

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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THE EDITOR'S CHAT



A NEW YEAR - AND NEW CELEBRATIONS

In wishing you all A Happy New Year I am glad to be able to mention that, after our C.D. half-century celebrations of 1996, further hobby anniversaries will be coming up soon. This year will mark the 90th anniversary of the start of the Gem to which we shall be giving prominence in the C.D. (see next month's issue for details) and, of course, the 90th anniversary of the Magnet's beginnings will not be far behind.

I have been happily deluged with Christmas cards and greetings from readers, for which I send my warm thanks and appreciation. It is wonderful to produce a magazine for

such a truly enthusiastic readership; I have also been deeply touched by the great number of congratulatory letters I have received about the big 50-Year book, compiled by John Wernham and myself, and the November special C.D. which also marked our half century. (By the way, THE STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST - THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS, which sold out very quickly, has now been reprinted by the Museum Press. Copies can be supplied by me at £20.00, which includes postage and packing. I also have a *very few* spare copies of the Annual, but would urge anyone wanting a copy to order this from me soon, as once it has sold out I cannot arrange a reprint.)

It is, of course, the wonderful support from readers and contributors which has ensured the longevity of our magazine, and I am pleased that your articles and letters continue to flow into my home. This month I have devoted rather more space than usual to our FORUM pages to allow the publication of your views and comments. I know that this feature is very popular with readers.

SEASONAL READING

I started re-reading various Christmas stories early in December, to be sure to find time for them: then, confined to bed for a couple of days after Christmas with a heavy feverish chill, I was able to wallow in even more reading of a seasonable nature. As always, I dipped again into FROM WHARTON LODGE TO LINTON HALL, the Christmas book which Tommy Keen and I wrote over a decade ago for the Museum Press: then, inspired by Roger Jenkins' article in the December C.D. I read *Jimmy Silver's Christmas Party* (S.O.L. 284) which particularly featured the Rookwood chums. To share Cliff House and Morcove Christmases I read the School Friend's 1926 series (spent at Dolly Jobling's home, and then at Barbara Redfern's) and Morcove's Merriest Christmas (at Dolly Delane's home, Cromlech Manor) in the Schoolgirls' Own Annual of 1936. I shared Yuletide joys with the St. Jim's juniors by re-savouring the last Christmas number of the Gem in 1939, Jack Blake's Christmas Pudding, and joined Harry Wharton & Co., with Bunter playing his usual gargantuan part, by reading the Reynham Castle Magnet series of 1937. Moving from juvenile to adult fiction, I also browsed happily through Jack

Adrian's anthology CRIME AT CHRISTMAS (published some time ago by Equation Books) and Richard Dalby's CRIME FOR CHRISTMAS (Michael O'Mara Books).

But now it is time to look ahead - and as we enter our second fifty years it is good to record that our readership includes the young as well as the not so young, and that interest in almost all aspects of our hobby remains extremely vital. Soon, of course, we shall be thinking about celebrating fifty years of the Old Boys Book Clubs!

May 1997 bring happiness, peace and prosperity to you all.

Mary Cadogan

THE FILE ON VERNON-SMITH

by Margery Woods

Part 2 The Arrival

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What the dickens is the matter with that chap?"

So queried Bob Cherry the day the newcomer entered the gates of Greyfriars on decidedly wobbly legs. The description of him was fully comprehensive. A little taller than Wharton. Weedy in build, probably a stranger to exercise, football and cricket. But elegant in well-tailored clothes, silk hat and lavender gloves, gold topped cane, diamond tiepin and rings glittering on his fingers. Quite a dandy, or, as Bob Cherry observed: "A gorgeous bird!" One vital part of this description was missing, though. There was no hint of facial characteristics. The reader had to guess at hair colouring and features and trust the illustrator's interpretation of facial character. But none of this intrigued the watchers. It was the swaying gait and unsteady progress of the newcomer across the Close.

Harry Wharton, always charitable before leaping to conclusions, wondered if the boy was ill. Not so Frank Nugent as the newcomer staggered and clutched at a tree for a few moments in order to try to regain equilibrium. Frank said he'd seen Gosling, the crusty school porter, walk like that when returning from the Pig and Whistle.

Intoxication was only the initial indication of Herbert Tudor Vernon-Smith's many misdemeanours. While the school and Mr. Quelch failed to conceal their amazement at the Head's reluctance to flog, let alone expel Vernon-Smith, he smoked cigarettes, cheroots, quaffed champagne, defied his form master, turned his nose up at the plain but homely fare of bread and butter and cheese provided for supper, made it plain that he expected money to buy his way out of anything and boasted that the Head would not dare expel him.

This statement proved sadly true. The Head was indebted in some way to Mr. Vernon-Smith, a self-made millionaire, known among other things as the Cotton King, a hard and ruthless mad devoid of all scruples in wielding the power he held over Dr. Locke. He could never have got his spoilt son into Eton or Winchester or Harrow, but Greyfriars dare not refuse.

Vernon-Smith clashed with virtually everyone in the school during those early stormy weeks. Only Harry Wharton at first tried to offer some guidance to the rebel, remembering his own difficult times when he arrived at Greyfriars, but soon he realised that this new boy was completely unamenable to reason and Wharton issued a plain warning that if Vernon-Smith didn't play the game the Remove would deal with him, even if authority inexplicably seemed unable to do this. Even Skinner and Snoop, whose study was now shared by the new upstart and whose own reputations could scarcely be distinguished from caddish, condemned Vernon-Smith with the rest of the school. It was Bulstrode who coined the name that was to become synonymous with that of Herbert Vernon-Smith throughout his years at Greyfriars; Bounder. The Bounder of Greyfriars.

Matters came to a head after the Bounder committed the unpardonable sin of kicking Mr. Quelch and refusing to apologise. It was time for Harry Wharton and the Remove to be as good as their word and convince Vernon-Smith that until he learned to behave himself they would punish him. It was really no problem to them. Simple expressions of boyish enthusiasm for the task in hand were put into force. Running the gauntlet, consigning his hoard of cigarettes, cigars and cheroots to the flames in a sort of premature fashion, dunking him in his precious champagne, along with assorted thumpings and much exercise of cricket stumps, and being forcibly pushed fully clothed into a bath of cold water-----this last by Loder-----and much ragging; all these were inflicted upon the sinner. But perhaps the most shaming was being forcibly hauled down to breakfast in highly coloured silk pyjamas in view of the assembled school. So suffered those who refused to get out of bed at rising bell. Humiliation was a highly refined art as practised at Greyfriars.

The treatment began to work. But it was too soon to think of reform. The Bounder might be many things but a fool was not one of them. There was no way he could battle with the entire Remove, nor would the simmering hatred of Harry Wharton and his pals that grew daily in his dark heart ever allow him to seek or accept their friendship, but sinning wasn't always fun on one's own. He needed a companion; his choice fell on Peter Hazeldene.

Vernon-Smith was capable of wielding a great deal of influence but mainly on the weak, self-indulgent, dissolute and sycophantic. On the reverse side of the coin few could influence the Bounder when his will was set on a particular course of action. Perhaps only three beings ever came to influence the character shaping of Herbert Vernon-Smith.

The principal of these was still unknown, waiting in the future. The second was Harry Wharton, during the course of a complex relationship that began with long-standing and vicious hatred on the Bounder's side, which was fuelled as much by secret jealousy of Wharton's captaincy, his powerful sporting prowess and standing in the school, as by personal dislike. For among Vernon-Smith's many failings was that of braggart and boaster, who must always have his own way and be recognised as being his own top brand leader. It was a bitter lesson he had yet to learn, that one needs the talents and abilities to fund these desires, none of which can be bought by money alone. It was to be a long time before Vernon-Smith, in spite of himself, began to develop the long dormant better qualities in his nature. Even then it could not be said that Wharton and he became close chums, schoolmates, perhaps; never soulmates.

The third influence was the gentle and charming Marjorie Hazeldene of neighbouring



"You are going home, Miss Marjorie?" said the Bounder. "May I walk with you?" Marjorie did not like the Bounder, but she could hardly refuse his request. She nodded coldly, without speaking.

Cliff House School, close chum of Bob Cherry and sister of Peter Hazeldene.

The evil influence Vernon-Smith possessed soon spread into the social fabric around him like a creeping fungus. Drawing the weak-natured Peter Hazeldene into his sphere was no problem at all but it caused great distress and worry to Marjorie Hazeldene, who had been called on too often to help her brother out of scrapes. Secretly she wrote to Harry Wharton and asked his help in dealing with the problem. The element of perfectly innocent discretion over this led to Harry and Bob Cherry almost coming to blows. Worse, through the pestilent Bunter, it put Marjorie's good name at risk of being brought into disrepute. In the previous story of the series Harry had already soundly thrashed Vernon-Smith over the distasteful incident of the toast to Marjorie made by Vernon-Smith to his caddish cronies during a champagne picnic. Now, the problem of Hazeldene flared again by the riverside, to be resolved, not by the temper of Harry and Bob, nor the sock on the jaw that precipitated Vernon-Smith into the river, but by Marjorie herself as she lashed into her brother with the home truths he richly deserved. Peter could not bear her tears of distress at the end of the bitter scene on the towpath. For a while he came to his senses and refused to have anything to do with the Bounder.

