

HAPPY XMAS

STORY PAPER

# COLLECTORS'

No 612

# DIGEST

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December 1997



ENLARGED CHRISTMAS NUMBER



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# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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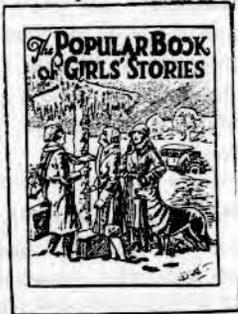
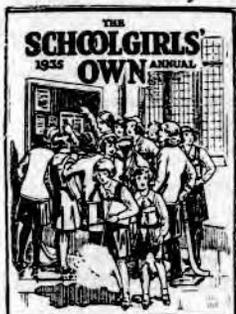
## OUR ANNUAL

As I write this editorial the Christmas season is fast approaching, and I hope that the C.D. Annual will soon be ready for despatch to all of you who have ordered a copy.

As promised, I 'trail' here some further delights from its contents. Leslie Laskey writes about a particularly interesting St. Jim's story, Tommy Keen has contributed an article about his long-standing friendship with Gracie Fields, Marion Waters writes a seasonable story called 'The Silent Three and the Christmas Impostor' while Andrew Miles, from Australia, has sent us an erudite but very entertaining study called 'Greyfriars and the Epic Tradition:

Echoes of Homer and Vergil in the Writings of Frank Richards'.

Again, I would remind anyone who has not already done so to order the Annual as soon as possible, in case stocks should run out. The price for our truly Bumper Book is £10.50 for readers in the U.K. and £12 for those living overseas (postage and packing included, in each case).



## THE SEASON OF GOOD-WILL - AND GOOD MEMORIES

This is, of course, a time when we especially remember families and friends. However busy we are with sending out cards and gifts, with festivities, with Christmas reading or T.V. watching, we generally find time for nostalgic thoughts, and in particular to recall friends and relatives who are no longer with us. This year has seen the sad loss of those two stars of our hobby, Eric Fayne and Bill Lofts; others too have passed on, and our affectionate memories reach out to them all. This month in our Nelson Lee and Blakiana sections I have used articles which were written several years ago by contributors who have now sadly departed. In memory of all these old friends I quote below some of Eric Fayne's favourite words about the Yuletide season:

"Whatever else is lost among the years

Let us keep Christmas -

Its meaning never ends ....

Whatever doubts assail us, or what fears -

Let us hold close this day -

remembering friends."

Christmas is also a time for thanks. First of all I should like to thank all those of you who have contributed items to the C.D. and its Annual in this, our 51st year. Your splendid dedication ensures that the flow of articles never stops. Next, I must convey warm thanks and appreciation to Alison, Mandy, Margaret, Freda, Richard, Andy and Sian, the always helpful staff of Quacks, our printers in York: no editor could receive greater assistance and co-operation than I do from them. Last - and as you know, by NO means least - I must thank all of you readers, both old and new, who so loyally support the C.D. Your letters of appreciation, encouragement and suggestions are wonderful. It is a privilege to edit a magazine in which there is so much enthusiastic participation. I sometimes feel that we C.D. readers and writers really do make up a widely extended but affectionate family!

As always, I warmly wish you -

A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY, PEACEFUL AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR.

Mary Cadogan

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## Nelson Lee Column

### MY CHRISTMAS VISIT

by C.H. Churchill

The big question is where shall I go this Christmas? You see I have such a lot of attractive places on offer that I find it difficult to decide which would be best. Let us consider the pros and cons of some of them.

First of all take Tregellis Castle. What a splendid time I would have down there in Cornwall. Dancing, skating on the lake (weather permitting), country walks, very pleasant company and wonderful food. As for the service, well, as hostess, Lady Helen Tregellis-West's expert guidance would ensure this. All would be fine but there is the thought of that Cloaked Cavalier who might be seen walking across the snow covered lawn at any moment, or appearing in the upper corridor! I really must think carefully before deciding on Tregellis Castle although Sir Montie is most pressing.

Lord Dorrimore is holding a party at Cliff Castle in Kent. This sounds most attractive with popular guests including the one and only Umlosi, King of the Katanas. What strikes me, however, is what about the face at the window of the billiards room one evening? The mystery that was never cleared up? It might appear again so this makes me hesitate to accept Dorrie's invitation.

