STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL.51 No.608 AUGUST 1997

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THE EDITOR'S CHAT

readers by arranging Enid Blyton days and, with Tony Summerfield, organizing the Enid Blyton Literary Society.

We all, of course, know that the fads and fashions of socio-literary critics can produce infuriatingly unjust comments about the stories of some of our most popular authors. It is certainly true that Enid Blyton has suffered more than her fair share of so-called 'politically correct' brickbats. However, in company with Frank Richards, Richmal Crompton, W.E. Johns and others she has triumphantly over-ridden and

SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE

This month marks the Centenary of the birth of Enid Blyton, one of the most popular writers of our age. We are proud and happy to celebrate this occasion in the C.D., for which Norman Wright has written an excellent assessment of her achievements. As well as being a connoisseur of Enid's works, Norman has done a great deal to emphasize her positive influence on

THE FOUR OF THEM SET OFF HAPPILY.

Off to 'The Secret Island', illustration by E. H Davie

confounded such critics: there is no doubt that the stories, plays, poems and nature articles of this astonishingly prolific writer will long continue to appeal to children - and adults - from wide-ranging and differing backgrounds.

Enid's elder daughter, Gillian Baverstock, has written a charming book for younger children as an introduction to Enid Blyton's works. As well as its informative text, it includes a range of interesting pictures - of Enid and her family: of some of her books and characters, of her various homes and of Beckenham as it was when she spent her girlhood there. (This local interest has always intrigued me. My daughter went to St. Christopher's, the school of which Enid was Head Girl just over 80 years ago!) Published by Evans Brothers at £7.99, *Enid Blyton* by Gillian Baverstock would be a delightful gift for any small child with an interest in books and authors.

MARY CADOGAN

BILL LOFTS

Last month I included a 'stop press' report of the passing of Bill Lofts. Many of us have been profoundly saddened by this tremendous loss of both a personal friend and someone whose contribution to the hobby over several decades can hardly be measured.

Unearthing, for his own interest and at the request of others, an apparently never-ending stream of facts and figures about authors, editors and illustrators of the old papers, Bill liked and deserved to be known as a literary super-sleuth. The C.D., the O.B.B.C. and other societies far and wide owe him a great debt.

My personal memories are of his constant warmth and generosity in sharing the fruits of his labours and researches. We have indeed lost a dear and faithful friend. Thank you Bill, for so much, given to us over so many years.

MARY CADOGAN

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A ST. JIM'S "VILLAINS" QUIZ **by Peter Mahony**

Name the villains who filled the title roles in these stories written for the *Gem* by MARTIN CLIFFORD (no substitute authors included).

		Year
1.	The Mystery Master	1931
2.	A Gangster at St. Jim's	1931
3.	The Black Domino	1933
4.	The Nobbling of "Nobbler Jim"	1932
5.	The Stowaway of the "Silver Swallow"	1939
6.	Schoolmaster and Schemer	1939
7.	The Fire-Raiser	1934
8.	The Menace of the Dwarf	1934
9.	A Regular Rascal	1907
10.	The Mystery Schoolboy	1933

(Answers on page 30)

One Hundred Years of Enid Blyton

by Norman Wright

Few writers this century have had a greater influence on their readers than Enid Blyton. Her prolific output catered for children of all ages and even now, more than a quarter of a century after her death, her books continue to sell in vast numbers. During her lifetime her influence over her young audience was invariably for good and through the various clubs she ran she encouraged children to help raise money for the less fortunate. Her work may, as some critics claim, lack depth and vocabulary but it has a special magic that has entranced young readers for seventy five years.

Enid Mary Blyton was born on August 11th 1897 in a small flat over a shop in Lordship lane, East Dulwich. When Enid was only a few months old the family moved to Beckenham, Kent, an area where Enid and her brothers, Hanly and Carey, spent their childhood. Her creative skills and interest in all aspects of natural history were nurtured by her father, Thomas Blyton, who encouraged her to write down the stories and poems she created and took her on long nature rambles pointing out all the local flora and fauna that flourished around the, then rural, Kentish village. Her mother, Theresa, shared none of the interests of her daughter or husband and as the years passed husband and wife found they had little in common. Rows became frequent and when Enid was in her early teens the marriage broke down irrevocably.

Thomas had always planned for his daughter to have a musical career but in 1916 Enid decided that what she really wanted to do was become a teacher. She persuaded her father to sign the necessary forms and later in the year began her training as a kindergarten teacher. It was in the brief periods of free time she found during her training that she began to write seriously. Despite the large number of rejection slips that landed through her letter-box she remained undeterred and carried on writing poems and stories.

Enid's first published works, according to her biographer, Barbara Stoney, were a short poem published in a magazine run by Arthur Mee and another published in *Nash's Magazine*. As neither have been traced it can only be assumed that they were either published anonymously or under a pen-name. Her first poem published under the Enid Blyton byline was entitled "Have You....? and appeared in Nash's Magazine in March 1917. A few months later the same magazine published another of her poems entitled "My Summer Prayer" and a year later "Do You.....?"

1922 was an important year for Enid. In February she began her long association with *Teachers World*, a magazine for which she was to write hundreds of poems stories and articles. But of even greater import was the publication of "Child

Whispers", a volume of poems published by J.Saville and Co. Ltd. The book was successful enough for Saville to publish a further collection, entitled "Real Fairies", the following year. Through her writing in *Teachers World* Enid was beginning to make a name for herself and soon her books were being published by larger publishing houses.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s Enid poured out a vast number of plays, short stories, nature books and the like. In 1926 she began editing *Sunny Stories for Little Folks*, a magazine aimed at younger readers. The content of early issues of *Sunny Stories* consisted mainly of individual short stories but when the title was changed to *Enid Blyton's Sunny Stories*, in January 1937, Enid introduced a serial story, "Adventures of the Wishing Chair", which proved to be very popular. It was followed by "The Secret Island", her first full-length adventure serial. Reader response to the story was overwhelming and soon readers were writing in their hundreds demanding more adventures of Jack, Mike, Peggy and Nora. "The Secret Island" was published in book form by Blackwell in 1938 and a sequel, "The Secret of Spiggy Holes", commenced in *Enid Blyton's Sunny Stories* early in October 1939.

The late 1930s and early 1940s were years when Enid was experimenting with various themes for her developing full length novels. Between 1938 and 1941 five full length adventure stories by Enid were published in book form. Between them they encompassed most of the elements that were to become such a hallmark of her work: castles, islands, secret passages, lost treasure and a wonderfully reassuring English countryside. By 1942 Enid had mastered the formula, if formula it can be called, to perfection and in that year she wrote her first 'Famous Five' novel, featuring a group of characters who were to remain enduringly popular for the next fifty years.

The Famous Five: Julian, Dick, Anne, Georgina (known as George) and Timothy, the dog, made their debut in "Five on a Treasure Island", published by Hodder and Stoughton in September 1942. The story was a blend of all the ingredients that make a first rate holiday adventure; Golden summer days on the English coast, and a rocky island complete with ruined castle, standing in a picturesque bay. It is a captivating story and for five decades readers have fallen under its spell. Critics who have a snobbish aversion to Blyton would do well to consider this book again. It has some excellent descriptive passages and a taught, well plotted storyline. Most important of all it has pace and a vitality that carries the reader along the treasure trail at break-neck speed.

The book was an undoubted success and a sequel, "Five Go Adventuring Again", was published by Hodder in 1943 and innumerable copies must have found their way into stockings that Christmas. All twenty one volumes in the saga were illustrated by Eileen Soper whose work for the 'Fives' books was always exciting; setting the scene

and mood of the stories. With the exception of 1959 a new 'Fives' title appeared every year until 1963 when the final novel, "Five Are together Again", was published.

The run-away success of the 'Secret' series and 'Famous Five' series spawned other series of mystery and adventure books from her busy pen. One of the earliest of these was the 'Adventure' series. The first, entitled "The Island of Adventure", was published by Macmillan and Co. Ltd. in 1944. A further seven titles followed each illustrated by Stuart Tresilian. The 'Adventure' series recounted the exploits of Philip, Dinah, Jack and Lucy-Ann, who, unlike the Famous Five, often adventured outside of the United Kingdom. Their adventures were longer than those experienced by the Five, with all but one of their adventures running to over three hundred pages.

Along slightly different lines was the 'Mystery' series featuring the 'Five Find Outers and Dog', published by Methuen. The rather precocious Find Outers, who first appeared in "The Mystery of the Burnt Cottage", published in 1943, solved mysteries in and around their home village of Peterswood. The Find Outers were Pip, Larry, Bets Daisy and Frederick Algernon Trotteville, whose initials gave him the nickname of Fatty. The obligatory dog was Fatty's lively Scottie named Buster. Despite its rural nature the village of Peterswood sheltered all manner of villains - from arsonists to cat-nappers; but all were grist to the mill for the Find Outers who quickly followed up the clues and ran the felons to earth.

The 'Fives', 'Adventure' and 'Mystery' series were intended for children aged from about ten years upwards. For slightly younger readers who wanted mystery stories Enid Blyton created the Secret Seven. Chronologically the Seven first appeared in a book entitled "The Secret of the Old Mill", first published by Brockhampton in 1948. A year later Blyton dusted down the characters and wrote "The Secret Seven", a adventure/mystery story aimed at an audience aged from about seven to ten. Like the Find Outers the Secret Seven solved mysteries in and around their home town, but unlike Fatty and Co. they did not carry out a campaign of one-upmanship against their local policemen! It was easy for young children to identify with one or other of the characters and soon groups of children up and down the country were having meetings in garden sheds, wearing club badges and using passwords just like the Secret Seven.