Then the Swiss holiday came into the story, bringing Vernon-Smith's attempt at moral blackmail of Marjorie to force her to accompany him and his cronies on an outing, otherwise he will do all he can to influence her brother again.

This unpleasant scheme is countered by Wharton suggesting to Marjorie that Hazeldene accompany him on the holiday to Switzerland which is being arranged by Colonel Wharton. Hazeldene accepted this invitation readily, immediately forgetting the Bounder's plans. Vernon-Smith's reaction is as predictable as it is disgraceful. He turned viciously on Wharton.

"You can gloat over me now. But I shall use Hazeldene as I please! He will be as wax in my hands. And then his sister....."

Wharton's brow darkened. "That's enough!" he said roughly.

"Pah! I tell you that I will cut you out with Marjorie Hazeldene. You shall see me do it, and then....."

This brief extract of dialogue sums up the more pernicious side of Vernon-Smith's character. Wisely, on this occasion Frank Richards did not allow the scene to develop into a fight, as a lesser author might have done. Instead, Wharton's controlled threats to Vernon-Smith should he ever mention Marjorie's name again in his hearing carry far more force and dignity than blows.

But the Bounder turns up in Switzerland with his millionaire parent and proceeds to tempt Hazeldene with the lure of the gambling tables. Hazeldene is easily corrupted, to the point of theft until Harry persuades the Colonel to intervene and get Hazeldene out of it all, for Marjorie's sake. Hazeldene repents, with the weak tearful gratitude of the offender bailed yet again, but only because he is terrified in case Marjorie and his family discover what he has done.

The earlier events concerning Marjorie show Vernon-Smith using her simply as a tool in his war of spite against Harry Wharton, as well as an effort to boost his ego before his cronies. Genuine affection, even respect for the girl, come a very poor second. But later this would change and be demonstrated in a chivalry completely unsuspected in the Bounder of Greyfriars.

(To be continued.)



FASCINATION LEADS TO AN INTRIGUING CHAIN OF EVENTS

Part One

By Ray Hopkins

Dig this scenario! Highly attractive but extremely devious schoolgirl gives the come-on to a schoolboy described by the author as "an unpopular junior, small and thin, and so round-shouldered that he looked hunch-backed." She, in turn, is described as "regarded by all the nice girls of the School as a "Little cat". (Shuffles of unease from members of The Old Girls weekly Periodical Club - branches in Hull, Filey and Accrington!) Not an updated re-write on the activities of Ursula Wade or Marcia Loftus, surely? Gasps of heartfelt relief when it is revealed that Moor View is the school alluded to, and not Morcove or Cliff House. No, this plot is from a 1926 NELSON LEE LIBRARY. And the leading characters as detailed above are Joan Tarrant of Moor View School, a feminine version of Bernard Forrest, the chief bad hat since Fullwood's reformation, and Enoch Snipe of the East House Fourth Form at St. Frank's.

Joan has the opportunity of being insincerely effusive to Snipe when her bag bounces off the handlebars of her bicycle. She has just passed the St. Frank's junior and he dashes forward and picks it up before she can brake and do this herself. "Ill-natured deception" is Joan's forte, and she responds to Snipe's pleasure in at last having an excuse to speak to her by saying the same thing back to him and sympathising with him on the way the other boys treat him (with scorn, mostly). She suggests they walk down the lane together into Bellton and there Snipe treats her to three sixpenny ice-creams. Joan decides to extend the little comedy, looking forward to the denouement when she is able to let Snipe down with an even bigger bump than she had originally planned. She suggests a friendly chat during a walk along a country lane and then amends this to perhaps not in the daytime when they might be seen by suspicious people who may misconstrue..... would he meet her at the stile that leads into the wood at ten o'clock that night? Snipe, brain awl at this pretty girl's interest, thinks that it will be awkward as it is after lock-ups. Joan chides him for his hesitancy and Snipe agrees to the proposal, not knowing that Joan is already forming the words in her mind as to how she is going to inform the Moor View girls of her duplicity, for she has no intention of breaking bounds to meet this incredibly besotted fool. She leaves him with a warm handshake and a sparkling look from her eyes. Snipe wanders around Bellton also rehearsing dialogue he will be able to spring on the St. Frank's fellows when he tells them about his marvellous new friendship with one of the Moor View girls.

One way that Snipe made himself extra pocket-money was to run errands for Seniors. Grayson of the Fifth had left his study clock for repair at the jeweller's in Bannington. Snipe had had to go to Bellton on foot to pick up his bicycle which was being repaired (had he not, the delightful first meeting with Joan Tarrant would not have taken place).

Waiting while the jeweller has gone to the room where he did his repairs, Snipe gazes idly at a Ladies gold wrist watch that had been left on the counter. It had been in his mind that he should take some little gift for Joan to be presented to her at the stile that night. The shop is empty and Snipe, brain still befuddled and thinking of Joan, slips the watch into his pocket. Then he comes to his senses and realises he has become a thief - not his nature at all - and puts his hand in his pocket to replace the watch.

But the jeweller has seen him from behind a showcase and threatens to call the police. He realises, however, that Snipe had had a change of heart and intended to put the watch back on the counter, but decides to teach him a lesson anyway. He tells Snipe that, if he will bring him five pounds by seven o'clock that evening, he can have the watch and the police will hear nothing of his indiscretion. Although Snipe doesn't know it, the good-natured jeweller realises the boy will be unable to raise the five pounds and will be back at seven pleading for mercy. He intends to listen to him sternly and then let him off with a warning which should stop his ever thinking of stealing again.

Snipe is not to know that he has encountered a shopkeeper caring enough to give him a valuable lesson for life. In a considerable state of shock as to where he is going to get five pounds or face utter disgrace and expulsion, a further nasty shock awaits him when, upon passing through Bellton on the way back to St. Frank's, he is halted by two of the nice girls from Moor View. Although they dislike him and don't wish to converse with him, they have such a strong sense of fair play, that as they unexpectedly bump into him they cannot let the chance pass.

Doris Berkeley and Mary Summers tell him that Joan Tarrant has been crowing about pulling one nicely over Enoch Snipe who has the audacity to believe she would actually be willing to break bounds to meet that insignificant creature at the stile that night. They tell him she never had any intention of keeping this assignation, and that only her unpleasant nature made her lead him on for she "regarded all boys with supercilious scorn."

So here is another valuable lesson for poor Snipe though he will have to grow much older and wiser the better to assess people and recognise them for what they really are and not what they say or look like.

(To be concluded)



FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON YVONNE

By Reg Hardinge

Donald V. Campbell's conjectures (C.D. December 1996) regarding the use of the whip that Yvonne is holding, made me chuckle. For Mr. Campbell's benefit, I should say that Val Reading was portraying a slim girl of 23 'riding a big chestnut, her face flushed with a warm colour, as she cracked a long stock whip, and sent a shaggy sheep dog flying around the mob of ewes she was mustering'. The conventional side-saddle technique, adopted by the ladies of the pre-World War One era who paraded themselves in Rotten Row and other such places, was not for this robust girl from Down Under. Val has

demonstrated how practical and down-to-earth he was in visualising so correctly the scene that was painted in words by G.H. Teed's narration.

When Tinker first saw Yvonne, the charming gamine of Binabong had matured into a cool, elegant beauty. She was then 29. Her studies in Europe, akin to a finishing school, had given her the polish and poise of a really fascinating woman.

Unfortunately there is no illustration of Yvonne in her ragged boy disguise. Part of the montage forming the front page of Union Jack number 485 depicts her on the race-track, but there is nothing in particular to distinguish her from one of the other (male) jockeys. I am, however, able to provide a reproduction of a unique incident in the lives of Yvonne and Blake - that pulsating moment when they gazed for the very first time into each other's eyes. Blake was then her prisoner on her rakish, white yacht.

(Editor's note: see this month's cover.)

MISTS AND PHANTOMS

by J.E.M.

Cribbing, swiping, borrowing - whatever you like to call it- has always been a feature of popular fiction. The Sexton Blake Saga certainly saw its share of derivative writing and was none the worse for that. Indeed, some famous old stories, dusted down and given the odd new twist, often brightened up the Baker Street scene no end.

Take the remarkable case of Blake's encounter with the elusive Mr. Mist recorded in the Union Jack back in 1928. This series of Tales by Gwyn Evans about a scientist who discovers how to make himself invisible obviously owes a whopping debt to the *The Invisible Man*, published over thirty years earlier. H.G. Wells' eponymous character and his *Union Jack* successor, Mr. Mist, have much in common. Both seek the power they believe their discovery will give them and both encounter difficulties they have not foreseen, Wells' frustrated protagonist finally going berserk. Mr. Mist has a further problem. Horribly disfigured in a laboratory explosion, he has become embittered by the revulsion people show at his hideous appearance.