Then there is Somerton Abbey in Somerset, the ancestral home of the popular Duke of that ilk. Quite a step up in the social scale of course but there is this business of the sealed room, where an intruder once hid and haunted the corridors of the Abbey made up as a ghost. Supposing someone else managed to get into that room and carried on in the same way. They might disturb my dreams. I must ponder on this carefully.

Grey Towers in Berkshire is another possibility. But it seems as if Sir Crawford has servant problems so it might not be too comfortable there. I really think I will give this a miss.

I know Dr. Stafford would be delighted to put me up at St. Frank's if I liked. But with the whole school empty and in view of what happened when Nipper & Co. once spent Christmas there, well I am dubious. I ask you! Intruders in the vaults and monsters prowling about Bellton Lane hardly augur well for a quiet holiday.

Lord Dorrimore, being so wealthy, has several homes, but it would be no good my turning up at Dorrimore Hall in Suffolk or at Dorrimore Castle in Derbyshire if he is entertaining at Cliff Castle in Kent would it?

What about Glenthorne Manor? The Colonel, no doubt, would make me welcome. However, I do like my sleep and would not welcome girls running about outside in the grounds in the middle of the night, screaming. I don't think I shall visit Glenthorne Manor.

I like the New Forest actually, although it might be a bit grim in December. All the same I might join Archie Glenthorne who is visiting his aunt, Lady Eustacia Bowers at

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New Series No. 139. December 29th, 1928.

A stunning long complete Christmas yarn introducing the cheery Chums of St. Frank's.

Forest House. But I do not like this mention of her being mixed up in black magic with this Nerki person. It all sounds a bit weird to me so I think I must settle for somewhere else.

There is Handforth Towers of course. On second thoughts this idea rather makes me shudder. The fact of about four Handforths being around all the time puts the hope of peace and quiet right out of the question. I do not think they will see me there this year.

After considering the matter very carefully I feel I must make it Tregellis Castle after all, despite the hauntings. I hear that the charming Miss Eileen Dare and her fiancé, Capt. Masters will be there and, with the elegant Lady Helen as hostess and Nelson Lee and the likeable Lord Westbrook in attendance, I feel I need fear nothing from this wretched Cloaked Cavalier. So, as I settle down to enjoy my Christmas at Tregellis Castle by means of Nelson Lee Library old series No. 130, I wish all readers and members of the hobby the compliments of the season and all the best for 1980.

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### BUNTER COMES FOR CHRISTMAS (AGAIN!)

by Horace Dilley

Christmas Eve 1997. The sky had threatened all day; it seemed to be carrying a heavy burden and looked poised to unload its moisture at any time. It had hardly been light all day and the light that existed was being enveloped into the darkness of the night.

Last minute calls on relations and friends had been completed. Last minute shopping to complete our requirements for our festive board had been unpacked. "We're going to have some rain," I volunteered to my wife, as I returned from garaging the car.

"I think it is going to snow" she replied. "With the wind in that quarter, you mark my words."

I looked sceptical. When I was back at Greyfriars all those years ago, we seemed to have snow every Christmas, but not in recent years. However, she is quite a good judge of the weather.

It all seemed set for a very pleasant Christmas. I had unearthed a generous supply of *Magnets* of past Christmas periods. The big envelope housing the *Collectors' Digest Annual* lay on top of these. Tea over and crockery put away, I opened the door to have a final look outside before settling down for the evening. "You're right" I exclaimed to the wife. "It's snowing. Coming down quite steadily." "Well let it" she said. "It's lovely and cosy here inside." A look at a couple of programmes on the T.V. and the heat of the open fire soon had me nodding off. The door bell sounding impatiently brought me back to life. "Can't be the Avon lady at this time of night" I muttered as I staggered to the door.

I was greeted by a life-sized snowman, which only needed a pipe stuck in his mouth to make it complete. "What the . . ." I started. This was no ordinary snowman.

"Let me in you beast. After coming all this way to look you up, all you do is keep me on the doorstep." The voice had a familiar ring. I had it in one. William George Bunter, late of Greyfriars School.

Bunter brushed me aside, came into the hall and unloaded snow in all directions. "The wife will be pleased," I mused. Regaining my composure, I said, "Let me take your coat, old chap! You must be pretty cold."