Enid Blyton's most enduring character for younger readers is, without a doubt, Noddy who made his debut in "Noddy Goes to Toyland" in 1949. Much of the character's early success was due to the Dutch artist, Harmsen Van Der Beek, whose bright, animated illustrations found in the early Noddy books were such a joy to behold. "Noddy Goes To Toyland" was the first of twenty four books in the 'Noddy Library', but a multitude of other publications featuring Noddy and the other Toyland characters were soon rolling off the presses. After Beek's death in 1953 Sampson Low insisted that the other artists who took over the character kept their styles as close as possible to that of Beek's original Noddy drawings.

Timmy agreed with every word she said

George and Timmy drawn by Eileen Soper

THE FIVE FIND-OUTERS, WITH BUSTER THE DOG
(*Left to right*) DAISY, FATTY, PIP, BETS, LARRY

Illustration by J. Abbey

In the early 1950s Enid severed her connection with *Sunny Stories* to edit and write the entire content of a new fortnightly publication appropriately titled *Enid Blyton's Magazine*. As well as serialising many of her full length novels the magazine also served as a forum for a number of clubs that helped raise money for good causes. The magazine came to an end late in 1959.

During the last few years of her life Enid Blyton suffered from poor health. The death of her second husband, Kenneth Darrell Waters, in late 1967, was a great blow to her and she died a year later on 28th of November 1968. During her lifetime she had been a very private person. Her own autobiographical volume, "The Story of My Life", written in 1952 was a well illustrated though rather dull book aimed at young readers. It was not until the definitive biography, "Enid Blyton The Biography", by Barbara Stoney was published by Hodder in 1974 that the true story of her life was revealed. The biography, which has just been reprinted, offers a fascinating insight into the woman and her world and a copy is essential reading to anyone with more than a passing interest in Enid Blyton.

In the quarter century since Enid Blyton's death her books have continued to sell in ever increasing numbers both in the United Kingdom and in many other parts of the world and in this, her centenary year, her popularity shows no sign of declining.

For Blyton collectors there is the Enid Blyton Literary Society. The Society recently staged its fifth annual 'Blyton Day' when one hundred and fifty enthusiasts gathered to listen to talks by four Blyton experts as well as shorter presentations from celebrity guests. The Society produces a quality magazine twice a year. (A years subscription to the Enid Blyton Literary Society, including two issues of its magazine, costs £3.50. Subscriptions, payable to: The Enid Blyton Literary Society, should be sent to Tony Summerfield, 93 Milford Hill, Salisbury, Wilts. SP1 2QL.)

What is it that has made Enid Blyton's work so popular with generations of children? Firstly, and most importantly she was a born story teller who had an instinctive knack of knowing what children would enjoy. The world she depicted has remained very appealing. It depicts an idyllic England, fresh and green with unpolluted beaches and long sunny days. Quiet, rural corners still nestle in the shadow of old castles. Adults stand back and give the children a free rein to do all of the things that children would love to do: explore secret passages, camp on a tree clad islands, look for lost treasure or roam the by-ways in a horse drawn caravan. It isn't reality, but who cares; it is a magical world of make believe where right always triumphs and there is a good feed and a happy ending at the end of the day. Who could want more?

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HERE BE DRAGONS . . . **by J.E.M.**

With China much in the news this year, it's perhaps a good time to take a look at Sexton Blake's great oriental foe, Prince Wu Ling. After all, China's ancient leader has recently died and Hong Kong has been returned by us to mainland control. Perhaps the shade of Prince Wu, with his dreams of a greater China and the spread of its rule as far as Western Europe, would see in these events a golden opportunity. If any question mark ever hangs over the country's new leadership, perhaps Wu's great and sinister organisation, the Brotherhood of the Yellow Beetle, could take the stage again . . . ? But let us go back to the beginning of this ruthless pretender's career.

In 1912, in the real world, the last Manchu Emperor was forced to abdicate (he was just six years old) and a Republic was established. Just one year later, Wu Ling appeared for the first time in the Blakian casebook. *The Brotherhood of the Yellow Beetle* (Union Jack, first series, No. 507), written like all the Wu stories by G. H. Teed, told of the beginning of Wu's conspiracy to restore Manchu rule at all and every cost. A ruthless

struggle not only against the Chinese Republic but against Sexton Blake himself had opened and was to last a couple of decades.

Blake's encounters with Wu Ling often came through a third party. An amazing number of Teed's other characters got themselves involved with the ruthless Manchu over the years and, of course, always in dubious or criminal enterprises. Mlle Yvonne, Dr. Huxton Rymer, George Marsden Plummer and Yvonne's later reincarnation, Mlle Roxane, were all linked with Wu Ling at one time or another - though not necessarily as collaborators. For instance, in *Yellow Guile* (Union Jack 1438), Huxton Rymer and Wu are in pursuit of the same prize, while Sexton Blake's task is to frustrate them both. In different forms this situation occurred a number of times.

Teed's knowledge of China, its culture, its geography and, not least, its history shines through the whole Wu Ling saga. The Japanese invasion of China at the beginning of the 1930s was the inspiration for a series of quite brilliant stories, Wu's ambitions cleverly woven into actual events. Wu has established himself as War Lord of Manchuria and is plotting to slip in between the warring Chinese and Japanese to make himself Emperor of Manchuria as a first step to his even greater ambitions. Needless to say, a combination of circumstances, including the intervention of Sexton Blake, brings Wu's efforts to failure. The two principal accounts of this episode are contained in *Sexton Blake in Manchuria* (UJ 1494) and *Arms to Wu Ling* (UJ 1495) both from the year 1932. For me, these stories make the highpoint of the Wu Ling saga and are well worth re-reading. I must say I always found Wu a far more convincing character than Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu and certainly the backgrounds to Teed's stories were incomparably more authentic.

Other memorable Wu Ling tales from the "Union Jack" include *The Tabu of Confucius* (UJ 1023), *The Street of Many Lanterns* (UJ 1064) and *The Blood Brothers of Han-Hu* (UJ 1497). There are, of course, many more; just take your pick from the Sexton Blake Catalogue. It is also a fitting tribute to the most sinister oriental ever to cross Blake's path that he was the central figure of Sexton Blake Library No. 1, published in 1915. I notice that a copy of this story, *The Yellow Tiger*, was recently advertised for sale in "The Book and Magazine Collector", price £200!

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THE WONDERFUL GARDENS **by Donald V Campbell**

3. Philippa Pearce's "Tom's Midnight Garden"

As gardens go and as gardens grow this garden is different. Different in a radical way from E. Nesbit's *The Wonderful Garden* and Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*.

Tom's Midnight Garden is a ghost story. Or is it? Or is it a dream story? Or is it science fiction - as in *Timestory?* Others may have their ideas: the following are mine. This, the third of my "Garden Stories", is well worth a critical look.

Re-reading it I was struck by a number of immediate things. It has wonderful Susan Einzig illustrations. Whilst her pictures bear hardly any resemblance to the Edwardian School of illustration they have both an interest and a power that dominate.

Susan Einzig was a long-running and successful *Radio Times* illustrator and that (for me) puts her a head start before the rest. She had a controlled yet slightly "splashy" pen and ink style that serves to enhance the detail. She was particularly good with period dress, architecture and furniture. Her people, though, can be either indeterminate (useful for a ghost story?) or a little stiff. There is a lot of sidewise glancing going on in her work which can be enigmatic. Useful again in a story which seems itself to be essentially of this nature.

Strangely - for me, with my declining eyesight - the library copy of *Tom's Midnight Garden* was in LARGE PRINT - a further proof that time does exist. In once swore that large-print would never GET me! Foolish hope, time has overtaken the fond wish.

"Time is an eternal enigma", someone is supposed to have said. Well I am not sure about that - but this is not strictly a ghost story - both protagonists (Hatty and Tom) protest that they are neither dead nor ghosts. So it must be a time story, and the problem for time shift stories is that of convincing the readers. Convincing them about reality in a time travelling sense, for example. We all know the arguments against it - interference with existing happenings, the apparent impossibility of meeting one's own great grandmother or grandfather; the de-ageing process which must surely occur as the individual goes back across the real life span in order to reach the past.

But, if H G Wells can do it, why not a modern author like Philippa Pearce?

The time (we can't get away from it) is in the late '50s (the book was published in 1958). The place, the Fen country - where, from a suitable vantage point (Ely Cathedral Tower for example) events displaced in space can be nicely seen happening across the flat land, and voices take time to reach the watcher.

If Tom Long is the main protagonist - with Hatty Melbourne the other - it must also be the grandfather clock that is both a 'character' and a pivot.

To the story time then. Tom Long is abruptly separated from his brother, Peter, who has gone down with measles. Tom's place of quarantine is with Uncle Alan and Aunt Gwen. Tom is not best pleased. He is further put out when he discovers that the large old house Aunt and Uncle live in has been turned into several flats which have no garden.

He is immediately fascinated by the clock which is screwed to the wall by immovable rusty screws. That night the clock strikes thirteen at midnight, and we see the start of an adventure so gentle that it might not please the generality of children - if there is such a thing as that. The action is slight and the most exciting thing to happen in a physical sense is Hatty's fall from their tree-house.

The adult characters around Tom are a rather unsatisfactory lot and it is from them that much of the tension comes. Aunt Gwen, a good cook, is over-fond of fattening Tom up. Uncle Alan is uneasy around the boy, and is a bluff character prone to indigestion if crossed (particularly at breakfast-time). Abel, the Victorian gardener, apart from Hatty, is the only person to see Tom in the Midnight Garden, and he puts it all down to the devil. Pincher, the dog, is aware of Tom and get into trouble because of it.