Does this particular situation hint at yet another well-known piece of fiction? Is it too fanciful to think that Gwyn Evans might have been influenced by the story of that earlier disfigured outcast, *The Phantom of The Opera*? Though the novel by French author Gaston Leroux appeared before The First World War, it was later put on the screen with the unforgettable Lon Chaney as the tragic monster, Erik. The film was made in 1925 but was shown in Britain only after a considerable delay. Not very long, in fact, before Evans created his own tragic victim.....

At all events, Mr. Mist's horrendous accident and his response to it strongly echo *The Phantom*. We can also, perhaps, take the comparison with Leroux's story a bit further. As sharp-eyed critics often say, *cherchez la femme!* In *The Phantom*, Erik is besotted with a beautiful young singer, Christine. In two of the Evans stories, Mr. Mist develops an attachment to a ravishing young lady, one Patricia Chetwynd, wife of The Chancellor of the Exchequer, no less. This affection is inspired by her kindly response to Mist's pathetic state when, in rescuing her from a would-be thief, he reveals his appallingly injured face. He promptly pledges his devotion and offers future help should the lady ever need it. And, of course, very soon she does.

Many years before, as a mere teenager, Patricia Chetwynd was involved in a youthful indiscretion which now exposes her to blackmail. The villain concerned threatens to show her husband some rashly written letters if she does not try and steal the secrets of the forthcoming Budget. So now, in desperation, she turns to Mr. Mist. At this point, however, things start to get a little complicated. Remember, Sexton Blake himself is on the track of Mr. M. and, in earlier episodes, has already foiled one or two of his criminal

exploits. Will Blake's intervention lead to Mist's undoing? Will Mrs. Chetwynd nevertheless be ruined? You can find out by reading the whole series listed at the end.

So, there you are: H.G. Wells and - just possibly - Gaston Leroux inspiring a lively Blakian adventure by the incomparable Gwyn Evans. One thing bothers us a little, though. A recent book probing the inconsistencies and problems of some famous fiction asks why did H.G. Wells' Invisible Man have to suffer the gross discomfort of wandering about naked in the cold and wet when all he had to do was use his miraculous discovery to make his clothes invisible too? The same situation occurs again in the Gwyn Evans tales. More than once, Mr. Mist goes around muffled to the eyeballs to conceal his ugliness when, presumably, he could always have made himself *and* his clothing invisible. In the Wells story it is made quite clear at one point that the invisibility process is not confined to flesh and bones. So, a question not faced by the great H.G.W. was also dodged by Mr. Mist's creator as well.

But, perhaps, this is all something of a quibble. All the fiction mentioned here has brought, as they say, delight and pleasure to millions - and not just to readers. *The Phantom of The Opera* has been filmed at least three times as well as being turned (of course!) into a musical. *The Invisible Man* was also made into a highly successful film which inspired endless pastiches and parodies, including one epic about an invisible woman. The Mr. Mist stories themselves, suitably adapted, appeared on ITV many years ago (I think Bill Lofts might, perhaps, help with details of the latter).

The Mr. Mist stories: *The Man Who Walked By Night* (UJ 1277); *The Phantom of Scotland Yard* (UJ 1278); *The Great Budget Myatery* (UJ 1280); *The Mystery of The Missing Mace* (UJ 1281).

Footnote: Might not the very title of UJ 1278 also hint at a debt to *The Phantom of The Opera*, bearing in mind other similarities I have referred to.

Postscript:

I have just noticed an invasion of the Gremlins in my Blakian piece in the December C.D.

The Initials UJ (for Union Jack, written in full in the first line) have subsequently been turned into UK which many readers will interpret as United Kingdom! In several places this makes near-nonsense of what I wrote, see page 6, paras 1,2 and 3.

OUR GANG

By Bill Lofts

Our Gang was a very long series of short comedies featuring a collection of comedy child actors. Created by Hal Roach, the brilliant film director, they ran from 1922 to 1944 having an astonishing run of 221 films. According to Hal Roach, he had originally got the idea when producing a short series entitled 'Sunshine Sammy Comedies' that featured a black boy. However this did not exactly catch on; there seemed to be something missing. One day whilst looking out of his top tall office window, his attention was diverted to a group of small children in a builders' yard who were playing about with some wooden planks. They were certainly a mixed bag in the physical sense - the fat boy, pretty girl, the black boy wearing a bowler hat too small for him, and the Leader, with cap and freckles. There was also the mongrel dog joining in the fun of bounding and jumping about. Hal Roach found himself laughing at their antics, and so the idea of Our Gang was born. Some boy and girl actors had already been used in his comedies and others were soon found in talent shows. So the first film appeared in 1922. Some of the actors were Joe Cobb, a chubby good natured sort; Mary Kornman, the sweet and attractive girl for whom, young male audiences developed big crushes; Mickey Daniels, the freckled-face Leader

who could pull the most extraordinary boss-eyed faces I have ever seen - and also Jackie Conden, and Allen 'Farina' Hoskins, a small black girl. Another addition was the dog, Pete the Pup. He must have been the biggest puppy I have ever seen! He also had a most extraordinary thin black ring round his right eye. Pete was very clever and used to bury his head between his paws when he had seen members of the gang do something which they shouldn't. I must have seen all the early silent Pathé instalments at my local cinema when a boy of seven. They were classed as one or two reels, and were quite old then - some so old that they kept breaking down and having to be repaired whilst the audience of kids had to wait. They certainly did not accept this quietly, but with whistles, cat-calls and the stamping of feet. But what happy days they were then! Apart from mischief and getting into scrapes, Our Gang did do some good at times by helping old widows in distress from grasping Landlords or swindling-shopkeepers who gave them short weight. Our Gang were of course from the working class population, and often had feuds with the rich children, who were portrayed as spiteful, nasty, sulky and pampered. Memories can play tricks, after so many years, but I would have sworn that Jackie Searle occasionally played the rich boy with the traditional sailor suit, although he was actually in another spin-off series entitled 'Smittie'. In later years he played in cowboy films. With his sulky type of face he was fated to be type-cast in similar mean-looking roles.

A big bugbear with child film actors was that boys in reaching puberty entered the lanky stage and had to be replaced. Girl 'stars' went on much longer, and were more dainty than some of today's who, at 13, are over six foot and built like Amazons!

However, two still remembered replacements probably could be called the kings of all the hundreds who appeared in the *Our Gang* films. 'Spanky' MacFarland was chubby as a baby and his Mother put him at an early age to commercial use in modelling. His nickname sprang from times when he was naughty, and his mother threatened to spank him and the name stuck. He joined *Our Gang* at the age of three, with great success, around 1930, and soon became their Leader. There had been a big reshuffle around 1929, when the group included Jackie Cooper, Dickie Moore, and Scotty Beckett, all famous child stars apart from the *Our Gang* scene. Cooper only made eight appearances, then left to make his own version of the *Our Gang* idea.



Half a dozen heads poked themselves out, revealing six grinning faces.

Around 1930 'Stymie' - real name Mathew Beard - appeared in the shows. He was a very small black boy, who wore the bowler hat that was too small for him. He was so popular that when the Amalgamated Press launched *Radio Fun* in 1938 to combat Thomson's *Beano* and *Dandy* they had 'Stymie' solo in their strips, drawn by their top artist Roy Wilson. An added attraction was that he had a Magic Wishbone. 'Stymie' died in 1981. *Dandy* had already obtained the rights from Hal Roach for *Our Gang*, drawn by

their most brilliant artist Dudley Watkins. Going back some years *Kinema Comic* featured the famous short comedy feature in February 1922, illustrated by George Wakefield. In 1936 one of the *Our Gang* films entitled "Bored of Education" won an Academy Award which was certainly a great honour for a short feature. In 1938 Hal Roach surprised everyone by selling all the rights of 'Our Gang' to M.G.M.

They say that imitation is the highest form of flattery, and there was none more than in the case of Hal Roach's creation. There were dozens of imitations with characters such as the traditional fat boy and the small black child. One of them actually featured the very young Shirley Temple when she still wore a napkin. (As I admitted in my earlier note, I had confused Jackie Searle with the *Our Gang* characters).

The last *Our Gang* film was in 1944, entitled 'Tale of a Dog' and it had of course changes from the original casts: Billy 'Buckwheat' Thomas, Cordwell 'Bigshot' Nickman, Bobby 'Mickey' Blake, Billy 'Froggy' Laughlin, Janet Burston, and Dickie Hall. (I have never seen films of this late period as I was involved in Burma jungle warfare at the time.)

They were certainly not the end of *Our Gang*. In 1955 '*Our Gang*' was offered to the ever-growing T.V. audiences but because of some American copyright law, the title had to be changed to *The Young Rascals*. According to friends in the U.S.A., the films on T.V. were cut a great deal. As far as I know they have never been shown in England (but I may be wrong). Should they appear, you can be sure that I would be glued to my chair, and transported back to the times of pure comedy and some of the happiest days of my life.

(Editor's Note: Our next issue will include the first part of Bill's history of FILM FUN.)

Screamingly funny adventures of the most popular of all Kinema Comedy Kiddies. You have laughed at them on the films, and you will laugh at them again now.