"Yes, and hungry!" stormed Bunter. "Why don't you do something about it? I don't think much of the Dilley hospitality. But there, you always were mean when you were at



Greyfriars." I thought my wife was going to throw a fit, but she controlled herself admirably. If looks could have killed . . . however, she went to the fridge and extracted a generous supply of eggs, sausages and bacon. The gas stove was ignited.

Another ring at the bell. "Whoever is this?" I groaned. "This is getting too much." I opened the door. Another figure all covered in snow. "Yes?" I asked, not too politely. "I'm the taxi-man" he said. "I've just brought a large-sized chap here and he said that he was going to find some money for the fare. It comes to sixty-eight pounds." I groaned, almost aloud, and called across to Bunter: "Your taxi wants paying. He says he wants sixty-eight pounds!"

"Tell him to go away", yelled Bunter. "It was a lousy journey. His taxi was filthy. I'm not going to pay him a penny." Bunter by now was doing more than justice to the eggs, sausages and bacon. Trifles such as paying the taxi fare mattered little or nothing to him. I turned to Bunter. "Look!" I said, "You must pay the man". In an act of grace Bunter felt in his inside pocket. I had a feeling he knew the answer without going through the exercise. "Oh dear, old chap! I've left my wallet at home. Can't be helped. Just one of those things." I looked at Bunter's face, now showing signs of egg attachment. It didn't seem to register any regrets. I knew what it all added up to. I went to the bureau and extracted the money, plus a tip.

I hadn't quite lost the spirit of Christmas yet. I said to the taxi-man, "You'd better sit at the table and my wife will bring you something to eat". I didn't quite like the look of him . . . but I should not forget, it is Christmas.

"How did you find out where I lived?" I asked Bunter. "I got a copy of the *Collectors' Digest* and you mentioned 'Biggleswade' in one of your contributions, and here I am, old chap." I realised it had been very stupid of me thus to advertise my location! Bunter became conversational. "You know," he said "The Brig wanted me to spend Christmas with him and Marjorie". "The Brig?" I queried. "Yes, Brigadier Harry Wharton," replied Bunter. "I couldn't stand him over Christmas. You know what a filthy temper he had. And Smithy. Sir Herbert now. He begged me to stay for the hols. But he's such a pig. Can't stand him either. When I got your invitation, old chap, I just couldn't refuse." I gave a resigned look and pushed back one of the curtains. The snow was still coming down in generous measure.

"Can we put Bunter and the taxi-man up?" I asked the wife. She gave a grimace. "I suppose so" she said. The evening moved on. Bunter and the taxi fellow looked quite content. "Why didn't you spend Christmas with Bessie or Sammy?" I asked Bunter. Bunter ignored the question. However the taxi-man came to his aid. "We did make a couple of calls on the way, but at both places they shut the door in the gentleman's face."

Carol singers broke the stillness of the night. "Peace on the earth, goodwill to men."

And so to bed. I had a disturbed night. I woke up. It was about one o'clock. There seemed to be a faint rattling of chains. A Christmas ghost? It couldn't be. I thought I heard a car starting up. I must be dreaming. No one would be out driving on a night like this.

Dawn seemed reluctant to break. I dressed and went downstairs. Immediately I sensed that something wasn't quite right. The silverware in the glazed cabinet? Missing! My bureau? Quite a few valuables in it including money. It had been prised open. It dawned upon me that we had been robbed.

I retraced my steps upstairs. From Bunter's room there was an unmelodious snore. I knocked on the taxi-man's door, and there was no answer. This was a job for the police and they were soon with us. But the bird had flown. We had to make statements. "I must get a statement from the other gentleman" said the policeman. I banged on Bunter's door, but, if he heard, he heeded not. I entered and shook Bunter. "Let me alone" he growled. "'Tain't rising bell yet." I said "Bunter, be sensible old chap. We've been robbed. I think it was that taxi-man of yours; the police want you to make a statement."

Bunter pulled the bedclothes more tightly around him. "You selfish ungrateful beast!" he stormed. "You're just the same as you were at Greyfriars. Always thinking of yourself. Here I am. I turned down dozens of offers to spend Christmas with all my other friends. Out of the goodness of my heart I come along to you, and this is all I get. Get out and leave me alone."

I am usually placid. I recalled the carol singers of the previous night: "Peace on the earth, goodwill to men". I supposed that included people like Bunter. But my patience, which had for some time been hanging by a slender thread, had about reached breaking point. I looked around unsuccessfully for some free standing article to throw. There comes a time, in the history of nations and men, when flesh and blood can stand no more. That time had been more than reached, as far as I was concerned.