Tension arises between Tom and his relatives immediately after he has been in the garden for the first time. The garden seems only to appear at midnight but Tom thinks that they are lying about its existence (or non-existence) and the relationship gets off to a poor start. Tom is supposed to spend the regulation ten hours in bed each night, and he is allowed to read for

not more than ten minutes in his bedroom before "lights-out". He is dismal and wants only to return to his home. However, the garden visits each night give him a root and, eventually, a playmate.

From the initial visit he is aware that he is being watched but it is some time before he detects by whom - Hatty, of course.

There is a similarity between the two - Hatty, in her own Edwardian time, is being raised by an unwilling and quite fearsome aunt. She is not allowed outside the house or garden, and spends time in devising a king of secret garden within the real one. This has tunnels in the hedges and arbours and hiding places.

Rather like Mary in *The Secret Garden* she is a contained little girl and remains an "only-child" within the family framework.

Perhaps the hardest sea-change to accommodate is that Tom takes so quickly to playing with a little girl on her terms, even though he does introduce her to the "manly" pursuits of bow-and-arrows and tree-house building. But, once this is accepted, the story moves on at a sedate pace. Sedate until we recognise that there are changes to the time-scale that Tom is experiencing. His visits are every night - with devious ways silently to bypass his aunt and uncle, and other dwellers in the flats. There are two basic notions to his experience of time. It is sometimes uneven as it passes backwards and forwards across the life span of the little girl, and is moving far more rapidly than his real time. We see Hatty quickly changing from little girl to bigger girl and then into young woman.

This may be seen as a rites of passage story. Tom - in his early teens - recognising people's changes and development, and their movement away from childhood. Hatty, growing up, does not so much reject him as forget him when she realises that she now has a beau and a future away from the house and garden.

The garden is clearly described but, basically, it is just a backdrop for the characters. The story eventually opens out with an eerie ice-skate down the river by the now young-adult Hatty and her secret visitor. They climb Ely Cathedral and for a rather unconvincing and unsatisfactory moment Tom's brother Peter joins them, but regrets he is not in the garden of Tom's letters. (Tom has been writing to him regularly and all the letters carry the symbol BAR - "Burn After Reading".) Peter revels in vicarious and illicit enjoyment of Tom's Midnight Garden. He also manages to keep the secret. But "will he, won't he tell" is a nice niggler for a good number of places in the book. So too is the possibility of the overlooking by an adult at either end of the communication link.

It is strange, in a book where the lead is taken by a young boy, Tom, that so few aspects of him are actually developed. But we have to remember that the real time-scale of his adventures is only a few weeks, even though his sojourns in the dream-or-ghost garden last for long spells (the kitchen clock in the here-and-now only moves a few seconds during even his longest visits).

The shadowy figure of a Mrs Bartholomew hovers over the flats and we are aware that she must be important. It is only when the significance of an older boy called Barty is highlighted (he drives Hatty home from the long skating episode, with Tom as "gooseberry" between them) that we sense the denouement. It is at this time in the other place that Tom is becoming mistier to the view of Hatty.

When, on his final visit to the garden, he screams out for Hatty he suddenly finds that he is back in real time and he has raised the complete household, including Mrs Bartholomew. The next morning he is due to return home but Mrs Bartholomew requires of Aunt Gwen that Tom should come to her top floor flat and apologise for the hullabaloo. It is she of course - Hatty. Now old, without her husband, and waiting for Tom. The final scene is touching:

"Goodbye, Mrs Bartholomew," said Tom, shaking hands with stiff politeness; "and thank you very much for having me."
"I shall look forward to our meeting again," said Mrs Bartholomew, equally primly.
Tom went slowly down the attic stairs. Then, at the bottom, he hesitated: turned impulsively and ran up again - two at a time - to where Hatty Bartholomew still stood . . ."

Tom runs up the stairs, and he and the "shrunken little old woman" hug each other as if they've been close for years. She was

". . . hardly bigger than Tom, anyway: but he put his arms right round her and he hugged her good-bye as if she were a little girl."

It is a fine, fey kind of book and deserves the plaudits given to it. Yet it goo suffers from the complications of time and space that bedevil any book based on the notion of time slip, time warp, time travel - whatever. Similarly it doesn't quite convince as a ghost story either. But, with prejudices and sensible arguments put away, it has its own power.

I have a sneaking notion that the withdrawals marked on my library copy (one book only within the ten libraries belonging to the massive Leeds Central Library area) were all by adults. By adults for themselves or with hope in their hearts that Casey, Tracey, Maz or Kaz, Barry, Shane or Winston - young offspring or relatives - might read a good book. The cynic in me says "Fat chance!" But time has a way of coming round doesn't it? I really liked the drawings.

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A BORROWED THEME **by Keith Atkinson**

Many of you will know the little books by 'Alpha of the Plough'. The one we are concerned with here is called *Windfalls*.

The author's real name was A.G. Gardiner, and he wrote short articles and essays for a London paper called *The Star*. Because the paper was called *The Star*, he, along with his fellow journalists, decided they would each take a pen-name after a star, or a constellation, and so he became 'Alpha of the Plough'. The period in which he wrote was mainly during and just after the First World War, and many of his essays were collected and reprinted in book form.

The particular one which interests us here is called 'On Habits'. The author begins by describing his difficulties in getting started with the writing of a particular article. He then begins to realise that this is because he is 'in conflict with a habit'. He has tried to write the article using a new and excellent pen which he has been given, but his normal practice is to do his writing with a pencil:

". . . there are not many hours of the day when I am without a pencil between thumb and finger. It has become a part of my organism as it were, a mere extension of my hand. There, at the top of my second finger, is a little bump, raised in its service, a monument erected by the friction of a whole forest of pencils that I have worn to the stump. A pencil is to me what his sword was to D'Artagnan, or his umbrella was to the Duke of Cambridge, or his cheroot was to Grant, or whittling a stick was to Jackson, or - in short, what any habit is to anybody . . ."

He goes on to say:

"The tyranny of little habits which is familiar to all of us is nowhere better described than in the story which Sir Walter Scott told to Rogers of his schooldays. 'There was,' he said, 'a boy in my class at school who stood always at the top, nor could I with all my efforts supplant him. Day came after day and still he kept his place, do what I would; till at length I observed that, when a question was asked him, he always fumbled with his fingers at a particular button in the lower part of his waistcoat. To remove it, therefore, became expedient in my eye, and in an evil moment, it was removed by knife. Great was my anxiety to know the success of my measure; and it succeeded too well. When the boy was again questioned his fingers sought again for the button, but it was not to be found. In his distress he looked down for it - it was to be seen no more than it was to be felt. He stood confounded, and I took possession of his place; nor did he ever recover it, or ever, I believe, suspect who was the author of his wrong. Often in after-life has the sight of him smote me as I passed by him, and often have I resolved to make him some reparation; but it ended in good resolutions. Though I never renewed my acquaintance with him, I often saw him, for he filled some inferior office in one of the Courts of Law at Edinburgh. Poor fellow! I believe he is dead; he took early to drinking.'

"It was rather a shabby trick of young Scott's, and all one can say in regard to its unhappy consequences is that a boy so delicately balanced and so permanently undermined by a trifle would in any case have come to grief in this rough world. There is no harm in cultivating habits, so long as they are not injurious habits . . .

"But habits should be a stick that we use, not a crutch to lean on. We ought to make them for our convenience or enjoyment and occasionally break them to assert our independence. We ought to be able to employ them without being discomposed when we cannot employ them . . .

"I happily had a remedy for my disquietude. I put up my pen, took out a pencil, and, launched once more into the comfortable rut of habit, ticked away peacefully like the eight-day clock ..."

This is an interesting little essay which shows how habits govern our everyday existence, but you may be wondering what it has to do with Frank Richards.

Well, Frank Richards must also have read this episode from Scott's schooldays, and of his schoolfellow's habit of fumbling with a button when thinking, and he used it in a very early *Magnet*, in fact in *Magnet No. 3* of 1908, which is entitled 'The Mystery of Greyfriars'.

In this story Wharton had not yet settled down at Greyfriars. He was still full of resentment at having been sent there, and he was at loggerheads with discipline and with most of his form. The only one who had befriended him was Frank Nugent, because Wharton had saved him from drowning on his journey to Greyfriars.

Wharton, mainly in order to spite the rest of the form, had entered for the Seaton-D'Arcy prize. This was an annual prize awarded to the best Latin scholar in the form, and the only other entrant was Peter Hazeldene.

He resolved to study for this prize on a compulsory games afternoon, but was forced against his will to play football. Because of this he was sent for by the Headmaster:-

"Come in!"

The Head's deep voice was very impressive. Harry Wharton opened the door and went in. Dr. Locke was alone, and his face was very serious.

"Ah, it is you, Wharton!" he said. "I sent for you. Close the door. I want to speak to you very seriously."
Harry stood silent and rebellious.
"I hear," resumed the doctor, "that you refused to take your football practice with the Form you belong to this afternoon. I believe you were somewhat roughly handled in consequence."

