34, 42-46) plus another 45 assorted issues from Vols6-8, 11, 26, 32 and 41. Most nice condition. The lot for only £44, postage paid. Tel: 0181 550 0323 evenings or write to Alan Coates, 12 Inglehurst Gardens, Redbridge, Essex. IG4 5HD.



THE UNINVITED GUEST

By Ted Baldock

'This night he makes a supper, and a great one.'

Shakespeare. King Henry VIII



Breakfast time at Bunter Villa.

Except for the champing of busy jaws, silence reigns. Mr. Samuel Bunter ensconced, with his third cup of tea behind the 'Times' (which bore the date December 23rd) thereby explaining the presence of the Bunter family in its entirety.

Sammy and Bessie were doing yeoman service in the bacon and egg line and Mr. Bunter's intake of sustenance to see him through to lunchtime in the city was by no means small.

Large feathery flakes of snow were falling on the Bunter residence, covering the small garden with a mantle of white. The limitless parklands surrounding Bunter Court were presumably also acquiring a mantle of snow. "Another cup of tea William my dear?" Mrs Bunter at her post behind the teapot smiled upon her favourite son. "Er, what was that Mater?" Billy Bunter's fat visage and manner suggested pre-occupation. The Owl's mind was dwelling upon important issues. He had a problem. Quite simply where, or rather, upon whom was he to insinuate himself for Christmas.

Harry Wharton had promised to be quite beastly should he turn up at Wharton Lodge, but was not this the season of good will to all men - which would - or should - include William George Bunter. Thus reasoned the fat Owl.

But first things first. Mr. Samuel Bunter's permission must be sought. "I say, Pater," Billy began "Wharton and his friends are spending Christmas at Wharton Lodge and they are pressing me, most insistently, to go along. Christmas would not be the same without you old chap, Harry's very words - May I Pater?"

Veracity and Billy Bunter had long been strangers - they were scarcely on nodding terms. Thus these revelations were delivered without turning a hair. These remarks were not entirely unacceptable to the head of the Bunter clan.

Mr. Bunter emerged from behind his 'Times' and gazed at his eldest son over his spectacles. Although Bunter was quite unaware of the fact Bunter senior was assessing and calculating on a plus and minus basis the gains which might accrue should Billy spend Christmas at Wharton Lodge, and the almost certain losses in pecuniary terms should he stay at home.

Mr. Bunter, being a 'city' gentleman and a very astute member of that select fraternity, was an expert calculator: there was none better than he swiftly to spot the chances of profit and loss. Without his eldest 'hopeful' over Christmas the family expenses, although still much too high, would be substantially reduced. The large saving in expenditure on provender alone would be well worthwhile. He would still have Bessie and Sammy with whom to contend: here he sighed.

Next day saw Billy Bunter seated in the corner of an unheated third class compartment of the train en route for Canterbury where he would change to a possibly colder local train which after considerable wanderings over the Kentish countryside would hopefully arrive at the little station of Wharton Magna. Meanwhile he gazed out upon the snow bound countryside and wondered a little apprehensively about the reception he might receive at Wharton Lodge. Bunter was an expert traveller and believed in being free of any luggage encumbrances. His happy habit was to rely largely upon his hosts to supply any small items he might require: a habit, be it said, that did not appeal at all to those unfortunate members of his acquaintance.

Darkness was closing over the countryside, and in the rising wind the falling snow was drifting and hiding in its folds all familiar landmarks. It was a fireside, armchair, carpet-slipper sort of night, and here was Bunter sitting in a chilly third class compartment, stumbling slowly through a bleak snowbound countryside. But all things have eventual termination, and Bunter was nearing his journey's end.

His reception at Wharton Lodge was, if not exactly glacial, certainly lacking in Christmas spirit. This did not worry the Owl unduly, his skin being of sufficient thickness to cope with such pinpricks. Colonel Wharton glared and snorted. Wells the butler raised his chin and sniffed. John, the footman, audibly clicked his tongue. But - what matter, Bunter had once more worked the oracle. Only Harry's Aunt Amy, who always reminded Bunter of his own Mater, welcomed him with any cordiality from the freezing night, for which he was duly grateful. She at any rate, like Mrs Bunter understood a chap. Snorts and grunts worried the fat Owl not at all. "Kick the fat ass," grunted Johnny Bull. "Bump him!" said Frank Nugent. Harry Wharton compressed his lips and remained silent, although the ever-genial Bob Cherry clapped Bunter on his podgy back. "Come in old fellow, let me take your coat."

The wind was wailing mournfully in the chimneys as the cheery company gathered round the fire, enjoying a final warm before dispersing to their respective bedrooms. Billy Bunter had spent, in his own view, a fruitful day. He had successfully attached himself to the gathering at Wharton Lodge, and tomorrow - well, that was another day! One thing he was assured of, there would be ample supplies of 'tuck' and that old ass Wells could look as grim as he liked - what matter.

"Will the jolly old ghost put in an appearance over Christmas sir?" said Bob Cherry addressing Colonel Wharton. There was a glimmer in the Colonel's eye as he glanced at Bunter.

"It is very likely," he rumbled. "It was Dickens, I believe, who said that most spectres are nothing more than undigested cheese, but, I am not sure".

Harry Wharton, being cognisant of his uncle's little characteristics, grinned and closed one eye at Bob.

There were blackened oak beams, ancient panels and floors which creaked along dim old passages where doors were prone to open slowly apparently of their own volition. If these were the stuff of haunting, then Wharton Lodge was an ideal groaning and chain-rattling area for the most fastidious of ghosts.

Wharton Lodge may have been haunted. Spectres may have been quite active that night. They may have drifted along the passages and stairways adjacent to Bunter's bed-chamber. They may have rattled their chains handsomely but if so, it had no effect whatsoever upon the fat Owl. He was sleeping the sleep of the 'well filled' and Morpheus had him firmly in his embrace.

Lying on his back with his mouth wide open he was emitting sounds in a range of keys which could have emanated from a fair-sized zoological garden at feeding time.

Not so Wells. The portly butler slept fitfully that night, his mind being fully occupied in pondering whether the food supplies would be sufficient to last over the holiday period now that one extra guest - a fat uninvited guest - had arrived.

The following morning Bunter was very surprised when proceeding to the breakfast room he was confronted by Wells who, despite his restless night, was actually smiling. To his further amazement the butler addressed him in fruity and friendly tones. "Good morning Master Bunter, a Merry Christmas sir!" Bunter was speechless for a moment. Here was a new Wells indeed. "I say Wells, er, I say - thank you." Wells billowed on his way.

Another surprise awaited Bunter. Entering the breakfast room John the footman stepped up and with his features wreathed in a cheery grin said "Merry Christmas, Master

Bunter." A like greeting welcomed him from the assembled company at the table. Bunter was conscious of a strange warm feeling swelling up in the region of his fat breast. A feeling he was quite unable to translate into speech. All he managed to stammer was "I say you fellows - I say - a Merry Christmas, you know."

Surely the true spirit of Christmas was abroad that morning at Wharton Lodge.

A MUCH-LOVED PIONEER OF BBC RADIO'S "CHILDREN'S HOUR" PASSES

It was perhaps somewhat remiss of the 'SPCD' not to notice the sad passing, at the age of 87, on April 29th last, of David Davis who, for nearly 30 years, was one of the best-known - and indeed, best-loved - voices of the BBC radio programme 'Children's Hour'. But, better late than never.....

I grew up with his voice when, as a child and schoolboy during the days of World War Two, I listened avidly to all those wonderful plays, serials and stories on 'Children's Hour' during the 1940s and beyond. Indeed, I - like many others - listened to many of the programme's productions well into adulthood and wasn't ashamed to admit it. 'Children's Hour', like many other BBC Radio programmes, was responsible for introducing me to a host of books, plays and people, that contributed to both my education and my reading habit.

And to me, and to so many other listeners, 'David' (as he was known on radio) was the possessor of the perfect voice. Clear and well-spoken without being too 'posh', it summed up the ideal friend, brother, father or uncle, and could summon up thoughts of strawberries-and-cream and cricket at Lord's in the Summer, and hot tea and toasted crumpets in front of a blazing coal-fire in Winter. He told a story, or narrated a play, just as it should be told, with exactly the right amount of expression and characterisation and warmth and friendliness, and somehow you wanted him to go on and on and on.....