In a moment of sheer despair I threw back the clothes from Bunter and tumbled him onto the floor. There was a terrific bump, followed by a yell of anguish, which reminded me of similar yells coming from the dormitory at Greyfriars. Luckily for Bunter the bed was of the "low" type and it wasn't far for him to fall. I wondered whether I had been as lucky with my floorboards. There was a vibration on impact. I would have expected them to groan but instead, it seemed as if they were chuckling away.

I am ashamed to say this, but afterwards I felt heaps better. I went downstairs. The appetising smell of the turkey as it permeated the house from the kitchen warmed my heart. I glanced through the windows . . . the snow was still falling gently, producing a scene of sheer beauty. I glanced at the *Magnets* and the *Collectors' Digest Annual*.

I had a feeling it could still be a happy Christmas . . . despite Bunter!

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**A "ST. JIM'S" GENERAL KNOWLEDGE QUIZ** **from Peter Mahony**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>Who was . . . ?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Wacky Dang.</li> <li>2. The Jam of Bundelpore</li> <li>3. "One of the Best" (title role)</li> <li>4. Shunned by his Father (title role)</li> <li>5. Racke's Man (title role)</li> <li>6. Skimpole's Pupil (title role)</li> <li>7. The "Professor"</li> <li>8. The "Worm"</li> <li>9. George Washington Junior (title role)</li> <li>10. Solomon</li> </ol> | <p>Who were . . . ?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. The Terrible Three</li> <li>12. The New Firm</li> <li>13. The Shady Three (title role)</li> <li>14. The Three Minors</li> <li>15. The Three Wallabies</li> </ol> |
|--|---|

And to finish:

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16. Who was the victim of "Baggy Trimble's Booby-Trap"?</li> <li>17. Who discovered "The Secret Passage"?</li> </ol> | <p>(continued over page)</p> |
|---|------------------------------|

18. Who was "Captured by Cipher"?
19. Who was "Too Good for St. Jim's"?
20. What were the surnames of:  
 "Tickey"; "Ephraim"; "Reuben"; "Marmaduke"; "Horatio"; "Lascelles"?

(Answers on page 30)

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## THE TOAST IS SEXTON BLAKE

by Raymond Cure

If you are looking for a little Christmas fare with a Sexton Blake flavour, I nominate "Crime at Christmas" directed and produced by Mr Howard Baker, written by Gwyn Evans and Edwy Searles Brooks, those two masters of the art of Christmas. Pride of place on this occasion going to Gwyn Evans with his four stories culled from the *Union Jack*.

Edwy Searles Brooks completes this wonderful volume with "The Pauper of Pengarth Castle" and the "Curse of Pengarth Castle". With six tales like this bringing together a host of popular *Union Jack* characters you are sure of a Christmas treat.

Some time ago I set about borrowing copies of Christmas numbers of the *Union Jack*. I was surprised to find they were a bit thin on the ground. Accustomed as I was to tracking down Christmas tales featuring the schoolboy stars of the *Nelson Lee* and *Magnet* Christmas masterpieces (with the help of the O.B.B.C. Library services) I had not realised that considering the long life of the *Union Jack* there was not an abundance of Christmas cheer in the offing. It is because of this that I regard my volume "Crime at Christmas" as special - extra special.

It's no secret that I am a Christmas fan. Maybe that's due to the fact that my parents and my Grandmother always saw we had a good Christmas no matter how roughly the rest of the year had treated us. Mention Christmas to me and I can visualise hundredweights of coloured paper chains, Christmas trees, bowls of oranges, tangerines, apples and nuts, and Meccano sets or the like and one of the Annuals (so popular today). Carol singers and a sledge ride in the wonder snow that appeared as if by magic every year around Christmas time in our corner of Leeds. Hosts of Father Christmases in every store, and the pudding! to quote Charles Dickens, every year I could say "Never was there such a pud".

All of which brings me back to "Mrs. Bardell's Christmas Pudding" starring Sexton Blake, Inspector Coutts, Splash Page and of course Mrs Bardell, not forgetting Tinker and Pedro. There it is plum in the middle of the cover page of U.J. No. 1157, 12 December, 1925, Mrs Bardell's Christmas pudding, just about to vanish by the look of it for a pair of thieving hands are hovering over it. Between these covers are nine chapters of seasonable crime and fun, followed immediately by "Mrs. Bardell's Christmas Eve". Gwyn Evans was a light humorous writer, sometimes writing with his tongue in cheek as the saying goes.