HAMILTON, BROOKS AND CRICKET. By Colin Cole

I refer to the very interesting article by Peter Mahony starting in CD No. 597. I was particularly interested in the comments about Greyfriars cricket.

Peter mentions cricket selection at Greyfriars with reference to the Remove/Junior selection of teams. The problem as to who would skipper a Junior cricket eleven, is who would have this privilege? Would this responsibility fall on the shoulders of Wharton, Temple, Hobson or somebody else?

If there should be a junior election to decide who would be junior captain, we will say, for convenience, that Wharton would be the Remove candidate. We can draw the inference from Hamilton's writings that the Remove are a more numerous form than the Upper Fourth and the Shell. Members of each form would naturally vote for their particular candidate, and, unless the vote is split, Wharton would win the election. There may be further doubt, of course, if the Third and Second forms were to take part in the election.

Most of the Greyfriars stories are concentrated around the Remove as it has far more real characters, as opposed to just names. Should either an Upper Fourth or Shell candidate win the election, the structure of the stories may be affected.

What do we know about the Upper Fourth? Temple, Dabney, Fry, Wilkinson, Scott? Few real characters there. In the Shell, there are even fewer characters, with Hobson, Hoskins, Stewart. The remainder are just names.

The situation is entirely different in the St Jim's and Rookwood stories, where characters are more evenly spread.

It is very difficult to assess the playing abilities of individual members of the Remove cricket team. We know from the stories that Wharton is a brilliant batsman, Hurree Singh a demon bowler and Vernon-Smith an excellent all-rounder. One cannot comment on the skills of Tom Brown, Squiff or Toddy, for example.

Fry, Scott, of the Upper Fourth and Hobson and Stewart are mentioned as players who could be included in a Junior eleven which would theoretically make it more formidable than a Remove only team.

There is, in fact, no proof that a combined junior team could be selected in such a way as to make it more formidable than a Remove only team. We can glean very little from the stories concerning the prowess of the four players from the higher forms. Another point is that one does not necessarily create the ideal cricket or football team by including all the more accomplished players.

I think it is a fallacy to imagine that Hamilton "dropped" Bulstrode from the stories merely for cricket reasons. From 1911-12 onwards Bulstrode's role declined. Originally a bully, but less so after the death of his young brother Herbert, the decline was speeded after the arrival of Bolsover - a bigger and better bully. Moreover the names are similar, and Bulstrode and several other members of the Remove suffered from the pruning of Removites which took place during the 'middle period' of the Greyfriars stories.

Cricket and Football, although naturally important at a Public School like Greyfriars, were only part of a central plot in any of the stories.

Wharton tried whenever possible, for example, to select Hazeldene because it would please Hazel's sister, Marjorie. If anything went wrong during the game, Wharton would be blamed because Hazel had played badly (possibly because Hazel had Joey Banks and the race at Wapshot on his mind). The plot would centre on Hazel or Wharton, not cricket or football.

On occasion, Vernon-Smith would let the team down by not being present for the match. The Bounder's reason for his absence, either for good or evil, would be the centre of the plot, not the match.

The sporting aspects of life at Greyfriars were useful ingredients in a plot but were subsidiary to the central plot.

Wanted: 'With Frederick the Great in Silesia' by G.A. Henty. Good price paid for a copy in good condition. M. Waters, 11 Abbots Way, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire. NN8 2AF.

URGENTLY REQUIRED: The Ranger 1st Series (1931/33) No's 72, 105, 115. The Ranger 2nd Series (1933/35) No. 42. The Thriller (1929/1940) No's 65, 114, 442, 454, 464. Good prices paid. Contact Bill Bradford, 5 Queen Anne's Grove, Ealing London W5 3XP. Tel. 0181-579-4670.

Five pounds paid for a copy of the rules of the game "Up For The Cup", which was given away with the Thomson paper "Adventure" on March 10th 1934. Contact Ben Bligh, Tel. No: 0161-483-7627.

Wanted: Toy and games catalogues from the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. Ben Bligh, 55 Arundale Avenue, Hazel Grove, Cheshire, SK7 5LD.

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 23283.

Wanted: Schoolgirls' Own Library (first series-all numbers, second series 1-230) Schoolboys' Own Library (all issues) Schoolgirls' Picture Library (1-100). ALISON AINSWORTH, 82 SHAKESPEARE CRES, FRASER ACT 2615 AUSTRALIA.

Apologies to Jack Wilson of Prescott, Merseyside, whose telephone number was incorrectly shown in the C.D. Annual. Please note that the correct number is 0151-426-2046.

A LETTER FROM E. GRANT McPHERSON

To all my friends in the S.W. Club and to readers of the C.D.

As most of you will not know, my house caught fire a couple of months ago, resulting in some months' stay in hospital for me and in kennels for 'Snoopy'.

Considerable damage was caused to 'Tynings' but I am hoping to be back there by about the end of February. Meanwhile I would like to send greetings to all, and apologies for not replying to those who sent me cards. This is because most of my paperwork was destroyed along with address books.

So, a Happy New Year to all, and I hope to see friends again in the near future.

With best wishes from
'MAC' (and 'Snoopy')

A RECIPE FOR BUNTER

by Una Hamilton Wright

Many people have speculated on the origins of Billy Bunter. Was he modelled on someone that Charles Hamilton knew? I think the answer lies not in the singular but in the plural. The Fat Owl is an amalgam of many relations, friends and other acquaintances.

Charles Hamilton always drew on the familiar. Even the foreign-based stories had familiar backgrounds by the time the author had researched his overseas settings. The derivations of the normal characters are easily found among the members of his circle - Mr. Quelch stemmed from the author's middle sister, Edie, who kept order grimly but justly among her younger siblings; Coker came from brother Dick - in the same form at school although two years older - plus a little of my father; Gussy was brother Douglas, who also contributed to Lord Mauleverer. Harry Wharton was the author's best friend from whom he was parted at sixteen as a result of a house removal. Bob Cherry was the youthful version of a retired Colonel whom Charles had met on holiday. Hurree Janset Ram Singh was an Indian gentleman whom the author met on the steps of a London Hotel. And of course Johnny Bull got his North Country obstinacy from my father. Most of the baddies, such as Loder, and the clientele of the racecourse and the pubs, contained portraits of the author's father. And lastly, both Frank Nugent and Herbert Vernon Smith included different aspects of their creator.

But who was Bunter? In an interview Charles said that he supposed there must be a bit of Bunter in himself as an author always put a bit of himself into every character. So where is Bunter in his author? The Owl of the Remove inherited his creator's sweet tooth though Charles lacked the endless capacity for food. The big round spectacles and short sight were shared with a very generous aunt who eventually became blind. She also contributed to the plumpness. My mother's defective sight has sometimes been cited as the origin of Bunter's, erroneously, as mother wore only pince-nez at the time of Bunter's debut - it was to be another twenty years before she was to wear big round spectacles. It is common knowledge that Bunter's Postal Order came from the author's eldest brother, Alex, who was always expecting a cheque in settlement of a business debt. As I have postulated before, I think Bunter owes something to Jack Brimblecombe from Charles Kingsley's *WESTWARD HO!*, the young Charles Hamilton's favourite and much-read novel.

Lastly, there is Bunter's gift for ventriloquism, the Fat Owl's one talent; for his author declared that everybody was clever at *some-thing*.

But there is more to Bunter than fatness, and huge spectacles and financial expectations. There is his appetite - as opposed to his taste; there is his greed; his dishonesty, which falls short of actually stealing money; his lies, his meanness, his prevarication, his unreliability and disloyalty, his laziness, his procrastination. In fact, listed like this, his imperfections would make him the personification of the 'Horrible Example', beloved by the writers of Victorian moral tales for the young, of which, while his father was alive, the author had suffered not a few for Sunday reading.

Along with these sins there were lesser failings such as ignorance, credulity, slowness on the uptake, unreasonable optimism, conceitedness, boastfulness, untidiness, carelessness, self-centredness and utter disregard for other people's rights or feelings. To Bunter, obligation was an unknown concept.

Where do we go to look for the role-model for this iniquitous package assembled in human form? Who, or what, was there in the author's background that could have supplied the blueprint?

Charles was the sixth child in his family. Below him were two more siblings: his brother Douglas, three years his junior and hard of hearing which, unjustifiably, made him appear slow; and there was his sister Dolly, my mother, five years younger. From her third year there started the eye trouble which was to plague her all her life. When Charles

was making up his first nursery stories these two younger ones were still babies, and always hungry. In fact, all the Hamilton children were always hungry - their mother being an atrocious cook. 'Killumquicks' was the name they invented for her boiled puddings. Charles was always a strong and healthy boy and he was very sorry for Douglas and Dolly. I think this family situation generated his concern for helping lame dogs over styles, a trait which was outstandingly evident all through his life. Because he was very fond of his younger brother and sister, when he transferred their babyish characteristics to the Fat Owl he also transferred his affection as well. The reader always senses that the author is fond of Bunter despite his exasperating qualities.