Harry coloured. The doctor's keen eye seemed to be scanning the bruises on his face, and the far from pleasant swelling of his nose. Somehow a feeling of smallness took possession of the boy as he faced the impressive figure in scholastic gown. The sullenness died out of his face, and uneasiness took its place. His hand fumbled with his jacket, for Harry Wharton never felt himself able to think clearly unless he was fumbling with that jacket button.
"Will you tell me what your reason was?" the Head went on quietly. "Were you ill this afternoon?"
"No, sir."
"Do you dislike athletic sports?"
"Oh, no, sir!"
"What was your motive, then, for keeping out of the practice?"
Harry was silent.
"Was it a desire to study?" asked the Head. "I know that you have entered for the Seaton-D'Arcy Latin prize, and you will have to work hard to beat Hazeldene."
"I did want to work, sir."
"But you know that there is a time for study and a time for exercise, and the laws of the school have not been made without a reason. An hour's exercise in the open air would have done you good, and would certainly have disturbed you less than the experience which you actually did undergo, I should imagine."
"Ye-es, sir!" said Harry, as the doctor paused and seemed to expect him to say something.
"Then it was not wholly a desire to work that prompted you from cheerfully doing your duty this afternoon?" said the Head.
"I didn't want to go out! I don't see why I should practise if I don't choose!" broke out Harry.
"Ah, I see! You have not yet learned the value of discipline. What are you fumbling with that button for?" said the Head testily. "Let it go! Now, Wharton, I suppose you understand that a school could not be maintained if every boy were allowed to exactly as he liked?"
"I suppose not, sir."
"And you have no special rights to privileges which are not granted to other boys, I suppose?"
"N-no!" stammered Harry, colouring under the quiet irony of the doctor's tone.
"Then am I to understand that your view is that schools should be abolished?" asked the Head. "Really, that is the only logical outcome of your position."

Harry Wharton turned crimson. He had a keen sense of the ridiculous, and he felt at that moment he was looking utterly absurd.
"Now, you see, Wharton," went on the Head, in a kinder tone, "that you have taken up an absolutely impossible position. You have not reasoned it out, but have acted like a wilful child. For your own sake, and the sake of your uncle,

Colonel Wharton, my old friend, I ask you to think this matter over, and come to a more sensible decision. May I depend upon you not to provoke again such a scene as that of this afternoon?"

"Ye-es, sir!" said Harry slowly.

"That is right, Wharton," said the Head encouragingly. "If you do not persist in being wrongheaded, you will grow to like Greyfriars, and to be glad that you came here. You have entered for the Seaton-D'Arcy prize. I believe, from what I have seen of your work, that you have every chance of winning it. Do so, if you can, and show your formfellows that there is something in you. Play the game with the rest, and show them that you are not a slacker. You have the makings of a man in you, if you will only give yourself a fair chance. You may go."

Soon afterwards, Bunter (who shares the same study as Wharton, Nugent and Bulstrode) with his usual tactlessness refers to the comments of another junior, Hughes, about Harry Wharton's nervous habit, and how this might affect the *viva voce* part of the examination:

". . . he said that in the jabberjee part of the exam, Wharton would be nowhere if he happened to lose that button off his jacket - the one he's fumbling with now. Funny thing how he's always fumbling with that button. I suppose it's really a kind of incipient insanity . . . that was how Hughes put it. He said that whenever Wharton was doing anything he was always worrying that button, and that once when it was off his jacket he started fumbling for it in class, and answered Monsieur Millerand in German instead of French . . . Of course, it's a silly habit of Wharton's, but fellows do get into habits," said Billy Bunter. "I noticed Hazeldene seemed to be very much interested in what Hughes said. Of course, he hopes that Wharton won't be able to answer the questions when the time comes. He said that really Wharton ought to be in a lunatic asylum."

"Look here, you ass!" broke out Harry hotly.

"Don't get into a temper, Wharton. I'm not saying that you ought to be put into a lunatic asylum, you know. It was Vaseline said so, and he said, too . . ."

"Never mind what he said," said Nugent.

"Yes, but really . . ."

"Oh, shut up!" said Harry Wharton and he walked out of the study . . .

Eventually Wharton and Hazeldene, the entrants for the Seaton D'Arcy prize, take their written examinations, and then they prepare for the oral exam to be conducted by the Head. A curious proof of Harry Wharton's unpopularity was the anxiety manifested by the Remove that Hazeldene should win.

The cad of the Remove was not really liked by anyone, and yet there was hardly a fellow in the form who would not have given a week's pocket money to see him carry off the Seaton-D'Arcy prize.

Excepting Nugent, and perhaps Bob Cherry, Wharton had no sympathisers; but that fact was far from discouraging him. It only aroused the obstinacy of his nature, and made him all the more determined to win in the teeth of dislike and opposition.

In spite of his determination, however, Harry Wharton felt a slight tremor as the time came round for appearing before the Head.

The examination was, by the rule of the foundation, in the hands of the doctor, the sole judge of the merits of the candidates. As five strokes boomed out from the old tower of Greyfriars, Harry Wharton gave a slight start, and his fingers fumbled nervously with his jacket-button.

"Not nervous, old chap?" said Nugent.

Harry shook his head.

"Oh, no! Hazeldene looks more nervous than I am, I think."

Nugent glanced at Hazeldene. He was certainly looking very disturbed, and he was licking his lips, which seemed very dry. His eyes were gleaming with a restless light. It seemed to Nugent at that moment that Hazeldene was thinking of something else than the coming exam, - something that troubled his mind and made him strangely disquieted. But it might have been only a fancy.

The two rival candidates wait to enter the Head's study and, as Wharton's name is called, Hazeldene falls, as if by accident, against him. Of course Hazeldene has surreptitiously taken the opportunity of detaching that special button from Wharton's jacket.

At the first question Harry's hand went to the button on his jacket, by force of habit. Then a thrill of uneasiness went through him. The button was gone!

Harry Wharton entered the Head's study. Dr. Locke was ready, with a long paper on his desk before him. The boy stood up to answer, feeling much more cool than he had expected. The Head's manner was very kind, and put him at his ease at once. Dr. Locke was certainly not one of those who wished him to lose.

At the first question Harry's hand went to the button on his jacket, by force of habit. Then a thrill of uneasiness went through him.

The button was gone! His fingers fumbled in the place, but there was no button, and a strange, lost feeling took possession of the boy.

His answer to the first question was absolutely at random. Dr. Locke looked at his flushed, uneasy face in surprise.

"Is anything the matter with you, Wharton?"

Harry coloured more deeply. He could not confess to the curious uneasiness which was the result of the loss of the button. He was the slave of a habit which was too absurd to be explained.

"No, sir," he stammered.

"You are not ill?"

"I am quite well, sir."

"Very well, we will continue," said the Head; but he was looking puzzled still.

The questions were resumed, but Harry's answers grew more random. It was useless to struggle against the nervousness which was growing upon him and overmastering him. It was not only that he failed to answer difficult questions, but matters of common knowledge in the Remove seemed too much for him now.

The doctor broke off at last.

"That is sufficient, Wharton," he said. "You may go."

Harry went miserably to the door. He knew that he had made a poor display; that any youngster out of the Third Form would have shown up as well as he had done in that exam. He knew that he had failed.

He left the study with a heavy heart, and a sullen feeling of anger against Fate surging in his breast. What wretched ill-luck that that button should have become lost from his jacket just at that particular moment. It had been there while he was talking to Nugent, just before going in. What had become of it now?

Hazeldene glanced at Harry as he went to take his turn. The boy's pale and disappointed face was enough to tell the cad of the Remove how the examination had gone. Hazeldene walked on with a glitter of triumph in his eyes.

Of course, as it was Harry Wharton who was the victim of Hazeldene's action, he could not be allowed to suffer the same fate as Scott's classmate, and go further and further downhill.

In Frank Richards' version, Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent found out what had happened, and informed Dr. Locke, without actually naming the culprit. A second test was held, which Wharton passed, and won the prize.

Wharton's habit of fumbling with his jacket button when thinking was introduced solely for this story, and was never mentioned again.

There are one or two other occasions when Frank Richards borrowed an idea - for instance, there is another early Magnet in which Bob Cherry was accused of stealing a

postal order and expelled. His father threatened to go to law to clear his name, but eventually Wharton discovered the truth and cleared him.

This story is supposed to be based on a real-life happening, the Archer-Shee case, in which a youth was discharged from the navy for theft, and his father took legal action to clear him. This was later made into a well-known play and film (by Terence Rattigan) called "The Winslow Boy".

Frank Richards, writing under his other pen-name of Martin Clifford, also used the main theme from a Sherlock Holmes story, "The Speckled Band", in a later *Gem*, but though we know that Frank Richards re-used and re-wrote themes and situations many times during his long writing career, considering his tremendous output, and the fact that he was constantly writing to a tight schedule, there seem to be remarkably few instances where he actually borrowed an idea from another source or author, and, even when he did so, he added to it his own inimitable style and charm, and we remain forever grateful for the thousands of fine stories, and many, many hours of pleasure which he has given us.

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YESTERDAY'S HEROES

In the fifth article of his series about popular fictional characters of yesteryear - best-sellers in their day and still affectionately remembered today - BRIAN DOYLE recalls the blood-and-thunder (or should it be thud-and-blunder?) times of Bulldog Drummond, when every problem could be solved with a sock on the jaw or a pointed automatic, when trilbies were worn and raincoat-collars turned up, when eyes were for narrowing, lips for curling and voices for menacing, when the worst thing to happen to a pretty, defenceless girl was being tied to a chair for an hour or two. Hardly intellectual detective stories - but then Drummond was more of a Bulldog than a Bloodhound . . . .

Part One

'Demobilised officer, finding peace incredibly tedious, would welcome diversion. Legitimate, if possible, but crime, if of a comparatively humorous description, no objection. Excitement essential. Would be prepared to consider permanent job if suitably impressed by applicant for his services. Reply at once: Box X10.'