Mary Cadogan, our esteemed editor, and I had the pleasure of meeting David Davis at the 80th birthday party, Anthony Buckeridge's publishers, Macmillan's, threw for him 4½ years ago and he, like Buckeridge himself, was as nice and charming and friendly as we could have wished. He was then 84, but seemed as lively and chatty as a man some 20 years younger. I told him that my first memory of hearing him on 'Children's Hour' was his serial reading of 'The Wind in the Willows'. He sighed reminiscently and murmured "Oh yes, yes, that was one of my own favourites too. But, you know, there wasn't a story I didn't enjoy telling - I tried to choose them all so carefully...."

David Davis was born in Malvern in 1908 and educated at Bishop's Stortford School, and Queen's College, Oxford University. He became a schoolmaster in 1931, a job he did for three years, before joining the BBC Radio's 'Children's Hour' in 1935 as an accompanist (he was an accomplished pianist). His colleagues soon realised that he had a superb speaking voice and a way with words and books and plays, and before long he was broadcasting, choosing incidental music for plays, and then producing. The first story he ever read on radio was Anna Sewell's 'Black Beauty' in 22 instalments in 1936. It was extremely popular and virtually made him a 'household voice'. His colleagues on 'Children's Hour' included the famous Derek McCulloch ('Uncle Mac') and May E. Jenkin ('Elizabeth'); there was also a fellow producer named Barbara Sleigh, whom he was to marry and who became a well-known children's author, probably best-known for her books about 'Carbonel', the magical cat.

After war service in the Royal Navy (when he was shipwrecked and wounded), he returned, with some relief, no doubt, to the calmer waters of the BBC's 'Children's Hour', where he produced and adapted and narrated hundreds of plays and serials, and told

stories, eventually becoming Head of 'Children's Hour' in 1953, a post he held to the end, in 1964, when BBC chiefs decided cruelly to 'kill off' the much-loved programme due, they said, to falling listener figures and for failing to combat the rival children's television networks. The public, young and old, were upset and furious and wrote in their thousands to say so. Petitions were submitted. Questions were actually asked in Parliament. Controversy raged in the Press. All to no avail. The final 'Children's Hour' was broadcast on Good Friday, 1964, when David read Oscar Wilde's fairy story 'The Selfish Giant', an allegory telling of defeat at the hands of a greater power. The irony was probably lost on the ignorant and short-sighted BBC tycoons of the time.

I mentioned all this to David when I met him. "They didn't realise what they were doing," he sighed and looked sad. "It was a major tragedy in my life." He never, he said, forgave them. Neither did an army of disappointed and angry listeners. It was something of a tragedy in their lives too.

Brian Doyle

AN UNUSUAL CHRISTMAS

By Roger M. Jenkins

In the first decade of the Gem and the Magnet, Charles Hamilton had a distinct partiality for gathering together groups of juniors from various schools to spend a holiday under one roof, almost invariably Eastwood House. This type of story at D'Arcy's home could be featured in the Magnet more often than in the Gem. For instance, in Magnet 374, Eastwood House had juniors from St. Jim's, Greyfriars, and Highcliffe staying there, as well as Coker, Potter, and Green, whilst girls from Cliff House arrived on a day visit to provide company for Cousin Ethel. Eastwood House must have been an enormous mansion to have had available so many guest bedrooms, and it was about as cosy and intimate as the concourse in a grand hotel. Furthermore, in such a huge company, only few had a chance to speak at all.

It may well be that readers of the time were less critical, and found these gatherings fascinating, just as a Samways' Magnet story in which juniors from various schools competed in a sports contest might have settled the ever-absorbing question whether Tom Merry could out-box Bob Cherry.

It is pleasing to record that, in one instance at least, the views of readers and critics coincided, and that occurred in No.810 of the weekly Boys' Friend Library. It was stated to have been written by Owen Conquest in collaboration with those famous authors Frank Richards and Martin Clifford, and this seems to have been the only occasion when all three pseudonyms came together. A reprint in No., 284 of the Schoolboys' Own Library entitled "Jimmy Silver's Christmas Party" is more readily available.

Naturally enough, the story began at Rookwood on the day the school broke up for the Christmas holiday. Jimmy Silver had an Uncle John, a ne'er-do-well who had redeemed himself by joining the army, this being a wartime story. The Famous Four

No. 284.—THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY.

JIMMY SILVER'S CHRISTMAS PARTY!

by OWEN CONQUEST



The shadow of a secret hangs over the old Priory that is JIMMY SILVER'S home—a secret which remains undiscovered until Jimmy entertains his chums of Rookwood, Greyfriars, and St. Jim's to a midnight ghost hunt!

learned at Latham Barracks that Private Silver was accused of theft and had deserted. This made a gloomy start for Christmas at the Priory.

The venue then switched to Wayland, where seven St. Jim's juniors were going to catch the express to Lexham, but of course they missed it because of Gussy and his topper, and they arrived at the Priory at midnight to see a mysterious light in the library. Gussy decided to spend the night in that room in order to keep watch, and he did in fact have quite a surprise as a result.

Finally, the story moved to Wharton Lodge. Greyfriars must have broken up earlier than the other two schools, because the Famous Five were to spend the rest of the holiday at the Priory. On the train they encountered a drunken belligerent man, whom they handed over to the police, and he turned out to be a thief.

The success of this story relied not on a huge gathering of juniors in one place, but on a series of events on the various journeys, each of which contributed part of the solution to the mystery. What with ice-skating and secret passages, to say nothing of the important role played by Cousin Phyllis, there was certainly a festive atmosphere. For once, Charles Hamilton used an accumulation of characters to good effect. The readers of the time must have found it a thrilling and heart-warming Christmas story, written by three different authors whose styles harmonised so well together.

PERENNIAL FAVOURITES

By Mary Cadogan

Lewis Carroll's great heroine achieved immediate popularity when the first edition of ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND was published some 130 years ago and she has remained a front-runner ever since.

While retaining the traditional Lewis Carroll texts and John Tenniel illustrations, the original publishers, Macmillan, have now produced some extremely attractive 'new' Alice books.

They have reprinted WONDERLAND and THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS (at £12.99 each) with all the Tenniel pictures in glowing colour. As long ago as 1911, for both these books, Macmillan commissioned Harry Theaker to colour 8 of Tenniel's world-famous black and white illustrations. It was he who established the exact shade of Alice's fair hair and the soft blue of her dress, presumably with the approval of Tenniel, as the Theaker enhancements were made three years before Tenniel died. Now Diz Wallis has coloured all the remaining WONDERLAND and LOOKING GLASS pictures in the style of Theaker to allow the creation of the first full-length, full-colour editions of the Carroll/Tenniel Alice books. These are treasures indeed - ideal Christmas presents for the whole family.

From the same range of coloured vignettes, Macmillan have brought out (at £4.99) a 1997 Alice Diary (far too beautiful to write in!) and a large and luscious wall calendar that has a different Tenniel/Theaker picture for each month (£5.99).

Also, for serious Alice buffs and/or children's festive gatherings, these ever enterprising publishers have created the ALICE IN WONDERLAND PARTY BOOK with snippets from the stories and, arising from these, all sorts of party and games ideas from



Alice, dormouse, Mad Hatter and March Hare press-out party masks to making 'curiouser Cocktail sticks' and playing 'Mad Croquet'. Fun for all at £4.99.



Warne have published THE COMPLETE BOOK OF THE FLOWER FAIRIES (£17.99) which is a large and delightful collection of all Cecily Mary Barker's Flower Fairy poems and pictures, plus OLD RHYMES FOR OLD TIME and the story THE FAIRY NECKLACES, both including her very appealing pictures. This is another book to cherish for yourselves and for future generations of the family.



At Christmas, I always like to read a Magnet story, so I opened a volume and flicked through the pages, until I came to a picture of guests seated around the festive board at Wharton Lodge. I had read so often of the wonderful Christmasses at the Lodge and of the hospitality and generosity of Colonel Wharton and Miss Amy. I looked down at the picture, everyone seemed to be having such a lovely time.

Suddenly I felt a rather queer sensation, the room appeared to be swaying a little: it was rather warm and perhaps I had overdone it a little with the Christmas fare at tea time. I looked again at the picture and it seemed to be getting bigger, somehow I just couldn't take my eyes off it, it seemed to be pulling me.

All at once I felt very cold; I was dressed in a thick overcoat and boots and found myself standing outside a large house, singing carols with a group of people. The snow was crisp upon the ground and the house was ablaze with lights. We sang a few more carols and then the great door was opened by a rather pompous looking gentleman, whom I took to be the butler. He bowed stiffly and informed us that the Colonel would be honoured if we would step inside to partake of some refreshment.

I was so pleased to get inside, out of the cold, and we were greeted by a tall, very distinguished looking military gentleman, who introduced himself as Colonel Wharton. Behind him came a sweet little old lady whom he introduced as his sister, Miss Amy.