One of the modern writers who reminds me of Gwyn Evans is Jack Trevor Story, who by the way came over fine on TV in a series of six on "Jack Trevor Story". "The Affair of the Black Carol" and "The Crime of the Christmas Tree" bring Gwyn Evans' Christmas offering for 1925 to 1929 to a close, and for a Sexton Blake fan and a lover of Christmas one couldn't wish for anything better.

Edwy Searles Brooks takes over at this stage with his "Pauper of Pengarth Castle" and "Curse of Pengarth Castle", and though these are dated as late as 13 and 20 June they have the Christmas touch as the ghostly monk hovering over Pengarth Castle dominating the cover page will prove. Starring Waldo the Wonderman and Sexton Blake, two tales from the thrill a minute pen of Edwy Searles Brooks.

Well now, I read it all last Christmas, and guess what - God willing, I have it lined up again for this Christmas. Christmas 1979 and the toast is Sexton Blake, though if Blake could be with us in the flesh methinks he would propose a toast to Gwyn Evans and Edwy Searles Brooks, not to mention Howard Baker also. They whose combined efforts have kept Blake alive for us in the year of our Lord 1979 and for those of us alive in the Christmases yet to come.



**HIS MASTER'S VOICE**

by Una Hamilton Wright



*Charles Hamilton*

This year we are celebrating ninety years of the *Gem* and next February will be the ninetieth anniversary of the *Magnet*. It was just ninety years ago that Charles Hamilton learned to listen to His Master's Voice and to follow its instructions. This year also sees the fiftieth anniversary of the Hard Cover Post-War Bunter Books. After a seven-year gap they brought Bunter back to life again, in 1947. Without them very few people alive today would know who Billy Bunter was.

Billy Bunter was born in London, at No. 7, Dorset Square, off Baker Street. Charles's home-life had been drastically affected by the death of his younger brother Douglas in 1902 and his mother's re-marriage and second widowhood. Charles and his younger sister Dolly were the last two members of the family at home and needed somewhere to live. Dolly moved into a Royal Academy of Music boarding house but Charles was not so lucky. After a short period with brother Alex in Chiswick he had to move when Alex transferred to Canvey Island. Charles went from one set of lodgings to another until he finally suggested to Dolly that they should take a flat together. It was a comfortable flat and service was provided.

Frank Richards was again enjoying a secure way of life, with his sister to run their home along with he teaching of singing which she had just commenced. She kept him in touch with the world outside and brought friends into his life, most importantly Percy Harrison, a musician she had met while holidaying with friends on the Isle of Man. She recommended him to Charles with the comment: "He's read everything that we have; you will like him, Charley". And Charley did, gaining a best friend who was to last for the next

fifty years, Percy and Dolly marrying a few years later. They all loved opera and often visited Covent Garden.

Charles bought a large gramophone - a carved and polished oak box with a handle for winding it up. The loudspeaker was an enormous green metal horn which somehow connected with the pick-up arm. His Master's Voice records were newly on the market, and Charles invested in reproductions of Melba, Caruso, GalliCurci and Tetrizzini and several other operatic stars. The device on the records was a picture of an eager little terrier listening to the voice of his master reverberating through the great green horn.



Into this pleasant existence where Charles had all the writing he needed, free-lancing for several publishers, Billy Bunter butted in. Preceded of course by Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's and the elegant Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

There were three prerequisites necessary to Charles Hamilton to ensure the safe arrival of the *Gem*, the *Magnet* and Bunter: they were a typewriter, which he had first bought in 1900, an accountant and a bicycle - which he needed for exercise - he was spending too long sitting at his typing desk. Also he could have done with a literary agent - had he but known it.

When Charles was asked by his publishers, Amalgamated Press, to write the weekly serial in a new paper to be called *The Gem*, in 1907, featuring a public school, he had not regarded it as breaking completely new ground. Since about 1895 he had been writing single school stories in the *Herald* for the same publisher, but these were shorter, simpler tales mainly about football. Although football stories were not in his mainstream of writing he cared about getting the background right as he did with all his work. He wrote to Percy Harrison: "I find it next to impossible to get any information down here about the Northern Union games . . . If you ever come across a handbook or anything of the kind published by the Northern Union, I should very much like it." Percy was happy to oblige.