There is a certain self-centred determination and obstinacy about toddlers and these naturally found their way into Bunter. If one thinks of Billy Bunter as an infant he becomes more believable. "Go and see what Baby's doing and tell him he mustn't" would apply to him admirably. I think Bunter drew his lesser failings from the author's younger brother and sister - as seen through the eyes of a kindly youth. Little children *are* credulous, optimistic, conceited, boastful, untidy and careless, and they have no ideas about other people's feelings.

But do the author's little siblings really account for *all* the undesirable qualities that comprise Billy Bunter? What else in the author's background could have contributed to the deplorable behaviour in my first list, the greed, the dishonesty, the lies, the laziness, the self-indulgent comfort-seeking?

There were always cats in the Hamilton household. Not just *one* cat, but cats - any number from three to nine. On one occasion there were even thirteen when the mother cat had produced an enormous litter. All the children loved the cats, Dolly particularly. She was a soft touch for any stray cat and so she was rather like the Pied Piper of Hamlyn, only her retinue consisted of cats, not children. She never had more than three dolls on the active list at the same time. There were other dolls who were retired or perhaps needed mending, but three was the number available for play. So when larger numbers were required, the cats were pressed into service. Charles had seen them dressed in bonnets and shawls and stuffed into the dolls' pram looking just as unwilling and unnatural as Bunter in a Latin class. He had seen the naked greed of newly arrived strays pushing aside the host cats and stealing their food; he had seen the feline raids on the pantry and sister Edie's indignation, forcefully expressed. And surely Bunter's idiotic lies stem from a cat's blank look of injured innocence, the look which says 'You can't hit me, I'm the family favourite'. And the laziness and the comfort - seeking - Bunter's monopolising of the most comfortable chair in the Rag and his preference for lazing indoors on a half-holiday afternoon - who else but a cat could have been the inspiration? Who has not stepped back on to the paw of a cat who has silently stationed itself behind one's heel, particularly at food preparation times, and been greeted by the YAROOH! of injured feline dignity?

Charles was very fond of cats, and in later life he joined the Cats' Protection League and could never understand how anyone could be cruel to such delightful creatures. The deplorable traits which we take for granted in the behaviour of our cats were part of Billy Bunter's makeup and he, like the cats, still kept his place in his author's affections. "I say, you fellows!" is the cat's opening gambit while purring and rubbing its head against your legs and thinking of food all the time. How often must Charles have explained to a cat that it was not feeding-time *now*, and been rewarded with an "Oh, *really* Wharton!" It is said that owners don't train cats but that cats train their owners. The Hamilton felines trained Charles so well that he was able to create a faultless word-picture of BUNTER THE FATCAT!

(Copyright Una Hamilton Wright)

THE RAMBLINGS OF A BOOK COLLECTOR

By George B. Sewell

Book collecting began in a very small way for me with just three objectives in mind; to complete a set of Giles Annuals, to fill the gaps in my Rupert Collection, and to acquire all the Swallows and Amazons books, not necessarily first editions, written by Arthur Ransome.

A simple task, until I became diverted, tempted, side-tracked, distracted and generally hampered towards the goal I had set myself. Needless to say my Rupert Collection is still incomplete and now I suppose that it would be true to describe me as a bookaholic, a condition also known as bibliomania.

About a quarter of a century ago I commenced work at Galloway and Porter, the Cambridge bookshop, and it was here that I became a colleague of Edward Baldock a regular Greyfriars enthusiast, who also contributes articles to the C.D. Ted was instrumental in introducing me to the world of Greyfriars and its architect, Frank Richards. He would order a copy of every book that Howard Baker published and soon I was joining him in poring over the latest offerings from 27A, Arterbury Road: Ted looking to see what was coming next and I looking at the back numbers and wondering how many I could afford.

During one of these perusals I became aware of a book by W.G. Lofts and D.J. Adley entitled *The Men Behind Boys Fiction*; purchasing a copy I was amazed and enthralled to find out how much, in this genre, had been written. This set me off on a different tack altogether, other stories about schoolboys and their escapades must be good reading too, so yet another dimension to my activities was added. Shortly afterwards I purchased a book called *A Born School Captain* by W.J. Batchelor, a really ripping read. As short search failed to locate any other books by this author I wrote to W.G. Lofts, esq. and asked about the author in question. The reply came back "He only wrote this book". Bill went on to say that if I was seriously interested in schoolboy stories I should not hesitate to visit the premises of Norman Shaw. So in the mid-seventies my wife and I trekked off to Crystal Palace station and thence to the address Bill had given. Norman appeared larger than life, so it seemed to us, and after giving us the 'once-over', for we had arrived without an appointment, he admitted us to that Aladdin's Cave of delights. Three things stand out from that trip; in an upstairs room stood a bookcase full of the works of G.A. Henty and others. The window was three-quarter sheeted against the afternoon sun, which, undeterred, streamed brilliantly through the remaining quarter catching the gold-blocked spines. This sight made us gasp, for it was the same reaction that one gets when standing in front of a medieval stained-glass window. ABSOLUTELY MAGNIFICENT. The second incredible thing was the bookcase inside the front door, this was crammed to overflowing with superbly bound volumes of the 'Captain'; those lovely purple bindings with the figure on the spine, with the amazingly long muffler, instantly transport me back to that red-letter day. The last recollection is of Norman's Filing System, three capacious boxes stuffed to the gunwales with requests for material. 'Haven't time to list' he rumbled, 'it has to be all, some, a little, or nothing'. We gazed, gawped, bought a few items and returned to the mundane world outside.

Shortly afterward I began a collection of 'Biggles', I had one 'Biggles' book that I had picked up at a jumble sale, this was 'Biggles takes a holiday'. I had enjoyed the story but had thought no more about collecting W.E. Johns until John Pearson published his 'biography' of James Bigglesworth. I was discussing this with Derek Gibbons, who at that time sold books in Green Street, Cambridge and he urged me to make up my own

mind about 'Biggles' by enlarging my knowledge of his activities. Through Derek I obtained several dealers' addresses including that of Sarah Baddiel, and the two Marys who ran The Portman Bookstore in Wandsworth. I was launched on my quest and have had many happy hours with 'Biggles and Co'.



Enid Blyton's Famous Five
drawn by Eileen Soper.

Rupert with family and friends,
by A.E. Bestall.





DIMSIE, with Hilary Garth, drawn by Mary Reeves.

Further diversions were around the corner for in the early nineteen-seventies the Lions Club ran several booksales in Cambridge and it was here that I first bought books written by E.J. Oxenham, E. Brent-Dyer, Angela Brazil and D. Fairlie-Bruce. However, my interest in schoolgirl stories began when I read *Tales of Melling School* by Margaret Biggs. This book belongs to my wife, and after a bout of 'flu I picked it up and to my surprise was soon immersed in the stories and, because the writing seemed so natural, I decided to investigate further and so the collecting activities widened. I did and still do enjoy 'Dimsie'. She seems to me to be one of the most 'natural' characters created by the 'Big Four', perhaps it is her inbred common-sense and total lack of 'side' that make here one of the most endearing creatures of juvenile literature, although to be absolutely fair I must include Tamsin Grey, heroine of the pony stories of the Romney Marsh, told so brilliantly by Monica Edwards. Tamsin has a 'conscience' and this sense of "right" keeps her character 'fresh' whereas if her author had just let her loose to run headlong into any situation the stories would lose a great deal of their appeal, and to a certain extent the same criteria can be given to Lindsay Thornton from the 'Punchbowl Farm' series by the same author.

Will all these titles to search for, it became apparent that I would need a small notebook to carry around. A small hardbacked book was purchased and for a year lived happily in my jacket pocket. Unfortunately it, like Topsy 'grew', except like Topsy it didn't stop. Once folks discovered that I was scouting around the bookshops they gave me their lists of 'wants'. The 'office' as I nicknamed the book has now increased in size from a mere quarter inch to more than two inches, is held together by elastic bands and spends a great deal of its life in my briefcase except when on holiday when it resides quite happily in the outside of my very large backpack. I found, at an early stage, that one must be prepared for any eventuality, the most innocent-looking collectors fair or jumble sale may contain the very items that you are looking for and, imagine the frustration, if you are unable to remove them because of lack of forethought; or if you do, you end up resembling the local 'bag-person'. Now I rarely travel without a backpack of some description plus an adequate supply of carrier bags, and with this method I have managed to transport FIVE FEET of books. I remember going into a jumble sale in St.Ives and picking up 40 Schoolgirls Own Libraries for 5p each. Recently I seen similar copies priced at £2-£3, so I can count that as a bargain. Here I must admit the influence of comics upon my activities; when I was about 10 years old my aunt in Canada sent numerous consignments of brightly coloured comic magazines. These were mostly published by Dell and therefore contained good wholesome reading. The stories featured the western writings of Zane Grey and Max Brand, the antics of Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, the adventures of Tarzan, Sergeant King of the Mounties, Tom Corbett, Space Cadet, Range Rider and many others, these led me to read the authors concerned and later, when I started collecting seriously, to acquire them and avidly devour the contents. Further 'bonuses' in the reprint arena were to follow, Hawk Books excellent productions of Dan Dare gave countless 'Eagle' fans the chance to relive those early, heady, day of interplanetary exploration, these sit quite happily beside the other favourites which include the yellow coloured spines of the immensely popular immortal W.G. Bunter. One of the happiest reprints to happen was the decision of D.C. Thomson to allow stories from the 'golden age' of the Beano and Dandy to be available again. I read voraciously of the Adventures of Black Bob, Red Rory of the Eagles, and not only because of the excellent story-line and the excitement that went with it but more than anything else the brilliance of the drawing in both sets: much can be attributed to Dudley D. Watkins but the other artists in the Thomson 'Stable' worked to an extremely high standard and this factor makes these annuals feature quite large in my collecting hobby.