The great hall had a welcoming log fire blazing away in the hearth, and there were wonderful Christmas decorations everywhere. In a corner stood an enormous tree laden with fairy lights and all around it were large piles of gifts wrapped in beautifully decorated

paper and tied up with glittering string, to which were attached little gift tags, bearing different names.

In the middle of the room a large table was piled high with all sorts of mouth-watering fare, including many seasonal delicacies, and also bowls of punch and mountains of fresh fruit and chocolates. Miss Amy was very hospitable, inviting us to eat our fill and we needed no second bidding.

The mansion seemed to be full of young people, both girls and boys: sounds of merry laughter and happy voices could be heard everywhere. Five boys came along and Colonel Wharton introduced one of them as his nephew, Harry. He was quite tall and handsome, indeed he looked the sort of boy who would make a great success of his life.

The boy next to him was fair and rather delicate looking. His name was Franky and I gathered that these two were good friends. The third member of the gang was a fellow with fair curly hair called Bob. I liked him straight away, he was very jolly and had a handshake like a grip of iron, but seemed extremely kind and friendly.

The next boy in the group, of a rather stocky build, was called Johnny. He seemed to be grumbling about something and kept saying "I told you so", over and over again, until at last even sunny-faced Bob got tired of it. "Put a sock in it, Johnny old man", he said in a rather loud voice. "We don't want to have to bump you at Christmas time". Johnny stopped it, but still kept muttering under his breath.

The fifth member of the party was a very handsome youth with a dusky complexion; the Colonel told us that he was an Indian Prince. His name, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, was rather a mouthful. His pals, however, called him Inky, which he didn't seem to mind at all. (I couldn't help wondering what the race relations board would make of it!) Hurree Singh's English was rather strange, he informed us very politely that "the pleasurefulness of our esteemed company was terrific".

Then another boy came in; he was wearing glasses, and had a thin face and a long nose. The others called him Fishy. He spoke with a nasal drawl and I really thought that he was rather rude as he seemed to find fault with everything and kept saying how much bigger and better everything was on the other side of the pond - but the only pond that I could think of at that moment was the one we had passed in the village. Then somebody mentioned that Fishy was an American and as he couldn't go home for Christmas, he had been invited here, to Wharton Lodge. I thought it very ungracious of him to brag about the wonders of the United States whilst he was a guest at such a fine house in Britain.

Then two other boys entered the hall. One, called Smithy, was quite tall. Somehow I couldn't take to him very much: he had rather a hard expression on his face and looked arrogant and self-opinionated, not the sort of boy who would suffer fools gladly. I felt very uncomfortable and quite ill at ease in his presence.

Smithy was accompanied by another fellow whom he called Reddy. It was obvious that they were the best of chums, but what a contrast! I really took to Reddy at once, he had a kind, honest open face and looked as if he had spent a large part of his life out of doors. We were told that his father was a sailor, which could explain this likeable lad's rugged, healthy complexion.

An extremely fat fellow was sitting at the table. We were all introduced to this boy who was named Bunter, but he had no time for any of us and, when spoken to, replied only with a series of grunts, as he was very busy eating. We all gazed at him in amazement. I had certainly never seen anyone eat as much as this before, I really feared that he was going to burst as he seemed to have great difficulty in breathing, and his face was terribly sticky and shiny. His clothes were so tight that I wondered how they were going to stand the strain!

Then the great door opened to admit a tall, angular, rather severe looking gentleman. Colonel Wharton stepped forward to greet him, "My dear Quelch, I'm, so pleased that you

are able to join us for Christmas", he exclaimed. We were told that this new arrival was one of the form masters at a school called Greyfriars.

All of a sudden, something seemed to ring a bell in my mind, I felt sure that I had heard that name before. Wasn't Greyfriars the name of that boys' school, fairly near the school which I had once attended. Suddenly I felt as if these boys' faces were familiar, as if I had seen them before, a very long time ago.

Harry Wharton and his chums rushed forward to greet their form master; "Welcome Sir and a very Happy Christmas", said Harry, and indeed these boys were genuinely pleased to see him. The severe expression on Mr. Quelch's crusty countenance softened as he looked at the five youths. "What can we get you, Sir", said Bob, "The plum cake is jolly good". Mr. Quelch smiled, but declined the offer. At fifty-plus he was probably past the stage in life when cakes and buns held any appeal.

The fat boy was blissfully oblivious of his form master's presence, being far too occupied in cramming food-stuffs into his capacious mouth. It was Christmas, and Schoolmasters were now distant memories, not to be even remotely thought of until it was time to go into form room again at some far off date in the future.

The tall gentleman stood gazing down at the podgy lad, who remained totally unaware that those gimlet eyes were watching every mouthful that passed between his plump lips. Mr Quelch laid a hand on his shoulder. "Well Bunter", he said, "I trust that you are having an enjoyable Christmas". Bunter fairly bounded out of his chair and shouted "Yow, wow, gerroff, lemee go, beast!". When, turning around, he saw his form master, his face fell and his little round eyes almost popped out of his head, "Oh crikey", said Bunter. "Sorry sir, I didn't see you there. I wasn't calling you a beast, Sir, I really wasn't, I thought that it was another beast, I mean, oh lor, whooch, gurgle, grooh." It seemed as if he was either having an apoplectic fit or almost choking; perhaps one of those chocolates had gone down the wrong way, Bunter's face turned quite a sickly colour and Mr Quelch looked slightly alarmed.

Then I heard a peculiar noise coming from one of the other rooms and, when I stepped inside the door, I saw a smartly dressed youth, fast asleep on a sofa and snoring. Then Harry and his chums rushed in. "Hey there, Maully old man!" said Harry, "Shake a leg, you lazy old slacker, you haven't come here to sleep, you can do that in your study at school". However, the smartly dressed fellow kept snoring: the five boys then shook him and he awoke with a start. "Oh dear, go away you fellows, let a chap sleep in peace", said Maully. "You're wanted on the dance floor, old top", said Bob, "Babs, Clara and the others are asking about you". "Aw, bagad, it's too much fag, what?" said Maully, trying to suppress a large yawn. The lads were having none of it: "If you don't shift in two minutes you're asking for a bumping, old man", said Harry, but Maully just kept on yawning.

Suddenly five pairs of hands were laid on that elegant youth who smote the floor with a terrible bang, but he was very good natured about it all. He picked himself up, and, with a reluctant sigh, allowed himself to be led into another room, from whence came the sounds of music and laughter.

I followed the boys into this room where lots of young people were dancing. Several girls were present and when I looked at their faces something clicked in my mind. Surely I knew these girls? They looked just like the chums with whom I had shared my schooldays, all those years ago. Yes, of course, it was all coming back to me now! My dear old school was Cliff House and these girls had been my very good friends. They were all here, Majorie, Barbara, Clara, Jemima and a very plump girl whom I remembered as Bessie. Eagerly I rushed forward to introduce myself, but though they were all very friendly and nice, I felt a terrible sense of disappointment that they did not really

remember me, although they were much too polite to say so. The passing years had dealt very kindly with them. They were all just as I remembered them from all that time ago.

Everyone seemed to be dancing, with the exception of Bessie. She looked rather lonely and forlorn, and I felt sorry for her, it was not very pleasant being a wallflower. Bob was dancing with Marjorie and they seemed a lovely couple - until I noticed that he seemed to be stepping on her feet quite a lot. His own were on the large side and he just couldn't get them to go the way he wanted! He kept apologising to Marjorie, and she kept on saying that it didn't matter: she was much too nice to hurt anybody's feelings, but she did look just a little relieved when the dance ended.

I then saw Bob looking across at Bessie and guessed that he was also feeling sorry for her, sitting on her own... He walked over and very kindly asked her to dance.

Unfortunately, however, Bob's feet did not behave any better when he was dancing with Bessie than they had done with Marjorie, and after a minute or two there came a loud yell of anguish: "Ow, ow, I'm crippled for life, you clumsy ox, Bob Cherry!" And there was Bessie hopping about on one leg and holding her other foot. Poor old Bob blushed to the roots of his hair and hurriedly left the room. I really thought it was mean of Bessie to make such a fuss when, after all, Bob was only trying to be kind. She kept on howling and Clara, with a brow like thunder, crossed over to where she was prancing around.

Whispering to Bessie Clara tried to drag her away, but failed. It was obvious that the plump one's unladylike behaviour was causing Clara some embarrassment, as this show of bad manners reflected badly on the good name of Cliff House.