This small ad. in the Personal Column of the London 'Morning Post', in 1920 - and probably one of the most famous ads. in English popular literature - was placed by one Captain Hugh Drummond, D.S.O., M.C., late of the Royal Loamshire Regiment. At the time, he was 25, a bachelor, and living in a flat in Half Moon Street, Mayfair, off Piccadilly, where his telephone number was MAYfair 1234 (which later became the real-life number of Selfridge's Department Store, in Oxford Street). His one-time and war-time batman, James Denny, was his manservant, and Mrs. Denny his cook-housekeeper. His affectionate nick-name was 'Bulldog', the canine breed that, to foreigners, was emblematic of the Englishman, and which was capable of holding on tenaciously to anything or anyone he had sunk his teeth into, being able to breathe as he did so, and continuing the operation indefinitely. In other words, when 'Bulldog' Drummond decided to do something, he would carry it out unrelentingly, to the end, until he had achieved what he had set out to do.

The first novel to introduce readers to this notable character was *Bulldog Drummond: The Adventures of a Demobilised Officer Who Found Peace Dull* (the sub-title was later dropped), written by H.C. McNeile, one-time Lt. Colonel in the Royal Engineers, and known to his public as 'Sapper', and published in 1920. It was the first in a series of ten

Drummond books by McNeile and the rest, for the record, were: *The Black Gang* (1922), *The Third Round* (1924) (titled *Bulldog Drummond's Third Round* in the USA), *The Final Count* (1926), *The Female of the Species* (1928) (serialised in *Strand Magazine* the same year), *Temple Tower* (1929), *The Return of Bulldog Drummond* (1932) (titled *Bulldog Drummond Returns* in the USA), *Knock-Out* (1933) (*Bulldog Drummond Strikes Back* in the USA), *Bulldog Drummond at Bay* (1935) and *Challenge* (1937) (titled *Bulldog Drummond Hits Out* in the USA). A 'bumper' omnibus containing the first four books and titled *Bulldog Drummond: His Four Rounds With Carl Peterson* was published in 1930, and became a huge best-seller, notching up sales of 13,000 copies in a few weeks (the seven sequels by Gerard Fairlie I shall come to later).

Bulldog Drummond was to become, during the 1920s and 1930s, one of the most popular and best-selling characters in fiction, as well as the star of stage plays and innumerable films. 'Sapper' called his original novel 'a shocker' and it went into 66 reprints over the next 33 years (two reprints a year). Probably only 007 James Bond achieved similar success and that was from 1953. Appropriately, Bond author, Ian Fleming, had been a keen Bulldog Drummond fan in his youth!

Bulldog Drummond's initial success was probably due to the fact that the books were popular with many ex-servicemen recently (like both Drummond and 'Sapper' himself) demobbed after the end of the First World War in 1918 and because (also like Drummond) they found peacetime comparatively dull and boring, and also missed their comrades.

But exactly who was Hugh Drummond and why did he become so popular?

In *The Final Count*, the story is told by John Stockton, who was to become a friend and associate of Drummond's. On page 2 he describes Drummond thus:

> "He stood just six feet in his socks and turned the scales at over 14 stone. And of that 14 stone not one ounce was made up of superfluous fat. He was hard muscle and bone clean through and the most powerful man I have ever met in my life. He was a magnificent boxer, a lightning and deadly shot with a revolver, and utterly loveable. Other characteristics I discovered later: his complete absence of fear, his cool resourcefulness in danger, and his marvellous gift of silent movement, especially in the dark.
>
> "But these traits, as I say, I only found out later: just at first he seemed to me to be a jovial, brainless creature who was married to an adorable wife.
>
> "It was his face and his boxing abilities that had caused him to be nicknamed Bulldog. His mouth was big and his nose was small and he would not have won a prize in a beauty show. In fact, it was only his eyes - clear and steady with a permanent glint of lazy humour in them - that redeemed his face from positive ugliness."

As we read more of Drummond's exploits, we too learn more about him. He was educated at Eton, was in the Finals of the Public Schools Heavyweight Boxing Championships, and was a one-time boxer and sprinter, Free Forester cricketer, Ju-jitsu expert, brilliant car-driver, and one of the best poker players in London. He could easily kill a man with his bare hands in a few seconds.

As critic Richard Usborne wrote in his book *Clubland Heroes*: "He is a huge, ugly, cheerful, brainless hunk of a man . . . who takes you up in a Sports Bentley to help him gate-crash the Moated Grange . . ."

He was also several other things. In fact, Bulldog Drummond was probably better to read about than to meet in person in real-life. In what passes for the latter, he would have been loud, overbearing, overpowering, bullish, intolerant, racist, anti-Semitic, prejudiced, a bit of a bully, facetious and, in contemporary parlance, decidedly politically-incorrect. He

was also, like several of his cronies, a Fascist. 'The Black Gang' was so titled because Drummond and his 'team' wore black masks, shirts and cloaks to wreak vengeance on Jews, Russians, Poles and other 'foreigners' (as Drummond succinctly put it) who were said to be 'infiltrating' English society and committing crimes. Drummond was violently opposed to the people he referred to variously as Jews, Huns, Wops, Wogs, Dagoes, and all other 'foreigners'. He was a man who believed implicitly in the God-given superiority of the English and seemed to be completely xenophobic. He was also something of a snob and preferred the Lower Orders to know their place - and keep it. To Drummond, Frogs and Dagoes began at Calais. He was racist, sexist and occasionally sadistic. All this might have been a reflection of the uneasy and suspicious times the books were set in, i.e. the 1920s and 1930s. A subject for debate? Perhaps. As the school exam papers used to say, 'Discuss'. And write on one side of the paper only. And for God's sake write in English, otherwise Hugh Drummond will be after you . . . !

In Greyfriars School terms, Drummond was more of a Coker or a Loder than a Wingate or Wharton, and he had plenty of Potters and Greenes hanging around to back him up in a crisis. He was a simple soul (or so he said). He was massively good-humoured with his own kind, but he could also be massively menacing when the occasion demanded, and dealt out lethal blows with his ham-like fists. And was merciless when it came to dealing with villains - witness his forcing Lakington into his own deadly acid-bath to a predictably horrific death towards the end of the original Drummond book. Apart from all these minus-factors in Drummond's personality, on the plus side he could also be courageous, chivalrous, fair, gentle and downright sentimental. And he was a man not to be trifled with, or treated lightly. Drummond was one dog whose bite was worse than its bark, when occasion demanded . . .

He did, though, tend to talk in clichés, laced with public school slang. He was constantly calling the friends in his team 'you fellows', 'you chaps', 'laddies' and 'old bucks'. And he rarely called Phyllis, his pretty wife, by her name; she was more likely to be 'you adorable creature', 'little girl' or 'kid'. And she seemed to like it too. Drummond first met Phyllis when she replied to his small ad. in the 'Morning Post' and agreed to help her (I won't go into the plot, but it's full of dastardly schemes, evil goings-on and nasty villains, take it from me).

Phyllis is forever being kidnapped and tied up, usually to a chair, but, helpless and attractive as she is, no one, not even the most dastardly of crooks or villains, ever takes advantage of her. Whilst 'Sapper' heartily approved of fights and violence and general mayhem, he drew the line at 'that sort of thing' . . .

Speaking of dastardly villains brings us to Bulldog Drummond's chief adversary and master-crook in the first four books, Carl Peterson. Not a particularly nice gentleman, it seems. When a character asks Drummond exactly who Peterson is, he replies, in set tones: "There is a man alive in this world today who might have risen to any height of greatness. He is possessed of a stupendous brain, unshakeable nerve, and unlimited ambition. There is a kink, however, in his brain, which has turned him into an utterly unscrupulous criminal. To him, murder means no more than the squashing of a wasp means to you." This reply makes the questioner thoughtful, as well it might, and he doesn't press Drummond any further on the matter. When Drummond and Peterson meet, as they do from time to time, they indulge in the kind of civilised, mocking dialogue that characterised Sherlock Holmes' encounters with Professor Moriarty. Polite menace and silky threats are the order of the day, laced liberally with "Good day to you, sir, I trust I find you not too well", "What is your precise meaning, Captain Drummond?", "We will surely meet again" and "I was sorry to hear that you survived my little plan" pleasantries.

There is also the slinky, sexy, attractive and highly dangerous Irma Peterson. Who is she? Mistress? Wife? Daughter? Sister? Mother-in-law? We are never told, but we

strongly suspect the first. She tends to glide around, usually in close-fitting, velvety black gowns and she smokes far too much, making her smoulder in more ways than one. Though she hates Drummond and longs to see him dead, she also admires him, and certainly (as we might say today) fancies him. She survives Mr. Peterson to fight Mr. Drummond another day, several in fact, and crops up year after year in the stories. Irma la Douce, she's not; more Irma l'Aigre (I need not translate, as Mr. Chips might say - but I will: Irma is more sour than sweet).

The creator of Bulldog Drummond was, of course, Herman Cyril McNeile. He hated his Christian names, which is why he used just his initials most of the time, and, in later life, preferred his friends to call him 'Mac'. He was born on September 28th, 1888, the son of Captain Malcolm McNeile, of the Royal Navy. At the time of his son's birth, he was Governor of the Naval Prison, at Bodmin, Cornwall and, indeed, little Herman was actually born there - in gaol! (Now that would have amused Carl Peterson!) He was educated at Cheltenham College, and at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich (the erstwhile London equivalent of Sandhurst and, as it happens, directly opposite my old school!) In 1907 he joined the Royal Engineers, serving with them until 1919, by which time he had risen to the rank of Lt. Colonel. In 1914 he went with the British Expeditionary Force to France. He was attached to the Middlesex Regiment, of an infantry division, and saw action at both battles of Ypres. He was Mentioned in Despatches and awarded the M.C. for bravery. He survived the war, but was gassed at least once, which caused his poor health for the rest of his life and was the probable cause of his eventual death.