Dudley Watkins illustrated four 'classics', which appeared as books in their own right and are worth acquiring.

Collecting Rupert set me off on the trail of Alfred Bestall, who was extremely prolific, illustrating for 'Punch' and also doing many covers for the Schoolgirls Own Annual. He also illustrated 'The Play's the Thing' by Enid Blyton and this brings me to another favourite, Eileen Soper. Now most people equate Enid Blyton with the 'Famous Five' and true, she created them in textual form but it was Eileen's skilful drawings that have given us the characters we have come to regard with affection. I was fortunate to see a Soper porcelain figurine in the Royal Worcester Porcelain Museum, created in 1941 it shows a small girl embracing a black spaniel. The girl is unmistakably a prototype for Anne and the spaniel could be a double for 'Loony'. My appreciation, of course, led me to collect books that Eileen had written and illustrated, so that I have the 'Five' books and a fair number of her wildlife books, including the exquisite "Wildings". One of my earliest books was called 'The Farmyard' and I read and re-read this book until the front and rear covers disintegrated, recently I discovered the remains and sure enough it was Eileen that had brought the whole subject beautifully alive. She also drew large pictures for use in schools to accompany a story that usually lasted twenty minutes, and I have been lucky enough to find a three-quarter set of these and now all I have to do is complete it. In the 1970s the BBC serialised 'Anne of Green Gables' with Kim Braden playing the leading role, I watched and was conquered by this red-headed slip of a girl and so began my search for the rest of Lucy Maud Montgomery's writings which I managed to acquire quite quickly. I have read and enjoyed her 'journals' although it is well-known that, in later years she did alter and amend passages that she felt could be better expressed or deleted altogether. I have books about Lucy Montgomery which range from gentle biographies to scholarly appraisals of her work and its place in the literature of North America. Nonetheless *Anne of Green Gables* is one of my favourite heroines, whether imagined my myself or played on the screen by Kim Baden or Megan Fellows. She epitomises the struggle to succeed against all odds, and when you think about it most of us are trying to do just that, whether in real life or just following the fortunes of our heroes and heroines in fiction. Here, of course, is another conundrum, does one now collect the video of the film of the book? My own feeling is YES, but only IF the film or video is a true characterisation of the book.

I mentioned at the start of my ramble, 'Giles', and my pursuit of his work: recently I picked up a drawing, it was obviously 'Giles' but it wasn't signed and yet it had that unmistakable 'air' about it that could not be ignored. I found the verification for it in a bibliography produced by Jim Allinson, a well-known cartoon expert. It was a Giles drawing that had been used for a Quick-Brew advertising campaign in 1958. Giles is a fascinating subject for collectors, and anyone possessing a full set of the Annuals has a wonderful commentary on the social and economic history of Britain from 1943 to 1990. My belief is that the subject matter chosen and the treatment meted out by Giles cannot be bettered. Peter Tory, the journalist, has written several books on Giles and his world, and these are hilarious and very worthwhile reading. Giles was a great sailor and his love of the sea was shared by Arthur Ransome, whose books are brilliant masterpieces of the art of combining fact with fiction. This 'balancing act' is extremely difficult to achieve, but Ransome's descriptions were so vivid and accurate that a Swedish man took his family sailing on a lake with only the knowledge that he had acquired by reading the 'Swallows and Amazons' books.

This mention of 'Background Information' has led me to collect books about monastic buildings of England. After all Greyfriars has its share of ruins and very useful secret passages, and E.J. Oxenham's *Abbey Girls* had more than their fair share of underground adventures, and countless other scholastic encounters owed much to the

ingenuity of the medieval craftsman whose ability to disguise and conceal allowed many a resourceful fourth-former to right wrongs that would have otherwise gone unpunished.

I have, over the years, accumulated quite a collection of books, and to decrease this I decided to take a stall at a local collectors fair. This has had an effect; I have managed to decrease my duplicates. On the other hand folks have come to me and I have been unable to refuse the 'goodies' they have offered me. On one occasion I set off for a fair with 18 smallish boxes and returned with 22, which as my spouse reminded me was not the object of the exercise. I must admit I do more talking than selling at the fair. So many people see 'my Memory Lane Books' that they stop and talk about the books which they had as children, and quite a lot of fresh information can be gained in this way. Someone can always add a little bit more to the knowledge that one already possesses.

Now I must turn to the people who have helped collectors the most, the bibliographers, Bill Lofts with his work with Derek Adley; Mary Cadogan, with Patricia Craig, and also her own solo works; Bill and John Beck for the Rupert Indexes, Robert Kirkpatrick with his 'Bullies, Beaks and Flannelled Fools' and Sue Sims who, with Robert, is putting together a bibliography of School Stories. Thanks are also due to all those authors who have taken the time to make lists of 'interesting reading' at the end of their books. Taking the time patiently to research, diligently track down and tenaciously follow tenuous 'leads' so that others may have the benefit deserves far greater reward; hopefully they will realise that their efforts help to forge friendships. I have made many through my collecting activities, and many of them have stimulated interest in other areas of collecting. Through the efforts of everyone I have come to enjoy what I consider to be the most wonderful, absorbing, frustrating, time-consuming, wallet-emptying pastime that one could ever wish to be involved in; the world of book-collecting.

FORUM

From Margery Woods:

One of the great delights about CD is finding an article that instantly evokes memories of a similar experience. George Beal's heart-warming piece about CHATTERBOX ANNUAL and The Caravan Cousins instantly brought happy memories to me, of a story in CHATTERBOX ANNUAL in 1934 by Sidney Baldwin entitled Sannibal Sands. I read and re-read this story till I knew it by heart and its island joined the other special places in my imagination. But in spite of a reasonable knowledge of geography and a great deal of adult research into islands for my other job I never thought that Sannibal Sands was a



"This is my daughter!"

real place, nor had I ever seen it mentioned in travel books, until a couple of years ago when two travel writers featured it within weeks of each other. I hunted out the now

battered annual and looked at the illustrations, then put the book away again; I did not want to read the story again all these years later; I was afraid of destroying the magic. Do any of our experts have any info about Sidney Baldwin, and can anyone identify the illustrator (if space permits its printing)? These are tantalisingly familiar yet I can't place the artist.

(*Editor's note:* I had hoped to be able to identify this artist for Margery but so far haven't uncovered the name. I'm sure that I've seen his (or her) pictures in *Little Folks*, and also illustrating girls' stories in various annuals.)

From Ted Baldock:

I thoroughly enjoyed George Beal's 'Magic Story of the Past' in the October issue. His search for the elusive *Chatterbox* Annual! What a whole carillon of bells it set ringing in my memory. The dear old *Chatterbox* was a firm favourite with my sister and myself. It never failed to appear at Christmas time. It was a lovely compendium of so many things. Would that we could have been gifted with the foresight to preserve them..... The illustrations accompanying the article were like meeting old friends once more. Those Annuals were certainly one of the good things of our childhood.

From Peter Mahony:

Could any reader identify S.O.L. No. 136 for me please? It was published in November 1930. It is not listed in any of the Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood or St. Frank's canons. Therefore, I assume it is another 'odd' story, like Cedar Creek, Packsaddle, Grimslade etc. It is the only one of the 412 S.O.L.S. that I have been unable to identify. If someone can solve the mystery - please do.

From Naveed Haque:

You know that I and others had been wondering who was that mysterious individual 'Nemo' who illustrated the first cover of the C.D Annual (and I find now the No.2 as well).

Well only yesterday I had gone out late (for a drink and dinner) with friends, and upon my return home I decided to relax with one issue of the monthly C.D of former years. I just picked one out at random from my bookshelf, and it was the C.D for April 1955 (the 100th Anniversary issue). And I found out the identity of 'Nemo'! On page 90 - I assume the pages had been numbered consecutively over several issues - Herbert Leckenby had been recalling past events. He comments: 'There have been one or two others who were once regular correspondents who suddenly disappeared from our circle, never to be heard of again. One was Tom Martin of Bristol. As 'Nemo' he drew the cover pictures of our first two Annuals and also wrote articles for the C.D'.

So it was an individual called Tom Martin! I wonder if he was related to that book dealer Bill Martin.

'Nemo' also reminds me of that kidnapper in the Kranz/Cherry kidnapping series, in which Maully distinguished himself so well. I wonder if Mr. Martin had this series in mind, when he used the 'Nobody' pseudonym (or perhaps he thought of Jules Verne's character)!