Bessie, however, refused to budge, now being the centre of attention and enjoying every minute. Bessie could be a sticker, and it was clear that drastic measures were called for. Clara proceeded to take Bessie's fat ear between finger and thumb and, as the ear was firmly attached to Bessie, wherever it went, Bessie had to follow, protesting loudly at the top of her voice. "Yow, wow, stoppit, you just wait, Clara Trevlyn, you spiteful cat!" However, Clara took no notice and her plump chum, purple with wrath, was firmly led back to her seat. I smiled to myself. All this was typical of Bessie who was exactly the same as I remembered her.

I gazed longingly at the merry throng. They were all enjoying themselves so much - how I would love to have joined them to dance the night away, but of course I was not really dressed for that. I was still wearing my thick winter boots and, in any case, these days I hardly think that my arthritic knees would let me.

I realised it must now be getting quite late and reluctantly made my way back into the hall. The leader of our group suggested it was time that we all started for home but I didn't fancy the trek back to the village through the snow, and was delighted when Colonel Wharton said he would not hear of us walking, and instructed his chauffeur to bring the car around.

Just before we left, Miss Amy hurried in and presented each member of our group with a paper bag, inside which, she informed us, were a couple of hot mince pies to sustain us on our cold journey home. We all thanked her very much. What a very kind and thoughtful lady she was, and what a lovely evening it had been! The warmth and motion of the Colonel's car made me feel sleepy, and my head started nodding.

The next moment I felt a hand on my shoulder and my husband Johnny was standing there, "Oh, so you've been asleep", he said. "Oh no", I answered, "I've been to Wharton Lodge". "So you've been dreaming as well", he laughed. "But no", I said. "It wasn't a dream, I have been to Wharton Lodge". I proceeded to tell him all that had happened, and he was quite amazed. "Good Gracious", he said. "That must have been quite a dream. You can usually never remember anything at all when you wake up". I opened my mouth, intending to declare again that it hadn't been a dream. Then I stopped. Of course it was - what else could it possibly have been?

But Johnny was quite correct; generally I can never remember anything once I have woken up, and yet I could remember every single detail of this particular dream.

Johnny went to start preparing the supper, and I looked down again at the volume which was still open on my lap. They were all there, sitting around the table at Wharton Lodge.

Suddenly I felt that queer sensation again, the room started swaying and the picture was pulling me in. Hurriedly I snapped the book shut, rubbed my eyes and gave myself a little mental shake. This kind of thing would never do, I'm not usually given to such flights of fancy, I've never been the type of person to confuse fantasy with reality!

It had been a very cold day and I was wearing a thick woolly cardigan with large pockets. As I got up from the sofa, I noticed that there was a bulge inside one of these, which I couldn't understand as I never put anything in my pockets except perhaps a small handkerchief.

Wonderingly I put my hand in my pocket and withdrew a paper bag and, when I looked inside, I found TWO HOT MINCE PIES!

Season's Greetings to all followers of The Hobby and particularly to those who have to live with The Hobby - partners, significant others, pals, typists, book-room dusters, phone answerers, meal providers, chauffeurs - those I have met and those I haven't. I'm sure we add another dimension to the enjoyment of the old tales.

And can anyone please tell me the origin of the phrase "Little Audrey laughed and laughed and laughed"?

Best wishes to all,

A. (yes, you've guessed what that stands for) O'Leary,
44 Kirkstone Drive, Loughborough, Leics., LE11 3RW

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.

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

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

Eslewhere Annual Subscription £17.00. Single copy/Back issues £5.25

*For more details on the magazine please write to:
John Trendler, 4 Ashdene Road, Bayford, Herts. SG13 8PX.*

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



NELSON LEE - AND ESB



St Frank's Magazine

CHRISTMAS CONVERSATIONS

Imagined by
CHARLIE TALMADGE

I.

IN THE LOUNGE-HALL.

NICK TROTWOOD: Hallo, Fatty! You're looking a bit full-blown! How are you enjoying the party?

FATTY LITTLE: Oh, first-rate. Everything's simply gorgeous. The turkey was too lovely for words—the plum-pudding was so topping that I had three helpings—

NICK TROTWOOD: I'm not talking about food! I mean the party.

FATTY LITTLE (staring): Great pancakes! The party! What does it matter about the party, so long as the grub's all right? In fact, the grub is the party! Without heaps and piles of good things to eat, a party ain't a party at all.

NICK TROTWOOD: Tastes differ, of course—personally, I'm more interested in the guests. Hallo, Corny! Where did you wander from? Looking for me?

CORNY TROTWOOD: My dear Nicodemus, it cannot be time for tea, surely?

NICK TROTWOOD: You deaf ass, I didn't say tea! But we won't argue—life's too short! Ask Fatty how he likes the grub.

CORNY TROTWOOD: Fatty has just come from the pub? Dear me, how disgusting! I am surprised, Little, that—

FATTY rolls off with a snort, and the **TWINS** argue.

II.

IN THE BALL-ROOM.

WILLY HANDFORTH: More dancing! Did you ever see such rot in your giddy life? Don't they look potty?

CHUBBY HEATH: Potty ain't the word! What's this—a fox trot?

WILLY HANDFORTH: Yes! Looks more like a shuffle! If some of these fat-heads could only see themselves dancing, they'd chuck it for the rest of their lives! This party's getting dead!

JUCY LEMON: I'm fed up! No games—no Blind Man's Buff, or Hunt the Slipper, or Musical Chairs, or anything! What's a party for, anyhow? This dancing makes me tired!

WILLY HANDFORTH: They said something about games later on. Like their nerve! Look here, what's the matter with a rag? Supposing we sneak upstairs and shove some holly in Archie's bed?

CHUBBY HEATH (brightening up): Jolly good idea! Better than watching this menagerie, anyhow!

WILLY HANDFORTH: Come on, then—we'll shove a bowl of water just beside

my major's bed, too. I shall be there when he steps into it! I tell you, my sons, there are compensations even for dancing! We shall have the upper quarters entirely to ourselves! They go off, gleeful and chuckling.

III.

IN THE SERVANTS' HALL.

BUTLER: It fair beats me, it does! What's come over the master, havin' the 'ouse overrun by these schoolboys? More like a pack o' wolves! Never saw such a commotion!

HOUSEKEEPER: It ain't for us to criticize the master, Mr. Ferris! Although I do say as these young people takes my breath away. There's no end to 'em, in a way o' speakin'. We don't know whether we're on our head or our 'eels. Enough's as good as a feast, as the sayin' is.

BUTLER: Well, there's more than enough 'ere—take my word for it! Only 'arf an 'our ago I found two o' the young varnunts putting holly leaves on the bed-room floors. Schoolboys, eh? More like monkeys from the Zoo!

HOUSEKEEPER: Oh, well, the holidays don't last for ever, Mr. Ferris—an' I don't see what good we can do, anyhow. Would you like a little o' this port? It's the master's special!

BUTLER: A lot you know about the master's special! I've just 'ad a glass o' port that no money can buy nowadays— Still, just to please you— That'll do nicely, thanks. (Raises glass). Well, 'ere's to the 'our when this pack o' young demons clears 'out!

IV.

IN THE DEPTHS OF THE CHESTERFIELD.

ARCHIE GLENTHORNE: What-ho! I mean, who goes there? Dash it all, kindly cease the rough stuff with the good old shoulder-blade!

ALF BRENT: Lazybones! Wake up, Archie! You're missing all the dancing and the fireworks, and everything! I've been looking for you for hours—and here you are asleep in the middle of this giddy Chesterfield.

ARCHIE GLENTHORNE: Absolutely! Laddie, I'm having a priceless time! Be good enough to retire into the good old undergrowth, or something juicy like that. The old tissues are howling for help!

ARCHIE dozes off, and **ALF** gives it up as a bad job.

GAMES—AND ALL THAT SORT OF THING

By ARCHIE GLENTHORNE

WELL, here we are again! Christmas, what? I mean to say, the good old festive season, and all that sort of thing. I feel a frightful ass, writing this puff, but when a chappie is asked to contribute a few well-thought-out words of wisdom, he can't let the old rag down. Absolutely not! I mean, that sort of thing isn't done.

There was a kind of notion that I should chat about games, and so forth. I mean, I'd dash into it straight away if I was an expert on the old sub. But, well, I mean—Games, what? Good gad! Now I come to think of it, the old gear-box commences to function slightly.

Blind Man's Buff, as it were. Musical Chairs, and all that sort of rot. These games, just between ourselves, are a dashed strenuous sort of business. When it comes to Hunt the Thimble, I'm absolutely on the spot. I mean, Hunt the Thimble is a priceless sort of game for Christmas. One chappie is left alone in a room, and all the other

chappies take the girls out, and leave the first chappie to himself.