Charles wrote school stories for a paper called *Pluck* featuring St. Jim's in 1906, then when the *Gem* was started in the following year St. Jim's had to be amalgamated with a school called Clavering which featured Tom Merry. Charles objected ineffectively, but His Master's Voice had to be obeyed. He found the prospect of a weekly school serial daunting, especially when it was soon doubled in length. He complained to his sister, "What can go on in a school?!", wondering how he could fill the weekly numbers with plausible incidents. A short football story was one thing, but an ongoing serial was an entirely different kettle of fish. His sister comforted him and wrung out the wet towels to be applied to his throbbing head, and gently explained that people were fundamentally the same whatever their situation: they were governed by the same emotions. They might be pirates, cowpunchers or explorers, but they were all programmed by the same good or bad urges. They could even be schoolboys in uniform but they were still human.

Charles learned this lesson and used it to great success. He already had seven writing commitments when the *Gem* was started; *Marvel*, *Pluck*, *Boys' Herald*, *Smiles*, *Boys' Realm*, *Vanguard* and the *Boys' Friend Library*, all but three of which were published by Amalgamated Press. Most of them required fresh work each week. With the creation of the *Gem* Charles became A.P.'s star writer for boys. The *Gem* had done so well that he was asked to produce a new school and characters for a new paper on similar lines. Greyfriars, the Famous Five and Billy Bunter appeared in a new weekly, *The Magnet*, which was set on a course that eventually led to its overtaking even the *Gem* in popularity. The characters and the situations in these two serials were so convincing and true to life that they can be regarded as the original 'sit-coms'. Edwardian youth was glued to these papers as modern youth is glued to a television set. Again, he had had to heed HIS

MASTER'S VOICE but the author benefited by finding his place among English writers as the chronicler of the English adolescent male in all his aspects.

Billy Bunter had been tried out, in about 1900, on a non-Amalgamated Press editor and had been dismissed as unsuitable and "unlikely to catch on". Charles would never reveal this editor's identity. There are three candidates for the origin of the name 'Bunter': there was 'Bunter's Nervine', a tooth tincture which Charles himself had used; more interestingly, his sister Edie called rowdy teenage girls 'regular Bunters'; thirdly, according to the dictionaries, a 'bunter' was a person who vacated rented premises leaving the rent owing. Bunter's appearance and character were an amalgam of editors and relations: his size from one editor, his shortsightedness from an aunt, his expectations of a postal order from brother Alex who permanently existed in the anticipation of a cheque which never came. No-one has explained how Bunter's costume was evolved; it calls to mind the dress of a member of the Beggarstaff brothers - the group of English painters who, in 1895, first made a fine art of poster design - William Nicholson, who was of ample proportions and who wore yellow spotted bow ties and tight checked trousers - in fact a perfect prototype of Billy Bunter.

Charles felt not only the elation of being chosen to create these two new boys' papers but he also felt the burden of commitment. His visits to Covent Garden suffered - from nine recorded visits in 1906, he achieved twenty-six in 1907 but only eight in 1908.

The first change in Charles's life had taken place - time was at a premium. Little did he realise that time would always thereafter be in short supply, that he would have to abandon forever his gentle canter through life and substitute a hectic gallop. The Amalgamated Press literally controlled his life until the 1940 paper shortage. This led to hiccups and occasional explosions, he mourned his lost freedom. He became fascinated by small children who still possessed theirs. His Master's Voice laid greater burdens on him: he was ordered to drop all other publishers and to work only for the A.P. He was doing quite a lot of work for Trapps Holmes and was very regretful at having to give it up. He did not want to put all his eggs in one basket.

While celebrating the birth of the *Gem* and the *Magnet* one cannot keep solely to the years 1907 and 1908 - they ushered in a new and very busy, dedicated way of life. Charles did not fully appreciate what he had let himself in for, and he had not time to stop and think it out. His sister was pressed into service, she wrote to Percy describing how she had been roped in to read through finished work for her brother: "I am very tired . . . I have been correcting a lot of work for Charley to-day". Charles, in his AUTOBIOGRAPHY described his work "as though writing for a wager". He wrote an 18,000 word story for Henry Drane in one day, something he never wanted to repeat.