From Horace Dilley:

What a super Fifty Year Celebratory edition of the C.D.! And I can well imagine your truly golden glow!

As readers, we are so grateful for the effort that you have put in and to all the many contributors who have played such an important part.

We also owe so much to the Founder, previous editors and to so many others who have helped to keep alive, those rich and precious moments of our younger days.

I remember when I was a lad, counting the days and almost the hours, when the next issues of the Magnet, Gem and Nelson Lee would be in my (perhaps grubby) hands. I celebrated my 80th birthday two or three weeks ago and the recent issue of the C.D. knocked 60 to 70 years off my age!

I came across a piece of nostalgia the other day. A list of old boys' books offered for sale by Bill Martin. The edition was Winter 1958 and Bill described himself as "world famous for old boys' books". "Cables: superb Used, London".

At the time, I was trying to replace Magnets etc. It was a gradual process as money was a little bit tight. Soon after the outbreak of the war, the call for paper salvage was made and I donated some 2,000 periodicals which about filled one of the large tea chests which were prominent at the time.

Browsing through Bill's list, why ever didn't I purchase stacks and stacks of books? But I don't suppose that then I had the money to spare!

I would have been happy to have snapped up 50 Magnets between 1403 - 1683 price £5. 50 different Union Jacks between Nos. 1160 - 1443 price 75/- . 2 Bound Volumes written by Sir Winston Churchill, price 21/- each. Chatterbox Annual 1921 price 5/-. Complete file of Collectors' Digest Annuals from 1947 to 1958. Please state your requirements. 1st Volume Ever of the Boys' Own Paper containing nos. 1 - 35 Nice Condition Leather Bound price £1. 15. 0. Lot of Fun (1907 - 1914) 24/- dozen. Puck Comic (1908 - 1920) 24/- dozen. Also in stock Penny Dreadfuls and Fierce Boys Journals Union Jacks, Runs of 26 copies £2. 0. 0. Album of Cigarette cards, most rare over 40 years old £2. 2. 0.

And so I could go on and on. Hundreds of lots. Sheer nostalgia. What fragrant memories are unearched. I wonder where all these items are today?

From Martin Waters (Some comments on the Annual):

Matt Braddock:

Des O'Leary has done a top class job in his article on this popular Thomson character. I would only disagree with him on one minor point.. Brad's wage of £4-11-6d per week would be an exceptionally good wage for the 1930's. A wage of about £3.00 per week would be about average for a manual worker at this time and many would receive less. Brad's wages as a steeplejack would be on a par with a senior police constable or with a yard foreman (the highest paid member of the 'wages staff' on the railways in the 1930s).

Members of the fair sex do not often feature in the Thomson boys' papers, but to some extent the Braddock stories were an exception. In the course of one series Matt and George Bourne operate from a civilian airfield. The control tower at this base is run by a dignified lady in late middle age who wears tweeds and is a constant knitter.... we now know where Miss Jane Marple spent her war service! On occasions Matt seeks the assistance of an elderly retired governess, who has spent most of her working life in Germany and has retained a large collection of picture postcards. "I well remember the vicinity of the Rossbach gorge, Sergeant Braddock, when I was employed by Graf von

Schwerwin, I used to take his children for picnics in the vicinity of the gorge. If you wish to attack the power station at the foot of the gorge, you will have to use a smaller aircraft than your Lancaster for the gorge is very narrow”.

The (von) Stalheim family and its place in German military history.

Readers of Jennifer Schofield's article, and students of Biggles and his adventures may be surprised to learn that there was once an officer named Stalheim in the German service. During the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), Frederick the Great added a large number of 'Free Battalions' to his army. These were bands of irregulars who engaged in patrolling and raiding and were intended to deal with the Austrian Superiority in light forces.

These battalions were comprised of footloose individuals from all over Europe, attracted by the prospect of loot and plunder without the rigorous discipline of the regular Prussian service.

The officers of the Free Battalions were among some of the most colourful characters who have ever graced the pages of military history. Noteworthy were Friedrich von Steuben, the future drillmaster of George Washington's army at Valley Forge, and the Dutch professor, Charles Guichardt, an expert on Roman history whose research provided the background for Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire'....

I cannot provide any information on the career of Major Stalheim at this stage. He did not have the prefix 'von' in front of his name, so it is likely that he was of middle class origin. The Free Battalions were disbanded after the war, and most of their officers were dismissed from the service with scant thanks for their efforts. The Great Frederick was prepared to use middle class officers together with former NCOs who had been commissioned from the ranks when his tiny kingdom was engaged in a desperate struggle for survival with almost the whole of Europe. However 'Old Fritz' disliked non-noble officers, and when his army returned to a peacetime footing, he got rid of 'unsuitable' officers as



Men of the Free Battalions (Menzel)

quickly as possible. Our friend Stalheim may have been transferred to the Hussars or to a Garrison Infantry Regiment, but most likely he would have been dismissed from the service. Incidents of this type place the character of the Great King in a very poor light.

By the twentieth century the von Stalheim family had moved up the social scale and they now carried the necessary prefix before the family name. However it should be

mentioned that in modern times relatively few German officers carried the prefix 'von'.... in 1939 only four of the twelve most senior generals were 'vons'. Many officers who came from many generations of military service, such as Heinz Guderian, Sigmund List or Kurt Student, lacked the aristocratic prefix in their names.

From The Rev. D.H. Sweetman:

In 1931 I was fortunate enough to possess a bicycle, this enabled me to deliver newspapers and groceries. In that year I purchased, from my wages, my first copy of 'The Magnet' and 'The Gem'; another world was opened up to me. In the passage of time I lost all my copies of these memorable magazines. Yahrooh! My lovely mother was a very tidy lady.

In 1996 my attention was drawn, through the magazine 'This England', to the 'Collectors Digest'. I have just finished reading my third copy. Oh dear! oh dear! why did I not discover this gem of a publication years ago. This is rip-snorting news, for that world of the past has been opened up to me again.

Thankyou and God bless you,

From Brian Doyle:

In answer to Audrey O'Leary's query about 'Little Audrey (who) laughed and laughed and laughed' in the December SPCD: Little Audrey was a cute little girl of around 7 or 8, who always wore her hair in a 'top-knot' tied with ribbon and originally appeared in a series of American animated cartoons (Famous Studios/Paramount) from 1949 until well into the 1950s. The character was taken over by Harvey Comic-Books in the early-1950s and became very popular with young children; these coloured comic-books (in the same sort of format of the 'Superman' and 'Batman' comic-books) were also sold in Britain and were still appearing in the 1980's. I don't know if they are still available.

Little Audrey was a sweet little thing and the stories, both on-screen and in the comic-books, showed her getting into scrapes, playing with her little friends, and sometimes getting the better of assorted and relatively harmless 'villains' They were quite funny too and a situation or story often ended with Audrey amused and the caption 'Little Audrey laughed and laughed and laughed!' So, presumably, did Harvey Publications and Paramount Pictures, since Little Audrey, as I've said, became extremely popular. She must be in her mid-50s by now and could even be described as 'Big Audrey'.....

With reference to Mark Taha's interesting survey in the Annual of the sequels to and 'spin-offs' from R.L. Stevenson's 'Treasure Island' I would add three titles he has missed: 'Portobello Gold' by Arthur D. Howden-Smith (1936); 'The Return of Long John Silver' by John Connell (1949 and originally serialised in the 'small-format' 'Strand Magazine'); and 'The Search for Treasure Island' by Emma Tennant (1981), which was an adventure-fantasy. Walkey's 'The Treasure of Pirates' Island' appeared in book-form following its original publication in 'Chums'. The author of 'Back to Treasure Island', H.A. Calahan has only one 'L' in his name. And the author of 'Return to Treasure Island', which Mark omitted to state, was John Goldsmith. It was nice to read Mark's article since I am a life-long admirer of 'Treasure Island' and, as well as all the sequels, also possess over 40 different editions of it, mostly illustrated by different artists. (I reproduced half-a- dozen in my book 'The Who's Who of Children's Literature'.) My own favourite is that

published by Macmillan in 1928, with 17 superb illustrations by the great H.M. Brock (this was the first one I read as a boy of about 10).

Good to see in the Annual an article about Harold Avery by Richard Burgon, but I certainly wouldn't describe him as 'the forgotten man of boys' fiction', as Richard does. He's still well-remembered - and read - so far as I know. And 'The Triple Alliance' remains one of the best school stories ever written.

Congratulations on a lovely, smashing Annual - one of the best ever. Keep up the good work. You should receive a Damehood in the New Year Honours List!

(Editor's Note: What a pity Brian isn't our P.M.!!)

From J.P. McMahon:

Can anyone remember The Magnet in which Bob Cherry holds out his cap or boater to catch an angry Sir Hilton Popper in? (This while the Famous Five are drifting up the Sark in their boat.) It is so funny; I would like to read it again. I have read The Popper Island Rebels but it is not there.

From Grace Batham:

I wish to correct a little mistake in the article in the Annual concerning Evelyn Flinders. She illustrated three years running, Morcove series, not once.