I mean, what could be absolutely nicer? There he is, in peace and quietness, amid all the good things, and all he has to do is to shove the old thimble on the gas-bracket, or among the fire-irons, or in the good old corner what-not, or something. So dashed simple, if you grasp the old trend.

And then, when the populace is admitted, he just lounges about, taking things frightfully easy, as amused as the Dickens because the good old crowd can't locate the old finger-tip protector.

But as for Blind Man's Buff, Musical Chairs, Postman's Knock, Charades, Hunt the Slipper, and so forth—well, I mean! A cove needs considerable bracing before he can dash into frightful ordeals of that kind or order. Personally, when these games are pushed on the programme, I generally slide silently out, and seek forty of the best until the riot is absolutely over.

HOW TO AVOID COLLY-WOBBLES

By FATTY LITTLE

ONE of the worst dangers of Christmas-time can be avoided by a few simple, well-thought-out precautions. At any decent Christmas party there's bound to be heaps and heaps of good things to eat, and a fellow is always in peril of getting colly-wobbles unless he goes to work carefully.

Roast turkey and goose, plum pudding, trifle, mince pies, and things of that sort are jolly indigestible. Appetising, of course, and any healthy chap feels like eating until there's no more left. That's just where he makes a mistake.

Don't misunderstand me. I'm not hinting that you should eat less this Christmas-time. My advice is—eat more! Eat until you cause people to stare at you in wonder. They'll expect you to go green, and collapse. And if you eat in the old way, you WILL go green and collapse. But take these tips from me, and everything will be O.K.

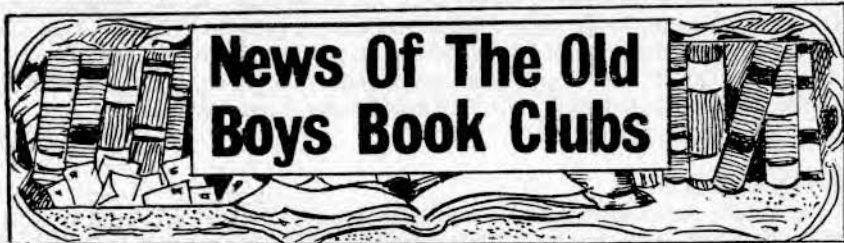
First of all, train yourself for a few days

beforehand. The most common mistake is to go hungry, so that Christmas Day will find you with a huge appetite. But this is all rot. If you starve yourself you begin to find that you don't want food at all, and instead of getting a whacking great appetite on Christmas Day, you don't care a toss for anything.

My system is infallible. Begin a week before Christmas, and eat more every day. Make it a gradual process, and your tummy will slowly, but surely, work itself into a rousing condition of activity. When the time for the big feast arrives, start eating in the early morning—and keep on eating without a stop. Don't eat too much at once, but let the grub supply be continuous. You'll be amazed to find how you enjoy the good things, and you won't even have a single trace of colly-wobbles.

(Don't take the slightest notice of this humorous advice.—Ed.)

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 8PX. Tel: 01992 511588



SOUTHERN WESTERN O.B.B.C.

Nine members were present at our autumn meeting on 22nd September 1996, which was treated as a celebration of fifty years of the O.B.B.C.

Bill Lofts gave an entertaining talk on the early years of the CD, to which he first contributed in 1951. E. Grant MacPherson showed us some interesting old copies of the "Gem" and "Magnet" together with other ephemera relating to school stories. Una Hamilton-Wright spoke on "The Life that led to Bunter" and on the influences that inspired the young Charles Hamilton to begin the Greyfriars saga.

A fine tea was once again provided by Mrs. Salisbury: a real study spread!

Laurence Price gave a talk "The Moon's a Balloon", showing how the unlikely theme of the moon and balloons inspired such diverse writers as Raspe (Baron Munchausen), Poe, Verne and Twain.

Bill Lofts closed with "The Greyfriars Roll of Dishonour", discussing those unfortunates expelled never to return to Greyfriars (some did manage to return, including one William George Bunter!).

Laurence Price

NORTHERN O.B.B.C. REPORT

Our Annual Lunch took place on 12th October at The Swallow Hotel in Wakefield, with twenty five present including our guests of honour, President Mary Cadogan, and Vice-President Anthony Buckeridge and his wife Eileen.

The afternoon was spent relaxing and chatting at the home and library of our Secretary, Geoffrey Good and his wife Vera.

Our evening meeting saw twenty nine people attending including visitors from Liverpool, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Tyne and Wear and County Durham in addition to our guests travelling from the south of England. One of our members flew in from the Isle of Man!

Mary spoke about her childhood and her love of the old papers, and gave us an insight into the workings of Collectors' Digest's production. No-one could possibly have believed that this monthly amateur magazine would still be going fifty years on without a break.

Copies of the souvenir book, The Collectors' Digest - The First Fifty Years were available for members. The Northern Club, is of course, very proud to have associations with the C.D. which was founded in Yorkshire and is still produced in this county.

Anthony Buckeridge then spoke about his involvement in writing for the B.B.C. and how very different it is these days compared to the 1950s. It was good to hear his accounts of meetings with David Davis and Derek McCulloch, who were the mainstays of Children's Hour. We were told how Anthony submitted his first Jennings book to Collins, and that now, the books are published in fourteen languages.

To conclude, Anthony then read to us the first chapter of his latest book ("That's Jennings"). Coming from the horse's mouth as it were, the story sprang to vivid life. Anthony's contribution was much appreciated by all. A splendid end to a wonderful day.

(For those interested in the stories, Northern Club has planned a Jennings Day to take place in Leicester on Saturday 21st June 1997 in the presence of Anthony and Eileen, and Mary Cadogan. Details will be published soon, and if you would like to receive these, please write to: Northern O.B.B.C., C/o 37, Tinshill Lane, Leeds LS16 6BU.)

See page 31 for November report.

John Bull junior

LONDON O.B.B.C.

An unusually small attendance at Wokingham on 13th OCTOBER did not detract from the enthusiasm and enjoyment of those present. We were sad that Eric Fayne was unable to attend as he still awaits a hip replacement and is largely immobile. Probably this was the first time he has ever missed a meeting at Wokingham.

We started, as usual, with a musical quiz from our host, Eric Lawrence. From certain letters in the titles of pieces he played on the piano, we had to find an anagram and deduce the name of a well known lyric writer (in this case, Ira Gershwin). Memory Lane covered Newsletters relating to September and October 1976. This is always a popular item, if tinged with sadness at references to past members.

Brian Doyle then gave us one of his 'Yesterday's Heroes', this time Captain Kettle, by Charles John Cutcliffe Hyne (1886-1944). A far ranging and very interesting talk (personally, I have always envisaged Kettle as a rather fiery Captain Justice!)

After tea and much reminiscing, Bill Bradford produced a memory quiz by reading a chapter from 'Wings of Doom' by George E. Rochester, then asking questions about it. This was won easily by Eric, who afterwards read an amusing interlude from 'Constable across the Moor' by Nicholas Rhea.

Our meeting on 10th November attracted an attendance of 27 members attracted by a Buffet Lunch and a distinguished guest speaker. A cold wet day did nothing to dampen our enthusiasm, or appetites. Audrey and Tony Potts provided a repast that we duly demolished with great gusto!

Professor Jeffrey Richards, of Lancaster University is, of course, a well known author and broadcaster, and he gave us a most illuminating and enjoyable talk on Swashbucklers of the Screen. This covered some 70 years of 'Movies' from Fairbanks Snr. to Kevin Costner, with additional reference to television portrayals, this talk was accompanied by numerous slides, projected by Normal Wright. Thank you, Professor Richards.

Following this, and tea and mince pies, we sped through the usual business agenda, we then had a quiz from Peter Mahony linking characters from our four favourite fictional schools with authors and names from, dare I say, more adult fiction. Next meeting: Sunday 8th December, at Ealing.

Bill Bradford

THE CAMBRIDGE CLUB

We held the first Meeting of the 1996/97 session at the Longstanton village home of our Secretary, Tony Cowley.

The Club was only able to hold a partial AGM due to absence because of illness of our Treasurer, Vic Hearn, without whose presence we were unable to complete business.

In a further attempt to broaden our nostalgia awareness, Tony introduced a video of a Channel 4 documentary on one of the seminal "British" comedians, Sid James. A colourful South African character actor he often played himself in numerous Tony Hancock BBC radio and television programmes, and "Carry On" films during the 1950s and 1960s. He was not entirely what he seemed though, as he had a lifelong addiction to gambling.

Christmas Joy to our Editor, and all at C.D, happiness to Eric and happy reading to all our readers, from Margery Woods.