Inevitably the pressure made him turn to ways of escape. First he bought a bungalow, 'Hazelwood' on Canvey Island near his brother Alex. Dolly helped him furnish it and his mother came down to find him a housekeeper. He felt Canvey was safely far away from the office and its editorial summonses. He used Dolly and Percy to supply plots. Dolly's life appeared in the stories - music, theatre, travel - things Charles loved but had less opportunity to experience.

At the height of his success his main desire was to escape. He embarked on foreign travel, only abroad did he feel really free of his editors. He planned ultimately to settle on the Continent. This ambition annoyed his publishers and he was eventually forced to abandon it and settle somewhere reachable from London.

He tried gambling: Roulette, La Boule, horses. If he could only get rich quick he could regain his freedom. Gambling fever gave him only headaches and put no money in his purse. He gave up all hope of marriage - he was already married, to his work. He came to realise that he had not the time to be married, that a wife would expect more of his time and

attention than a sister. Charles even studied black and white drawing at an art class with a view to establishing a second string to his bow - he would be an illustrator.

Because the *Gem* and the *Magnet* were such good moneyspinners his publishers could afford no gaps because their author was ill - the odious practice of employing substitutes was used despite Charles's remonstrances at having what appeared to him to be the Office Boy's work printed under his pen-name. He suffered bitterly over this. Finally His Master's Voice was stilled by the paper shortage in 1940. He was free at last, but incomeless. He was overjoyed when in 1947 Skilton's, later followed by Cassells, began to publish the Hardcover Bunter Books. He loved being back in the saddle again, writing regularly two books a year, and on much better terms.

The seven-year gap in the chronicle of Billy Bunter was bridged by a strip cartoon. But the return of the genuine written Bunter in 1947 - just 50 years ago - gave the Owl of the Remove a new lease of life, enabling him to attain his 90 years - come next February. Two more generations of schoolboy readers were to become Bunter enthusiasts. Without his author's stamina Billy Bunter would have vanished in 1940 like the Cheshire Cat - not even his grin remaining behind!

(Copyright Una Hamilton Wright. Charles Hamilton illustration is by Colin Wyatt.)

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### MORCOVE'S CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY IN FRANCE

by Ray Hopkins

It was all fun and games as the Study 12 coterie in their usual boisterous, jolly fashion headed for the French Riviera and the Chateau Dumont. The owner has gone to Paris but they will have the company of his granddaughter Madeline who, unbeknown to the girls, has been expelled from her neighbouring day school. The parents of Polly and Jack Linton, together with those of Dave and Judy Cardew, and Pam Willoughby's mother and father are in charge of the party. The rest of the excited group are Betty Barton, Paula Creel, Madge Minden, Tess Trelawney, Helen Craig and the impish Naomer.

Before they left Morcove, Jack, for a bit of fun, and underlining the fact that Naomer is forever eating, presented her with a Christmas pudding. Naomer, cuddling it until they arrive at Marseilles station, places it carefully on the luggage rack. Feeling for it later to have another affectionate look, she finds it missing. Confiscated by the Customs is Jack's suggestion with a knowing wink at his sister. Naomer accosts a passing ticket inspector who waves her in the direction of the restaurant car. Polly says it must have been taken to the dining car where it will be served for lunch. "Like sair cheek!" storms Naomer. Jack pretends he has made enquiries about the pudding. "It was taken away on a barrow by the police at Marseilles" he tells Naomer. An hour later as their destination is reached - Cannes - Jack remarks how heavy Paula's hatbox is. He hands it to Naomer who promptly drops it. The lid tumbles off to reveal the missing Christmas pudding! "Disgwaceful!" gasps Paula, aghast at the sight of a cloth-wrapped pudding basin among her beloved hats.

"Annie Hoorooks!" cries Naomer when they arrive at the Chateau Dumont. Blank looks all round! That curious girl's name turns out to be 'Merry Christmas' in Naomer's weird and wonderful French. Jack and Dave go into the spacious grounds to cut holly and mistletoe. "Pipooray!" cried Naomer. "Bekas, we can deggorate!" Paper chains and Chinese lanterns transform the large hall where the Christmas festivities will take place. Jack runs up a ladder to a large beam in the high ceiling where, when the ladder is playfully removed by Polly, he pretends to lose his balance. Consternation from the girls but nimble Jack is clinging on by one hand and pulls himself up, pulling faces and pretending to be an ape. Naomer joins in the jungle motif by performing an energetic war dance while holding Jack up to ridicule collapsing as he shies a large bunch of holly down upon her.