In the trenches, he wrote stories and articles based on what he saw and experienced, and about people he met and knew. He sent them to the *Daily Mail* in London, where the owner, Lord Northcliffe, was very touched and impressed. He tried to have McNeile appointed a special War Correspondent, but Lord Kitchener vetoed the idea. By the end of the war, he had published 80 short stories, plus articles. When he ran McNeile's stories in his paper, Northcliffe couldn't use his name, since no serving officer was allowed to receive credit for writing. So it was Northcliffe who thought up the pen-name 'Sapper'. Sapper was the Army word for a military engineer; 'saps' were trenches by which infantrymen approached hostile enemy positions. McNeile was serving in the Royal Engineers. Hence 'Sapper', which McNeile rather liked when he eventually saw it in the pages of the *Daily Mail*. Northcliffe, with his customary clever flair, had turned McNeile's occupation into his pseudonym. (In the USA his books always appeared under the name 'H.C. McNeile', since 'Sapper' would have meant nothing there.)

Sapper's first book, a collection of his war stories and titled *Sergeant Michael Cassidy*, was published in 1915 and sold 50,000 copies within nine months, a huge sale at that time, especially in war-time, and other books of war stories followed over the next few years. (Later, in 1930, his publishers issued a 1,000-page omnibus of Sapper's War Stories and, again, it sold in vast numbers.) In 1919, Lt. Col. McNeile resigned his commission to become a full-time writer.

He had begun a long association with *Strand Magazine* in 1916, writing some 65 short stories for it. His Bulldog Drummond novel *The Female of the Species* was serialized there in 1928, and another thriller serial *The Death Satchel* appeared in 1929-30. Another full-length Bulldog Drummond serial *Bulldog Drummond and the Mystery of the Studio* ran in 1931-32 - curiously and inexplicably this has never appeared in book form, so far as I can discover. In March, 1928, he wrote an article *All About Bulldog Drummond* for this magazine.

Though it was for his Bulldog Drummond books that he was best-known, Sapper published a total of 32 novels and short story collections over a period of 22 years and his short tales became noteworthy for often having a shock 'twist' and sometimes a 'double twist' at the end. They are still worth searching out today for this reason alone. Again his

publishers brought out a huge Omnibus of them titled *Fifty-One Stories of Thrill and Adventure* in 1934.

Among Drummond's friends and associates in many of the adventures (Algy Longworth, Peter Darrell, Toby Sinclair, V.C., and so on, were three whom Sapper wrote separate books about: Ronald Standish (not to be confused with Sydney Horler's 'Tiger' Standish!), Jim Maitland, and Tiny Cartaret. Another regular in the Drummond saga was our hero's police contact, Inspector MacIver of Scotland Yard.

McNeile/Sapper apparently loved the good things in life and especially beer, men's sports, good talk, 'robust' funny stories and pretty girls. He was, if you like, 'a man's man', was lusty, extrovert and loud in talk, manner and clothes, but good company - if you like that sort of thing.

Drummond and his cronies were like muscular public schoolboys; he was not an intellectual - it was probably his straightforward, direct, no-holds-barred 'bulldog' qualities that defeated his smooth and cunning adversaries.

(To be continued)

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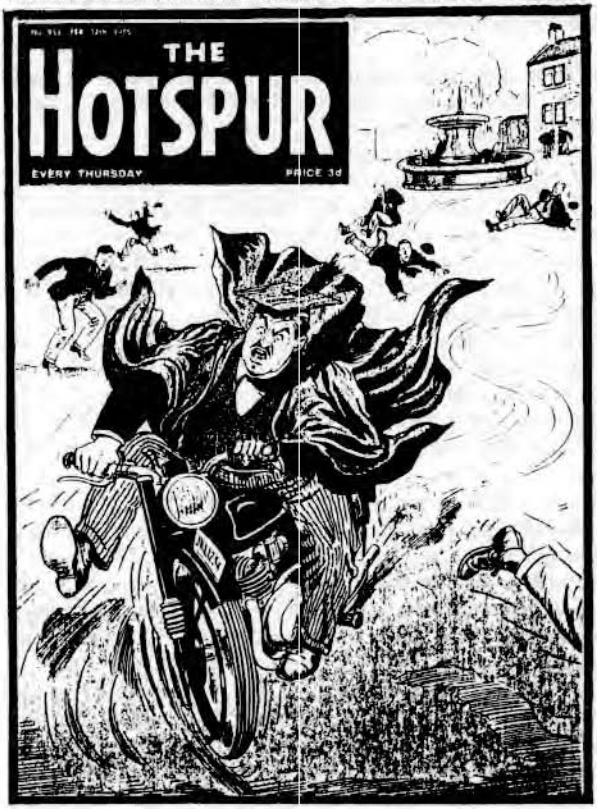
SOME MEMORABLE CHARACTERS

by Des O'Leary

1. Mr Smugg of Red Circle School

LOOK OUT! HERE COMES RED CIRCLE'S 60 SMILES-AN-HOUR SPEEDSTER!



Of all the many schools featured in the "Big Five" D.C. Thomson story papers, the one that undoubtedly stayed most fondly in the memory of its readers was Red Circle.

Bill Lofts in *The Men Behind Boys' Fiction* (Lofts and Adley 1970) has paid it a warm tribute: "I would say that the greatest series to appear in the Big Five was the *Red Circle School* stories in the *Hotspur* . . . Strangely enough, the most famous and best-remembered character at Red Circle was Mr. Alfred Smugg, the extremely unpopular master of the Home House . . ."

It is worth mentioning here that in most other school stories whatever happened to the main characters they remained fixed in time - the same age in spite of birthdays, and in the same Form, but as Mr. Lofts points out, in Red Circle boys progressed up the school through the forms from Fourth Form to Sixth and, eventually, left.

Thus "Dead-Wide" Dick Doyle of Home House, the House where boys from Britain went, started as a Fourth Former and moved up gradually to become School Captain until his departure to the Royal Navy in 1944. And another Dick, "Cripple Dick" Archer (so called from his disguise when he arrived at the school) followed in like manner until he, too, became School Captain.

The staff, also, was not invariable. As we shall see, Mr. Smugg did not begin as Home Housemaster. Dixie Dale, the popular sports master, would eventually become Headmaster.

One never-changing element is Alfred Smugg's character. In the very first Red Circle story (Hotspur No. 1, Sept. 1933) entitled *Japers of Red Circle*, we find the captains of the three rival Houses are united in their determination to avoid Mr. Smugg becoming their Housemaster in a staff reorganisation.

Jim Stacey of Home House voices the common view of Smugg which would always remain the opinion of the boys: "He's the worst-tempered beak in the school. He's always snooping and spying round corners and I'm positive the only fun he ever gets out of life is hauling some poor kid over the coals and wading into him with a cane." In this story the crafty "Yanks" of Transatlantic House (for American and Canadian pupils) and the "Conks" of Colonial House (for boys from the British Empire) are quick off the mark in pretending to be such industrious and virtuous pupils that, hopefully, the Head will see no need to appoint strict disciplinarian Smugg to their House. Finally British ingenuity triumphs as the "Homers" neatly entrap the "Conks" and "Yanks" into brawling with each other until Mr. Smugg is persuaded to ask to be put in charge of Transatlantic House as the one most needing firm discipline!

Smuggy, however, soon proved to be too promising a character to be kept away from the main centre of action, Home House, which is where he soon turns up as Housemaster. It is in this role that most *Hotspur* readers remember him.