THE FILE ON VERNON-SMITH

by Margery Woods

Part I A BOUNDER FOR CHRISTMAS

Arrogant. Insolent. Reckless. Bad-tempered. Intractable. Headstrong. Rash. Defiant....

These and many similar epithets were flung at Master Herbert Vernon-Smith during his stormy years at Greyfriars. Like him or loathe him, most readers would agree that the Bounder is one of Frank Richards' most vital and exciting characters. Whatever his faults, and they are legion, Smithy is never dull. He was created by a master of characterisation (from which plot should always spring) who while fully aware that in the climate of opinion governing juvenile fiction at that time good must always triumph over evil and true sportsmanship always prevail also knew totally evil characters repelled and goody-goodies bored as well being unbelievable. No character will live on the page without some conflicting traits in his or her make-up, and while the true and valiant will always engage our sympathy the character with a mix of good and bad will always fascinate the reader, especially if the suspense as to which side of the character will win is sustained right to the end of the story. This ploy also crosses the sexual barrier. Many of the girl readers of THE MAGNET must have followed the exploits of Vernon-Smith with great interest. Women have always been fascinated by bounders, even while commonsense warns them to stay clear. For every woman is convinced that she alone is the one who can reform the handsome rake, just as a man will be ensnared by a glamorous adventuress and allow himself to believe that he has succeeded where lesser men failed, until she waves goodbye and goes off in search of further conquests.

These observations on the craft of characterisation do not mean that authors deliberately or mechanically make up their characters. Most good writers do it instinctively, not realising until the writing is done how they achieved a character whose vitality comes to life on the page. Frank Richards must be one of the few writers of juvenile fiction whose stories actually become more compelling when read in adulthood and instead of galloping avidly through the story as in youth one becomes more fascinated and appreciative of his skills in weaving plot and characters into one satisfying whole.

The Bounder is particularly interesting because of the long time span of the paper which allowed the scope for building and layering the facets of this compelling character. The difference is most easily illustrated by using Bunter as a comparison. Here is a fat, foolish and greedy character of transparent cunning. Bunter was born complete, so to speak. He was always the same and readers would have been furious had he changed in any way, thus destroying what they expected every week. Apart from the amusement he caused, some predictable characters are essential in stories which have a large cast of players, if only as a sounding board against which the other dominant characters could stand out. Bunter was also indispensable for his sheer nuisance value.

But the Bounder.... There was the constant element of doubt. When he reformed could he stay reformed? Would he be able to resist the flouting of authority which was as necessary as breathing to him? And would the calming, good influence of Tom Redwing succeed in keeping Smithy from going headlong into trouble? That he had good in him was beyond doubt, and was proved on many occasions, usually after his temper had led the way and often after black quarrelling, as Tom Redwing discovered just before Christmas one year.

Vernon-Smith was not a warm-hearted, fun-loving Christmassy person. There was nothing cosy about him. His idea of fun in the hols was much more sophisticated than that of most of the boys, therefore he did not feature so often in those wonderful log-fires and snow-fights, candlelight and spooks, carols and groaning festive boards of glorious food, all the holly and inglenooks and gracious old manors in those traditional Christmas series we loved so much. So when the Bounder did get involved in Christmas the reader could be sure that the atmosphere would prove as sinister as merry.

The Polpelly series kicks off just before Greyfriars breaks up for the hols, with SMITHY'S STRANGE ADVENTURE. The deceptively familiar opening lulls one with the ever hopeful Bunter hawking the pleasure of his Christmas company up and down the Remove and finding.....surprise, surprise.....no delighted takers. But Bunter does not give up easily. He just can't understand why the comfortable, well stocked niches are all closed to him this Christmas. His determination to park his greedy self somewhere leads into a dark and dangerous Christmas adventure which is anything but cosy. Several threads of the story are laid that first day: Smithy's quarrel with Redwing; the advent of the mysterious Italian seeking Smithy, supposedly bearing messages from Vernon-Smith senior, which incurs Smithy's instantly suspicious question trap and his unceremonious eviction of the Italian, to the horrified reaction of the Famous Five.

Still seething, the Bounder departs alone by car. All his worst characteristics are shown in these first few pages of the 1935 series. His quarrel with Redwing is over his chum's refusal to spend Christmas in London, a Christmas which would doubtless want for nothing in the material line, but Redwing's father is coming home from sea and naturally tom wants to be with him. "...in a cabin up at Hawkscliff," sneers Vernon-Smith. "You think that's better than a holiday at my father's place in London with all the shows." He then goes on to suggest that Tom's father might join them. He loses his temper when Tom points out that his father would be like a fish out of water in a millionaire's mansion in London.

The Bounder storms out, and his temper is not improved when he learns that his angry exchange with Redwing has been overheard by Bunter, who thoroughly agrees that poverty-stricken outsiders and rough old tarry-necks are cheeky cads, no use to the Bounder. He, Bunter, would be a much more suitable Christmas guest for a millionaire's mansion.

There is a small release of temper in the satisfaction of kicking Bunter several times, very hard, and, later that afternoon, after surprisingly giving Bunter a lift, booting the fat owl out into a snowy lane to face a long walk back to school. But for once Bunter is the bringer of salvation. Soon after the car has driven on, it is held up by the Italian and another stranger. Armed, they kidnap Smithy and while one forces the chauffeur to drive the car away the other imprisons Smithy in an old Army hut across the fields, unaware that Bunter is palpitating behind the door of the inner room and overhearing all the details of Count Zero's plan to keep Smithy hostage to force his father to sell an estate he owns at Polpelly. When the rascally count turns his back for a few minutes to get food out of his car Bunter emerges and frees Smithy. But they do not escape far. Count Zero fires at them and the sounds carry to the Famous Five, on their way back from the football match. They race to the rescue and the Count is no match for them.

Ship Inn, where Bunter has an encounter with a large Christmas pudding, and very early next morning the Bounder hires a boat to sail round into Polpelly Cove under cover of darkness. His plan pays off. They capture Count Zero in the house and the plan left by Count Zero's ancestor showing where he had hidden the gold when his galleon was sunk and he was held prisoner at the mansion. But the Count manages to escape before their eyes, through yet another of the secret panels with which the mansion seems to abound. In the final story, GALLEON GOLD, the action gets grim. Until now the boys have sensed that Count Zero is not a murderer at heart, but now he is desperate. And the Bounder is steelier than ever.

Frank Nugent is captured by Beppo, the accomplice, and Johnny Bull, setting off to get the police, is struck down, and the Count slips into the house like a deadly reptile, armed with an automatic. But for the third time in the series Bunter rolls onto the scene to create the diversion the boys need and Smithy gets the gun. In the final confrontation he does not hesitate to use it. At last the Count is defeated and Smithy forces Beppo to lead them to where Nugent and Bull are imprisoned. There a surprise awaits them.

Johnny and Frank have been very busy trying to dig themselves out of the underground cell; they have not found their way to freedom but they have found the gold.

In victory the Bounder shows that he does possess a merciful side to his personality. The Count is bandaged and given the boat and told he is free. The Count does not give the Bounder time to change his mind.

Polpelly has lost its attraction now and the Bounder, in high good humour, takes his Christmas party off to London for the rest of the holiday, even accepting the company of Bunter with humorous grace. But how long would that last?

(More next month)

YESTERDAY'S HEROES

In the second article in his new series about popular fictional characters of yesteryear - best-sellers in their day and still remembered by some people today - BRIAN DOYLE writes about C.J. Cutcliffe Hyne's tough and breezy little hero 'Captain Kettle' who, at one time in the early-1900s, challenged even the great Sherlock Holmes as the most popular character in all fiction....

Do you remember 'Captain Kettle', that redoubtable, resolute, cantankerous, fiery, peppery, red-bearded little sea-captain, whose fist and revolver were always ready for the fray...? That truculent, argumentative, daring, roguish, reckless, cigar-champing, peak-capped warrior and adventurer....? That plucky, indomitable, eager, furious, optimistic, patriotic, fighting, brave little sailor....? Whose courageous and colourful adventures and exploits took him all around the world, to countries hot and cold and where he encountered a gallery of rogues and villains unsurpassed even by the adversaries of the modern James Bond.

At one time, during the first three decades of this century, Captain Owen Kettle (later Sir Owen Kettle, K.C.B.) was acknowledged by many literary critics (not to mention the general public) to be second only to the



Captain
KETTLE
is back

great Sleuth of Baker Street as the most popular and widely-read fictional hero of his generation. The London "Times", in its Obituary of Kettle's creator, C.J. Cutcliffe Hyne, said: '... he created a character who at one time was second only to Sherlock Holmes in the affections of British readers.' At least three other national newspapers or magazines had said much the same thing many years earlier.