The first was the autumn of 1933 when I was 13 years old. It was a 4 part series about a Jubilee Magazine.

The second was in 1934 in a series 5 part, featuring Billy Charters, and the third was in 1935, the last half of the Summer holidays in Turania, and the first series of the new term, featuring Fay and Edna Denver.

I have 3 of the 1933 series, 3 of the 1934 series, and all of the 1935 series.

I think Evelyn Flinders was far and away the better artist. She drew each character as she should be, with the correct hair colour and style.

I liked Leonard Shields' drawings in the 'twenties, but I think he went off in the late 'twenties and 'thirties.

I think the C.D Annual is marvellous especially the Morcove and Cliff House items.

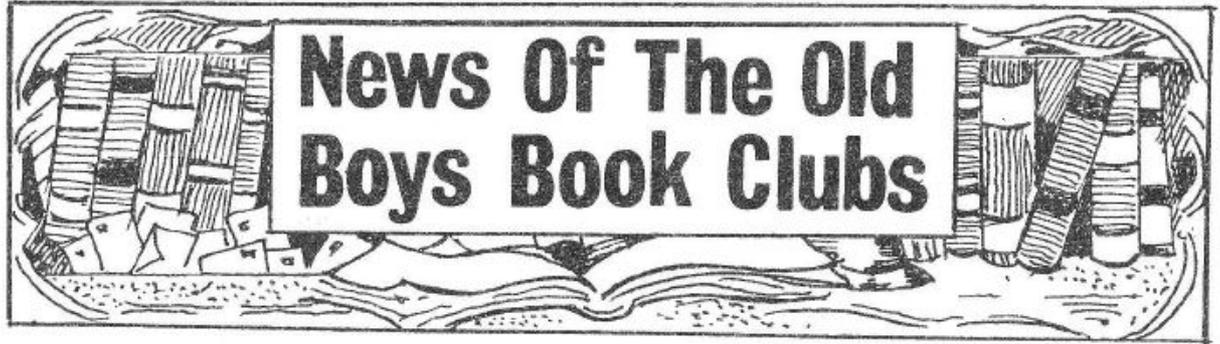
From E.H. John Gibbs:

I was very sorry to hear (in the October C.D.) of the loss of Denis Gifford's Annuals. I am sure that the feelings of C.D. readers go out to him. This is the first time I have read of this type of crime: it is all very worrying to us all... How can you replace something that it has taken over 40 years to put together? To the true collector, they are like a family... They enable us to relive those energetic and very enjoyable summers of so long ago.

I have always wondered what other C.D. collectors collect besides books. We all, I am sure, collect other things. Items on these in the C.D. could be interesting.

From Joe Williamson:

I so much enjoyed 'A Matter of Logic' by Anthony Cook in the September & October issues of the C.D. One could imagine that this had been written by the Master, Frank Richards himself. Also Brian Doyle's new series, *Yesterday's Heroes*, suggests we are in for a treat. I very much appreciated the enlarged November issue of the C.D. Who said you could not get something for nothing? Extra pages and at no extra cost - miracles apparently still do happen. Also the Annual has arrived - lovely for Christmas readings and well up to expectations.



LONDON OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

Our Xmas meeting at Ealing on Sunday 8th December was attended by 24 members. A smaller gathering than usual at the festive time, but no fewer than 6 'regulars' had sundry health problems. The guests included Arthur and Jean Bruning, from Norwich, who had been unable to attend the December meeting for a number of years past. With a full programme, business matters were soon disposed of and we enjoyed our usual readings from our Librarians. Roger gave us an extract from Magnet 1244 (Christmas at Mauleverer Towers), Duncan read from Union Jack 1313 (The Crime of the Christmas Tree) and Norman, deputising for Phil Griffiths, chose from Nelson Lee 130 (Phantom of Tregellis Castle), all familiar but much loved stories.

Arthur provided an item, comparing the basic descriptions of the Bible with the unnecessary elaborations of some modern writers, which provoked some worth-while discussion. Bill Bradford presented a Quiz with clues indicating the surnames of 18 club members, 'Using Aftershave' referred to Bruton, Graham of that ilk! This quiz was won by Mark Taha, an almost forgone conclusion! The reading from Memory Lane covered the meeting of December 1976. Happy days! The Annual General Meeting will be on Sunday 12th January 1997, at Loughton. Please advise Suzanne Harper if attending.

Bill Bradford

Northern O.B.B.C.

Saturday 14th December, saw a goodly number assemble for our informal Christmas Party.

As in the past, the study table was groaning with the weight of comestibles. Three of the beverages were Bob Cherry's Cherryade, Tom Merry's Ginger Beer brewed in study 13 and The Outlaws' Lemonade produced in the old barn by William and Co. However,

people did have a sneaking suspicion that despite the apparent authenticity of the labels, the contents were no doubt Sainsbury's best!

Being an informal party, Christmas cards were exchanged. Joan presented a Santa Claus characters picture quiz and there were various table games. Geoffrey read a classic chapter from Magnet number 1028 and we ended the evening with more eating and drinking, concluding in a toast made by Geoffrey to the Club, members past and present and the other clubs in our small circle.

Our 1997 session opens on January 11th with "Bookshops of My Boyhood" and "W.E. Johns Today". On February 8th we have "Poet's Corner" and "Not My Brother's Keeper".

All the very best for 1997 from all at Northern Club.

Johnny Bull Minor

<p>THE COMPLETE MAGNET COMPANION 1996</p> <p>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</p>	<p>I'M SUCH A SILLY DUFFER! MAYBE I NEED THE MAGNET COMPANION!</p> 
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The Silent Three; an illustration by Evelyn Flinders for the *School Friend*, 1950

If there are any artists among our readers who might be interested in preparing illustrations of the Silent Three and other characters in my stories I would very much like to hear from them.

Marion Waters, 11 Abbots Way, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, NN8 2AF.

Darkness fell.

After dusk the spot was as lonely a one as any lover of solitude could have desired. Billy Bunter entirely failed to see the charms which sages are said to have seen in the face of solitude. He loathed it.

No sound came to his fat ears, but the whisper of the summer wind in the branches, and the unending ripple of the Sark in the rushes.

A silvery crescent of moon came out in a sky of darkest blue. It gleamed on the rippling river. The scene was one of great beauty had Bunter been in a frame of mind to appreciate it. But Bunter wasn't.

The scene on which Billy Bunter would have been glad to feast his eyes was not moonlight on a rippling stream, but a steak and kidney pie on a dish.

MAGNET 1479

Flour was easily to be obtained in the regions below. Henri was prepared to carry up flour if milord wanted flour. He supposed, of course, that Gussy was a little mad to be asking for flour to be brought up to his room.

But that was not really surprising, for Henri, like most Frenchmen was aware that all the English were a little mad. People who washed themselves every day could hardly be sane from the Gallic point of view. Henri knew that D'Arcy washed himself several times a day, so he was obviously a little madder than the rest. His desire for flour was really not much madder than his desire for soap.

GEM 1628

As a bowler Coker of the Fifth might, with luck, have hit the side of a house provided it was quite a large house and Coker not very far from it. But Coker's own idea was that he could bowl. A large-hearted fellow like Coker, in possession of valuable knowledge, naturally desired to impart some of the same to the less-gifted friends. Lack of enthusiasm on their part did not discourage Coker.

MAGNET 1478

"Come back, you pesky gink!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I'm going to hand you a sockdologer that will burst you all over the universe!"

Bunter did not come back for the sockdologer. He did not quite know what a sockdologer was - the American language not being in the curriculum at Greyfriars School - but, whatever it was, Bunter did not want it.

MAGNET 1092

Bunter was not often either spick or span. Generally, he was grubby, his elbows shiny, and his knees baggy. Mr. Quelch had even been known to send him out of the Form-room for a wash!

Quelch, had he seen him at this moment, would not have thought Bunter the most slovenly fellow in the Remove.

He had washed since dinner; and two washes, in one day, was rather a record for Bunter. Nobody looking at Bunter now, could have guessed what he had had for dinner. As a rule, there were some clues.

MAGNET 1480

.....Some fellows might have felt rebuffed. But William George Bunter was not easily rebuffed. He could swallow a rebuff, and almost anything else that came his way.

MAGNET 1092

SCHOOL GIRLS I HAVE MET



THE COMIC GIRL.

On the right, a Junior Mistress is reading, in recess, a letter from her brother in the Navy.



THE GIGGLER.



THE POPULAR GIRL.



THE GOOD CHILD (FEVERISHLY):
"I SAY, DO HEAR ME MY FRENCH."



On the left, you see an Important Parent and the Head Mistress, listening to a rehearsal for the school concert.



WAITING FOR THE BELL TO RING.

Illustrations by Anna Wood

IN THIS
ISSUE:

“THE DESERT GIRL'S DEVOTION!”

A SPLENDID STORY OF THE
GIRLS OF MORCOVE SCHOOL

The Schoolgirl's Own



2^D

A SIGN FOR SILENCE!
(An incident from the grand long
complete story of Betty Barton and
the girls of Morcove School which
appears in this issue.)

No. 64. Vol. 3.]

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