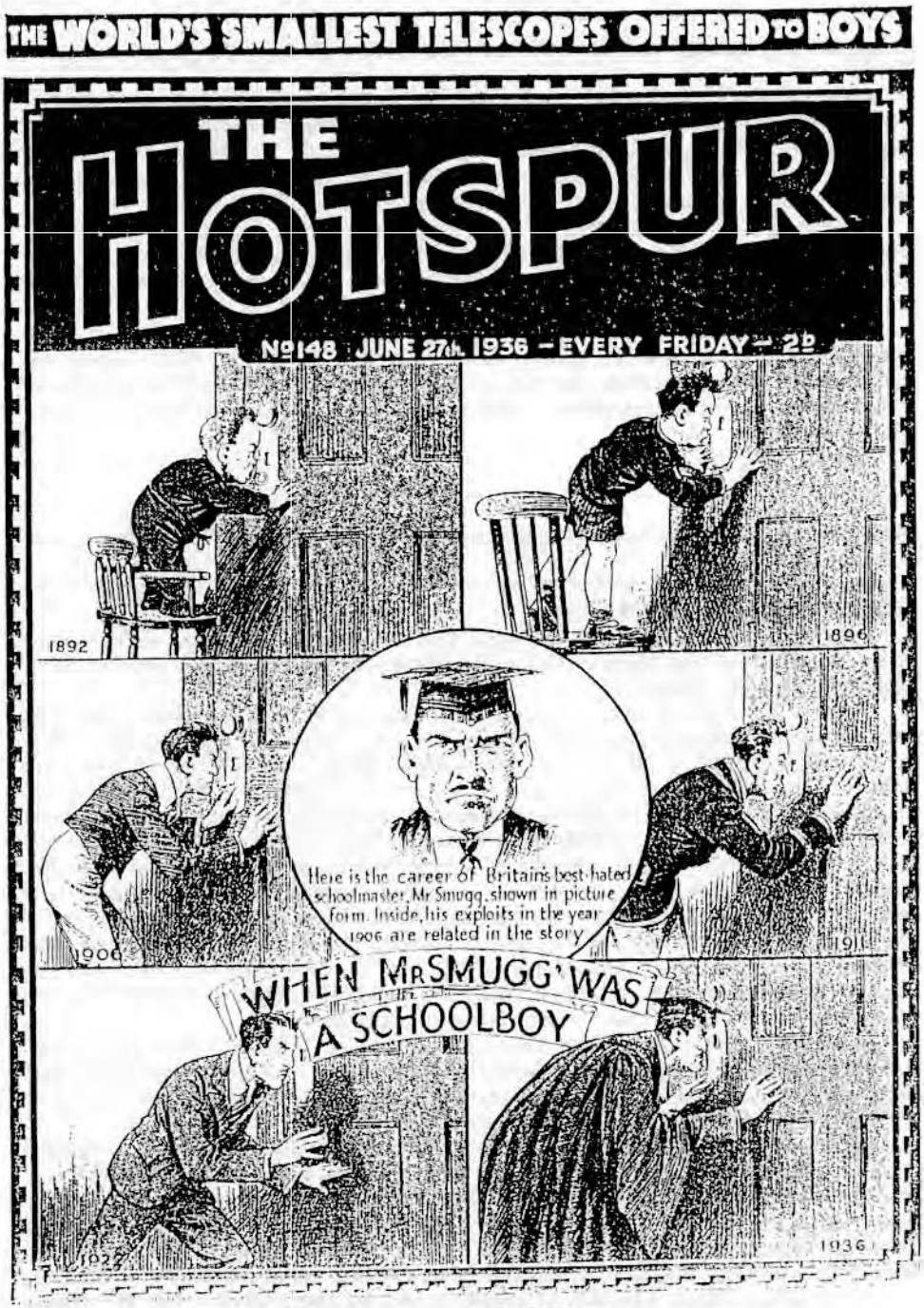
Such an impact, indeed, had Smugg made that, uniquely, Thomsons published a "prequel" of his early career. The *Hotspur* of Summer 1936 (nos. 148-157) carried *When Mr. Smugg was a Schoolboy*. This series appeared while the ordinary Red Circle stories continued in those same issues, further evidence of the popularity of Thomsons' greatest school and its most unforgettable teacher. As may well be expected, young Alfred Smugg, Sixth Former of Butler Academy, already possessed all the qualities he showed in later life: he was a bully, a slacker at games and an unpopular toady.

Mr. Smugg's importance to Red Circle was two-fold. Firstly, he was the source of many plot-lines as a spiteful presence whose antagonism has to be circumvented by the boys. Secondly, his pompous stupidity made him the natural target for amusing "spoofs and japes" of all kinds. The fact that his incompetent malevolence makes this mockery of him self-provoked, takes away any hint that this constant "ragging" might be cruel and unpleasant.

The titles of some of the stories in which he figures stress the comic element: *Alfred the Apeman* (1938); *Rag-time Cowboy Smugg* (1943); *Smuggy and the Zulu Death-Sign* (1947); *Smuggy the Terrific Toreador* (1953) etc. etc.!

We must however sympathise with a teacher faced with the frequent arrival at his school of gangsters, cowboys, Chinese tong members, witch doctors and countless sinister and eccentric newcomers! The pupils, too. Boys from all parts of the world: Zulus, Red Indians, wartime evacuees, cowboys and so on.

His colleagues were often a trial to him. Canadian sports masters; American exchange teachers who prove to be tough and resourceful but somewhat "vertically challenged" (this latter series, from 1948, is entitled *Smugg and the Seven Dwarfs*)!; Smugg's own brother, more sympathetic than Alfred, but rather lachrymose, hence his nickname "Weepy Willy"



Smugg; not only the huge and jolly Mr. Barrel but, briefly, his equally large and energetic sister!

Persisting always is Smugg's rivalry with Dixie Dale. Dale is not only athletic, popular and respected by all, but even finally takes the Headmastership of Red Circle, something which Smugg considered rightfully his. To cap it all, Mr. Dale's services were in demand by the British Secret Service. This did give Smugg some chances of being acting Headmaster, but his authority always ended in farcical failure.

Farce is the keynote of Mr. Smugg's importance in the stories. His rigid personality, compounded of pomposity, obtuseness and stubbornness, made him the obvious butt of the boys' jokes. His spitefulness, greed and cowardice made him richly deserving of his pupils' contempt and resultant "ragging".

When all's said and done, Smuggy is a great comic creation. Mysteriously, his thoroughly unpleasant character doesn't seem to matter. With the ridiculousness of Shakespeare's Malvolio without the dignity, the severity of Mr. Quelch of Greyfriars without his fairness, he is the supreme laughing-stock and as such gave all *Hotspur* readers many hearty laughs.

Thanks, Smuggy!

(With grateful acknowledgement to Colin Morgan for his invaluable help in the preparation of this article.)

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ROBERT PEPPERDAY WRITES:

I am writing with reference to the Revd. D.H. Sweetman's questions in *Collectors' Digest* No. 606 as to how Sherlock Holmes and Sexton Blake came to be named. I hope the following may be of interest.

Some of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's notes written when he was preparing his first Holmes novel, *A Study in Scarlet*, published in 1887, have been preserved, and indicate that he originally intended to call the story "A Tangled Skein" and the hero "Sherrinford Holmes". (In his book *Memories and Adventures* Sir Arthur recalled the name as "Sherringford".) There are conflicting explanations for the change to "Sherlock". John Dickson Carr wrote in his biography of Sir Arthur, written in 1949, that Doyle hit on the Irish name of Sherlock "entirely at random". Vincent Starrett, author of the book of essays entitled *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, unearthed a newspaper article in which Doyle claimed: "Years ago I made thirty runs against a bowler by the name of Sherlock, and I always had a kindly feeling for the name". William S. Baring-Gould added in *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes* (John Murray, 1968) that "the Sherlocks were landowners in the very part of Ireland where the Doyle family had once held its estates - County Wicklow - and Conan Doyle may well have seen the name in family papers".

It seems generally agreed that Doyle took the name "Holmes" from that of the American essayist Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-94), author of *The Autocrat, Poet*, and *Professor at the Breakfast Table* who was himself, as Vincent Starrett pointed out, a physician, and a man whom Doyle greatly admired.

Incidentally, one or two pastiche writers have treated Sherringford as a separate character, arguing that as he was in a literary sense the "first-born" of the Holmes family, he could be regarded as Sherlock's eldest brother! Readers with a taste for pastiche might enjoy Andy Lane's novel, *All-Consuming Fire* (Doctor Who Books/Virgin Publishing Ltd. 1994) in which the famous time-travelling doctor (another great British creation) meets the three Holmes brothers, Sherlock, Mycroft, and Sherringford, and of course Doctor Watson.

As to Sexton Blake, who was of course created by Harry Blyth (1852-98) writing under the name "Hal Meredith", Mr. Lofts and his late colleague Derek Adley recalled in

their book *The Men Behind Boys' Fiction* (Howard Baker Books, 1970) that they had met Blyth's son, himself now deceased, and that he was convinced that his father had invented the name. This was however disputed by an old editor of Harmsworth Ltd., who asserted that the character was originally called "Frank Blake" but that his first name was changed editorially as something investing the character with an aura of mystery was required. If this is the case then Holmes and Blake have an early change of Christian name in common.

There is an interesting reference to Blake's name and family background in the novel *Danger's Child* by Jack Trevor Story (1918-91). In this adventure (Sexton Blake Library no. 487, published November 1961), which is narrated by Blake himself, the detective travels to St. Ives in Cambridgeshire in response to a call for help from the woman who was the great love of his university years. On the way he makes a detour to Blakeney in the Fen - "little more than a ruined Abbey and a few farm cottages with one half-license beer house. But there is also a shrine there . . ." In a touching scene Blake arrives at the obelisk of grey stone in the overgrown burial ground of Blakeney Abbey, and recalling the words of Rupert Brooke, "There's peace and holy quiet there", he places some wild flowers from the hedgerow on his mother's grave. Elsewhere in the story, he observes, "With me the fen mood is a mingling of pain and pleasure because in a distant way I belong here . . . The Blake blood runs with the high fenland rivers, the irrigation dykes and ditches; the Blake bones usually come home to the black fen soil. If there is anywhere in the world where I feel slightly immortal it is here, for the Blakes originally come from a long line of sextons of Blakeney Abbey."

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THE 'TOFF' - THE CALL OF THE PAST by Peter Mahony

Part 2.

The capture of Hookey Walker removed physical danger from Talbot's life. Now established at St. Jim's as an upright, honest scholar, the prospects for the 'Toff' looked rosy. But it is at such moments that the forces of evil redouble their efforts. Three weeks after Levison had solved the ciphers and brought Hookey Walker down, Talbot found himself in moral difficulty. A Mr. Packington joined the St. Jim's staff as Science Master. Talbot thought him vaguely familiar - he turned out to be another ex-confederate - 'Professor' John Rivers - in disguise.

Packington/Rivers befriended Bernard Glyn, St. Jim's tame inventor. Glyn, the millionaire's son, took Packington home for the weekend. Mr. Glyn's safe was burgled on the Sunday night. (The Angel Alley gang were dead-set on plundering the Glyns - it was barely six months since Talbot had robbed them and then restored the loot.)

Talbot confronted Rivers and demanded that he return the loot - his first mistake. His conscience, still troubled by his own repented sins, could not allow him to 'shop' the Professor without giving the scoundrel a chance. Rivers tried to threaten his way out, but Talbot insisted on restoring the swag. Together, they went to the crypt where Rivers had 'stashed' it - Talbot's second mistake. Rivers stunned him and left him tied up in the dark vault. Then, Rivers/Packington put about a story that Talbot had left the school during afternoon classes. Secure, temporarily, Rivers planned to crack the Head's safe that night and abscond with the plunder.