Captain Kettle was featured in a dozen books by Hyne and they sold well over six million copies (a huge total for its time), as well as establishing 'Pearson's Magazine', in which they originally appeared as serials and series, as one of the most successful British magazines ever (probably second only to the great 'Strand').

An enormous success and phenomenal best-seller then, and one of the great fictional characters of them all. But who remembers Kettle today? Who, indeed, recalls Cutcliffe Hyne? And he was a highly-prolific author who wrote nearly 70 books and countless magazine and newspaper articles and stories over nearly 50 years. Only a handful of people remember either Kettle or Hyne, that's for sure. Such is the capriciousness of the great British reading public. Yet Kettle was on film, stage, radio, and once, even, in a ballet!

They say that the test of a great fictional character is - would you recognise him (or her) if you saw them walking down the street? During the first thirty years of this century, ninety-per-cent of people would have recognised Kettle, without the shadow of a doubt. He was unmistakable in every way.

But before we look at Captain Kettle in more detail, let's glance at the equally-adventurous career of his creator....

Charles John Cutcliffe Hyne (usually known as C.J. Cutcliffe Hyne - occasionally there was a hyphen, but it came and went over the years, and it was absent for most of the time!), novelist and traveller, was born in Bibury, Gloucestershire, in 1865, the son of the Rev. Charles Hyne, Vicar of Brierley, Yorkshire. He was educated at Bradford Grammar School (which he hated) and Clare College, Cambridge University, where he gained his B.A. and later M.A. He was a considerable athlete; at 15, he stood 6'3" tall and became a keen boxer, oarsman (he rowed for Cambridge), yachtsman, cricketer, fisherman, rock-climber, and rifle and pistol shot. He was expected to follow a career in the church or the law, but instead decided he would like to try writing, and also to travel.

He wrote for magazines, became an 'Agony Aunt' for a woman's paper, and often wrote humorous articles aimed at feminine readers. Later came boys adventures and novels, the first being "Four Red Nightcaps: an Account of a Scotch Cruise" (1890). There were also short stories and articles for various magazines, including "Boy's Own Paper".

Captain Owen Kettle made his bow in a supporting role, in "The Great Sea Swindle", which ran as a serial in "Answers" in 1895. It was reprinted in book-form as "Honour of Thieves" the same year, and later still as "The Little Red Captain" in 1902. Hyne was a friend of Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe), the publisher of many magazines and newspapers, including "Answers", and was staying with the great man one weekend at his home Elmwood, in Kent. Harmsworth said to Hyne one day (referring to "The Great Sea Swindle"): "That little red-headed sailor man who came in once or twice was the best touch in your story. If you picked him out and wrote short yarns about him, you might make a hit like Conan Doyle is doing now with his Sherlock Holmes." He went on to offer Hyne "thirty bob (£1.50) a thousand words" for a Kettle series in one of his magazines. Hyne said it wasn't enough and Harmsworth explained that he never gave authors more, as it only drove them to drink.

'Pearson's Magazine' subsequently offered Hyne fifty guineas (£52.50) apiece for a series of six Kettle short stories, which was more to the author's liking - and Kettle was launched on his long and successful career... The first Captain Kettle story appeared in

'Pearson's' in February, 1897, and his adventures continued to appear in that magazine for around thirty years. The Kettle was on the boil! The stories and serials were later published in book-form. Here, for those interested, are the details:

"The Adventures of Captain Kettle" (1898); "The Further Adventures of Captain Kettle" (1899); "Captain Kettle, K.C.B." (1902); "The Marriage of Captain Kettle" (1912); "Captain Kettle on the Warpath" (1916); "Captain Kettle's Bit" (1918); "The Reverend Captain Kettle" (1925); "President Kettle" (1928); "Mr. Kettle, Third Mate" (1931); "Captain Kettle, Ambassador" (1932); and "Ivory Valley: an Adventure of Captain Kettle" (1938), the last Kettle book.

A 1,000-page "Captain Kettle Omnibus" (containing "Adventures", "Further Adventures" and "The Little Red Captain") was published in 1929, and in 1912, "Adventures" was included in 'Pearson's Sixpenny Novels', a very popular series of paper-back reprints, which sold in huge numbers at the time.

Hyne once said that he often wrote his stories wherever he happened to be - in torrid or frigid zones - and that he could pen his tales as easily in a desert tent or in the cabin of an ocean trawler in a sea-storm, as he could in his cosy study at home. He used to write in the early hours of the morning while camping in the Moroccan Atlas Mountains, to keep himself awake, in case his men should attack and raid him at night....!

Much of Hyne's fictional material was based upon his own extensive world travels in such places as the Shetland Islands, the Arctic, the Spanish Main, Mexico, Brazil, Morocco, Lapland, the North Sea, Algeria, America, the Sahara Desert and the West Coast of Africa. He said that he first dreamed up the character of Captain Kettle while voyaging home in a tramp-steamer from New Orleans. He made it a rule to cover at least 10,000miles each year (and this, remember, was long before the days when air travel was to become common). As the London "Times" said in its Obituary of Hyne: "Even if he had never written, he would have deserved remembrance as a great and indefatigable traveller who had sought adventure in many remote corners of the earth. As the creator of Captain Kettle, however, he came to hold a special place in the affection of three generations of reading youth."

Captain Kettle lost his right leg during one of his early adventures, when it was cruelly and literally chopped off by an axe wielded by a ruthless Moroccan leader and villain, Ayoob Bushaid, in Southern Morocco, when Kettle refused to convert to the latter's religion! Kettle subsequently had his revenge - an eye for an eye or, in this case, a leg for a leg, when the villainous Moor became Kettle's prisoner and the good Captain thoughtfully arranged for him to lose a leg. Kettle wasn't a man to under-estimate, he could be just as tough and ruthless as his enemies when circumstances demanded. Kettle's friend and sea-mate, McTodd, by the way, usually ready to lend a friend a hand, or even, if need be, a leg, quickly and efficiently made a wooden leg for Kettle, made of ash (and painted white for 'coolness'), plus one made of mahogany, inlaid with ivory and mother-of-pearl, for Saturday nights and Sundays....!

Kettle's trade-marks included, apart from his red torpedo beard, his ever-present Naval peaked-cap, glaring eyes, and jaunty, dapper appearance, his big cigars, his revolver, his fondness for playing the accordion (especially 'Home, Sweet, Home') and his poetry-writing (especially sonnets). He liked to stand bolt upright, legs astride, with his head (and beard) cocked at a jaunty angle, surveying the current situation. His favourite exclamations were "By James!" and "What the deuce!" He was staunchly-British in his attitude to the rest of the world and intensely patriotic. Between voyages and adventures he lived with Mrs. Kettle and their children, and he was fiercely loyal and faithful to his Mrs. K., despite the occasional temptation in foreign climes. They lived in South Shields, Tyneside.

Cecil Hayter, the prolific author of over fifty Sexton Blake stories, including those about Blake's early years at school and university, and who created and wrote about Lobangu, the Zulu Chief, and Sir Richard Losely, for the Blake saga, was one of Hyne's closest friends and one with whom he often went travelling abroad.

Hyne knew the sea and ships and men; he also knew, at first hand, danger and adventure and excitement, having experienced all these things during his world travels. He had sailed throughout the globe himself, often to remote regions, and knew the places that Kettle knew. In fact, some of the tales were based on his own exploits. In his Autobiography, Hyne recounts many real-life adventures and hazards and often comes across as a kind of 'John Wayne' or 'Errol Flynn' character, indulging in - and usually winning - several tough, no-punches-pulled fights and brawls. He was indeed something of a real-life Kettle himself....

Hyne once explained how he hit upon the name of Kettle for his hero: "First there was his name. I wanted something that would go glibly off the tongue with the title of Captain, and I also wanted a name that was not in human use. So I pitched on Kettle - and found later that is a commoner name than Smith in many parts of Ireland!" Hyne also commented on Kettle's moral code: "His austere shore creed made him forswear cards, betting, or anything connected with the stage, and though many of his exploits at sea were little removed from piracy, they were performed on an owner's behalf, and it was he who would go to hell when his time came, and not Captain Owen Kettle."

Was there a real-life original for Kettle? Hyne was contradictory about this. In an interview in 'Pearson's Magazine' in 1899, he said that 'Kettle' had been the Captain of a passenger steamer voyaging off the West Coast of Africa, when he had met him; in another interview he said that he had actually served under 'Kettle' as his ship's doctor in the Mexican Gulf. But in his Autobiography "My Joyful Life" (1935), Hyne vigorously denied that Kettle had been based on any actual person, but suggested that he was a synthetic character, an amalgam of many people he had met on his travels. Hyne said he felt rather irritated that scores of small, dapper men with the requisite torpedo beard, had claimed to be the original of Kettle. One even went so far as to give public lectures on the subject! It was a disgrace and ought not to be tolerated, went on Hyne (sounding uncannily like Mr. Growser in the BBC Children's Hour's 'Toytown' plays). But, apparently, it was tolerated, since there is no record of Hyne ever taking such a pseudo-Kettle to court.

Captain Kettle was so popular during the early years of this century that there was a special Kettle pipe and ash-tray on sale, a Kettle inkwell, a Kettle peaked cap, and a huge tobacco advertising campaign in the Press, featuring the jaunty features of the Captain. Men went to fancy-dress parties and balls dressed in his image, and he was impersonated on the music halls. The number of small men who grew red torpedo beards caused a distinct slump in the razor-making industry. He was even featured in a ballet at London's Alhambra Theatre (but luckily we were spared what Kettle himself might have said about that!).

Kettle's success was reflected in one of Hyne's books about him too. After a particularly hazardous adventure (he eventually returned after it was feared he had been killed) he was awarded the K.C.B. and created a Knight Commander of the Bath..... His adventures were also selling very well throughout Europe and the United States.

There was at least one silent film about Kettle too (details thanks to Denis Gifford's massive tome, 'The British Film Catalogue'). "The Adventures of Captain Kettle" was released in 1922; it was produced by Austin Leigh and directed by Meyrick Milton, had a screenplay by Hyne himself, and appeared to be a rather rum affair. Captain Charles (Charles?) Kettle was played by one Charles Kettle (Hyne obviously missed out by not writing a book called "Captain Kettle, Film Star"). Another leading character was played

by the producer. An the heroine 'Pacquita', was portrayed by a certain Nina Gudgeon - not perhaps the most alluring or feminine name for a pretty young actress.... (This movie, by the way, should not be confused with a series of nine 'Ma and Pa Kettle' comedy films of the 1950s, which featured Marjorie Main and Percy Kilbride).

A stage play, titled, unsurprisingly, "Captain Kettle", was produced at the Adelphi Theatre, London, in 1902, when the title-role was played by one of the co-writers, Murray Carson (the other was Malcolm Watson). One interesting fact about the casting was that the third lead was played by C. Aubrey Smith, who had earlier captained Sussex and England at cricket, and who later became a famous Hollywood film star (and was also knighted). Hyne subsequently wrote, somewhat caustically: "Kettle appeared in a bad play which I did not write." One feels, reading between the lines, that he did not entirely approve of the enterprise.

Captain Kettle starred in radio versions too. The first adaptation was in 1937, when Abraham Sofaer played Kettle in a BBC radio serial "To Capture an Heiress". Then, in 1947, Julian Somers portrayed the good Captain in a BBC radio series called simply "Captain Kettle". The ship's mate was played by Jon Pertwee. Hyne's daughter, Nancy, was on hand to keep an official eye on things, and the help of Trinity House was enlisted to ensure that all the nautical aspects were authentic. The series never returned, so presumably it didn't register as a major success. And curiously, and sadly, Captain Kettle has never been produced on television.

C.J. Cutcliffe Hyne wrote many other non-Kettle books. His characters included McTodd (a ship's engineer who liked his whisky), McTurk, the American Naval Officer, land detective Mr. Horrocks, whose exploits were told in a series of short stories collected into the book "Mr. Horrocks, Purser" (1902). Hyne also wrote an acclaimed science fantasy novel about the legendary lost land of Atlantis, "The Lost Continent" (1900); this has been described by more than one modern critic as 'probably the most famous and best novel ever written about Atlantis' (and there have been many since Hyne's). It originally ran as a serial in 'Pearson's' in 1899.

The Kettle stories, both in 'Pearson's' and in the books, were illustrated superlatively by Stanley L. Wood, and Hyne confessed that half of Kettle's success as a character was due to Wood's graphic, lively and memorable depictions of him. At the beginning, Wood was determined to find a real-life model for his drawings of Kettle. He haunted the docks for days and weeks without finding a suitable subject. Then, in a rather shady, run-down pub in Hampstead, North London, he discovered a man pulling pints behind the bar. He had found his Kettle! Wood returned time after time to make surreptitious sketches on his note-pad and old envelopes. The enterprise also cost him a small fortune in drinks, he later admitted!

Wood illustrated many other books (including Guy Boothby's famous "Dr. Nikola") and also worked for many magazines and boys' papers. He had almost as adventurous a life as Hyne, working, for example, as a cowboy for years on the plains of Texas and Southern California. Also, like Kettle, he was Welsh-born!

Hyne (who also wrote under the pseudonym 'Weatherby Chesney') also wrote such novels as "The Recipe for Diamonds" (1893), "The Captured Cruiser" (1893), "Stimson's Reef" (1899), "Thompson's Progress" (1902), and a boy's adventure novel "Sandy Carmichael" (1892). All these were very popular in their time. His last novel "Wishing Smith" appeared in 1939 and sounds intriguing; it was about a Cambridge Don who discovers the secret of making one's wishes come true....

And we musn't overlook "The Further Adventures of Captain Kettle Junior" by Stacey Blake, which appeared as a serial in the "Big Budget" boys paper in 1904 and later in book-form. Hyne obviously approved of this idea ('catch 'em young, make 'em Kettle fans, then they'll read the adult novels about him....!').

In 1897, Hyne had married Elsie Haggas (typically, he took his bride for a honeymoon in Arctic Lapland, and wrote a book about the trip afterwards!). They had a daughter, Nancy, and a son, Charles, who died of wounds received in World War One.

Hyne, who, by the way, listed his recreations in "Who's Who" as big-game hunting, shooting and cave-hunting, lived for many years at (coincidentally) Kettlewell, near Bradford, in Yorkshire, and he died there in 1944, at the age of 78.

C.J. Cutcliffe Hyne. One of the most successful and prolific British authors of this century, and who had the distinction of creating one of the era's most popular fictional characters: Captain Owen Kettle. But why then is he all but forgotten today? Perhaps because he has never been adapted for television and modern films. Or just because he's rather dated and jingoistic in these days of political correctness.

But maybe this particular Kettle just boiled dry.....

(Next in the series: "Beau Geste")

NORTHERN O.B.B.C. REPORT

It was a busy evening for the 12 members who attended the A.G.M. in November. Club Officials were elected, the 1997 programme was discussed and the Christmas Party organised.

After all that and well-earned refreshments we relaxed and enjoyed Darrell's presentation Some Reflections on Green Hedges. Although Enid Blyton is not everybody's favourite author there will be few who have never read anything written by her. We gained insights into her complex personality with references to her book The Story of My Life, and A Childhood at Green Hedges by her daughter, Imogen Smallwood. The evening's only disappointment was that there was not enough time for one of Geoffrey's excellent Greyfriars readings.

Paul Galvin

WANTED, Knockout Fun annual 1941, Radio Fun annuals 1941 and 1944, Beezer annuals 1958 and 1960, Pre 1945 Mickey Mouse and Disney annuals, Beano and Dandy comics from 1960 to 1990. David Small, 69 Uplands Rd, Oadby, Leicester LE2 4NT, Tel: 0116 2712671.

WANTED: Toy and games catalogues from the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. BEN BLIGH, 55 Arundale Avenue, Hazel Grove, Cheshire, SK7 5LD.

SEASONS GREETINGS to all followers of Greyfriars, and to Mary, our dedicated and esteemed Editor. Maurice O'Connell, 12 Beechwood Park, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

to all readers of the Collectors' Digest

From Darrell Swift at Happy Hours of Leeds

Did you realise that Happy Hours has been established
since 1982?

The aim then was the same as it is now - buying and selling
good quality books that would grace a devoted collector's shelves.

Specialising in Hamiltonia and books of our childhood with
the occasional book on reference, biography and privately
produced indices with some nostalgia thrown in, the stock is
varied and of high quality

Do you have books to sell in the above categories?
Try Happy Hours for help and advice

The latest catalogue of stock was produced in late September
and although demand has been great, there are still some good
bargains to be had

If you did not receive a catalogue, then send off for one now!

Many Happy Hours!



Happy Hours

Specialising in Books of Yesteryear

37 Tinshill Lane, Leeds LS16 6BU, England Tel. 0113 267 1394 Fax 0113 230 0193

(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, Kent, BR3 6PY.

Printed by Quack's Printers, 7 Grape Lane, Potergate, York, YO1 2HU. Tel. 635967