Fortunately for Talbot, Skimpole, the 'cranky' genius of the Shell, was using the vaults as a workshop. 'Skimmy' broke dormitory bounds to work on his 'invention' - and discovered Talbot. Groggy from his ordeal, but determined, the 'Toff' roused the Head and Mr. Railton. They surprised Packington at the Head's safe, captured him and handed him to the police. Talbot needed a spell in 'sanny' to recover. Once again, he had proved his honesty - but a disconcerting tendency to 'make allowances' for old cronies had entered his make-up.

This trait was to prove an even greater handicap three weeks later. In a superb trio of yarns (*Gems* 361-363) Talbot was 'framed', lost his reputation, was banished from St. Jim's - and nearly 'snuffed it'. And none of it need have happened - but for a girl.

An outbreak of 'flu at St. Jim's filled the sanatorium to overflowing. Miss Pinch, the school nurse, needed temporary assistance and a 'Miss March' - a Little Sister of the Poor - was engaged.

Talbot, meanwhile, read that John Rivers (Packington) had escaped from custody. (The police, hereabouts, seem a negligent lot. They had Hookey Walker - and let him slip - only to recapture him through the cleverness of Levison. Now, Rivers was 'on the run', despite being handed over safely by Mr. Railton.) Fearful that Rivers might try to involve him in crime again, Talbot told Tom Merry the full story of his connection with Rivers. It transpired that Rivers' daughter, Marie, had been a special chum of Talbot's in his 'Toff' days. With a great deal of subtlety, Clifford/Hamilton conveys the idea of a 'thing' going between Talbot and Marie of much deeper implications than the other youthful 'romances' written about by Hamilton. (One hesitates to suggest 'carnal knowledge' of each other, but the background of both was seedy and criminal. They would have been far more 'worldly-wise' than the 'innocents' of St. Jim's.) Talbot's regard for Marie is evident from the start of this episode. It proves to be his 'Achilles heel'.

"Marie!" exclaimed Talbot in astonishment. "What are you doing here?" The junior seemed to lose all his nerve at the sight of that fresh pretty face, with the clear blue eyes that had a mocking light in their depths. "The Toff!" she murmured.

Gussy, with his usual instinct and concern for the ladies, suggests meeting Miss March at Rylcombe station. He inveigles Talbot into accompanying him. A Grammarian ambush leaves Gussy smothered in snow. While he seeks repairs at the tailor's, Talbot goes on to the station. To his surprise, Marie Rivers arrives. She taunts him about 'betraying' her father. Talbot, on the defensive, realises that Rivers cannot be far away. Marie is to be the 'Professor's' shield: Talbot cannot 'shop' Rivers without 'shopping' her.

Marie proceeds to pour scorn on the 'Toff's' reform. In an excellent chapter of dialogue, she shows herself to be a conniving minx; contemptuous of Talbot's decision to go straight, she plays the temptress role, reminding him of the contrast between the opulence of his criminal past and the frugal living of his scholarship present.

"What does your present life offer in comparison?" she mocks.
"Honour," said Talbot.
Marie laughed.
"Honesty," said the Toff steadily. "A clear conscience, Marie. Better poverty - yes, even hunger - and honesty with it, than wealth that is not mine, Marie. When I came to St. Jim's it was like the scales falling from my eyes. I had

never seen things in their true light before. They know what I have been, and it makes no difference to them, because they have confidence in me. I would die rather than betray that confidence."

"And you are satisfied?"

Talbot sighed.

"It isn't so easy to forget. I don't keep any secret from you, Marie; I do miss the old life sometimes - the danger and the excitement, but - I've made the right choice, and I mean to stand by it."

Marie's lip curled.

"Then we are enemies?" she said.

That little exchange sets the scene. Talbot is 'stuck' on Marie: and she knows it. Manipulation is the order of the day: he'll dance to her tune - one way or the other. Talbot, aware of his vulnerability, suffers inward torture - especially when she dares him to give her up to the police. Then, to pile on the agony, she reveals that she is 'Miss March' and he knows that her presence will be a permanent source of worry and stress. Their relationship will be resumed; but it will be bitter-sweet.

The complications soon arise. Joe Frayne, in the 'sanny' with 'flu, recognises Marie. He asks Talbot to keep an eye on her and thwart any scheme of Rivers'. While Talbot demurs, Tom Merry takes a hand. Aware of Rivers' escape and suspecting that he is in the neighbourhood, Tom and Lowther search Rylcombe and spot 'Mr Judd' at the Rylcombe Arms. Their suspicions are allayed when Miss March visits her 'uncle', Mr. Judd!

Marie reports that Talbot is inflexible. Rivers decides to try trickery - and alarms her. He tells her to 'delay' Frayne's recovery and to get 'inside information' at St. Jim's. Despite some misgivings, the girl plies her 'trade'. Gussy's watch, a Challenge Cup, Railton's petty cash, etc., are purloined. The 'Toff' is checked on, but Tom Merry gives him a clear alibi. He guesses that Marie is the culprit - confronts her - she defiantly tells him that Rivers already has the loot. Talbot threatens to expose him; Marie, a wily customer, points out that she will be implicated. (Whatever her feelings for Talbot, there is no doubt that she is very ready to exploit his regard for her.) She obviously considers this a trump card - her 'Toff' will never put her in danger of arrest.

His response is a 'shaker'. He says that he will shoulder the blame himself - her name will not 'come into it'. Taken aback, Marie resorts to tears - to no avail. She then reveals that 'Mr. Judd' is still in Rylcombe.

Talbot visits Rivers and demands the loot. Rivers refuses: Talbot calls his bluff by preparing to telephone the police. The loot is surrendered: Rivers leaves by train. Talbot leaves the loot to be found at St. Jim's - a ploy he had used before, yet it does not arouse anyone's suspicions about him. The Saints really did fall over backwards to keep believing in this repentant sinner!

Marie, thoroughly chastened, realises how deeply Talbot cares for her. In a burst of remorse, she promises that there will be no more pilfering while she completes her commitment as 'Miss March'. So all is calm and bright!

Or is it? (To be continued)

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NEWS OF THE OLD BOYS BOOK CLUBS

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

The thirteen people present included Keith Normington from Thailand, and new members Paula Johnson from Middlesbrough and John Ingleton from Denby. Tributes were paid to Bill Lofts, a friend of, and fairly frequent visitor to, our club in the past. We were saddened to have recently lost two stalwarts, Eric Fayne and Bill.

A report was given on the recent very successful Jennings day in Leicester. Forty people had attended, a splendid record for a first-ever meeting. A further gathering is planned next year in Sussex.

Mark Caldicott gave an update on correspondence received through the Internet, and Geoffrey reported that Leeds City Council wished to include our Club on their Internet system.

Joan's literary anthology, humorous and otherwise, included excerpts from Wodehouse and Arthur Marshall. She was ably assisted by various members, including our Secretary who read a Magnet extract in which Bunter tries to get out of writing lines for Quelch using the excuse of spilled ink on the paper, and also of having to meet his father at Lantham. Appropriately he was rewarded by six of the best!

Next Meeting: 9th August, when members are asked to bring along their own items and Paula will speak of her interest in the Chalet School.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

LONDON O.B.B.C.

The July meeting at Bill Bradford's Ealing home celebrated the halcyon days of radio. Roger Jenkins provided extracts from classic BBC comedy shows, including *Round the Horne* and *Hancock's Half Hour*. Norman Wright spoke of his passion for the classic serial *Journey Into Space* that took the world by storm. Members' knowledge was tested by two tricky radio quizzes, presented by Duncan Harper and Brian Doyle respectively. Bill Bradford then took us on a trip down Memory Lane as he revisited the July 1977 meeting.

Thanks were extended to our gracious host.

Next Meeting: At Chingford Horticultural Society Hall on 10th August. Please phone Tony and Audrey Potts to confirm your attendance on 0181-529-1317.

VIC PRATT

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ANSWERS TO ST. JIM'S QUIZ

1. Amos Keene
2. Lasalle
3. Archie Hilton
4. James Bullivant
5. Guiseppe Fosco
6. James Silverson
7. Ralph Stansen
8. Pablo Lopez
9. Jonas Jex
10. Richard Thurnel

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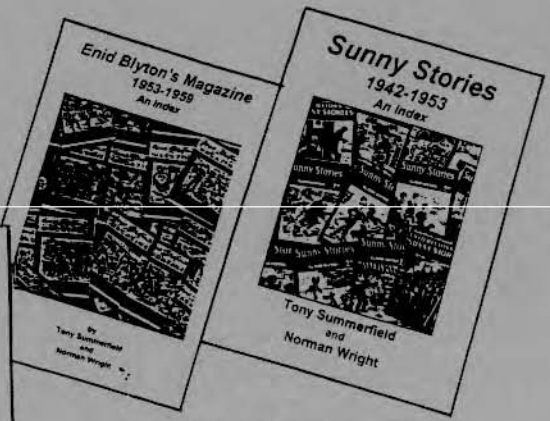

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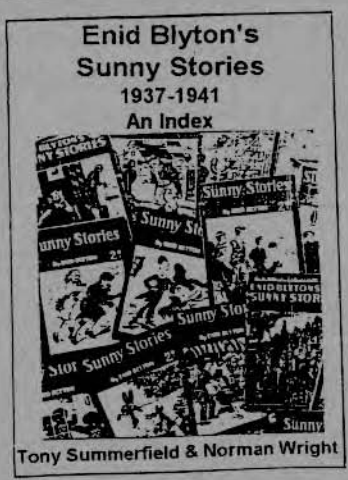

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