But Morcove's Christmas at the Chateau is not to be all careless rapture. Madeline Dumont, though enlivened by their cheerful company as an antidote to her rather lonely life, tells them she has been left behind by her grandfather as a punishment for stealing into the school and obtaining information to enable her to win an important examination. The school grounds abut those of the Chateau and there is an underground passage leading from one building to the other. Madeline, of course, is innocent of the charge but evidence has been left behind by the real miscreant leading to the accusation against Madeline. Madeline is expelled before the exam is held and is won by Lucille Lafarge who had, in fact, been studying overnight at the Chateau when the headmistress's study was unlawfully entered. Due to a conversation overheard on the train where they first encounter Lucille and her mother, Betty and Co. suspect that the real intruder was, in fact, Lucille.

They invite her to spend Christmas at the Chateau with them and she accepts with alacrity, her excitement revealing a deeper reason for wanting to be there. She manages to slip away from the festivities but is prevented from entering the underground passage by the close watch kept on her by Betty and Co. Lucille has told the Morcove girls that the caretaker had refused to let her enter the school for something she left behind. Betty wonders if it can be something that would prove that it was she, and not Madeline, who had visited the headmistress's study at dead of night.

Dave Lawder finds a shoe buckle in the underground passage and Madeline recognises it as Lucille's. This leads Betty and Co. to confront her with the evidence. Dave has signed an affidavit stating where he found the buckle and has drafted a confession for Lucille to sign admitting that it was she who broke open the headmistress's desk. Lucille signs and swears she will get back at them all. After she returns to her mother's home, Dave tells Madeline to put his testimony, the confession and the buckle in a safe place where Lucille cannot get at them while they all enjoy the winter sports at Brunnerspel.

Madeline locks them safely in her bedroom and takes the keys to the drawer, together with the rest of the Chateau keys, with her.

More Gifts For You In

This Special Christmas Number



But Lucille and her mother, who knows what Lucille has done and realises she will have to suffer the disgrace of her own daughter's expulsion next term, turn up at the winter sports hotel. Lucille searches Madeline's hotel room for the papers and surmises, upon drawing a blank, that Madeline has left them at the Chateau and that she must have the keys with her.

Early the next morning, after a sleepless night, Lucille follows Madeline as she leaves the hotel for a walk in the snow. The snowstorm increases in severity and Madeline turns back but is felled by a falling tree as she passes beneath it. While Madeline lies insensible, Lucille removes the keys and she and her mother leave the hotel immediately for the Chateau. They are seen to leave the hotel by Betty and Co. who suspect the worst when they are unable to find Madeline. A blizzard at Brunnerspel makes them almost too late finding her unconscious body lying in the snow. But the missing keys tell them where to look for the Lefarges and Madeline, exonerated by the Morcove girls and the speedy actions of Dave Lawder and the Morcove fathers, is welcomed back to her school the following term.

(The full story can be found in *The Schoolgirls' Own* 671 - 674, Dec 1933 - Jan 1934. It was never reprinted.)

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**MORE FLICKERING MEMORIES** **by Dennis L. Bird**

Ernest Holman's delightful article in the June C.D. stirred many happy memories of fifty years ago and more, in the warm, cosy darkness of the cinema. He suggests other readers may like to contribute - so here goes!

Born in 1930, I was brought up in a household which did not go often to the cinema. Such visits were so rare that I still remember vividly my very first. We were on holiday in Cornwall in the summer of 1937. We spent a pouring wet day looking around Falmouth - I was much impressed by Pendennis Castle, partly because its name echoed mine. What could we do after lunch, since the weather showed no sign of improving? Father conceded that the cinema might provide the answer.

So, not yet seven years old, I experienced for the first time the thrill of the lights going down, the curtains parting, and then a story being enacted on what seemed a huge screen. The film was *History is Made at Night*, which ended with the sinking of the "Titanic".



The stars were Charles Boyer and Jean Arthur - and for quite a while Miss Arthur became my heroine.

Future visits were strictly rationed; in fact, over the next few years I recall only two or three. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, of course, and *The Wizard of Oz* - and what has remained one of my favourites ever since, Errol Flynn's heroic *Adventures of Robin Hood*. This also featured the suavely sinister Basil Rathbone as Sir Guy of Gisborne, who captivated my mother (she used to say she "liked a man with a bit of the devil in him").

Rathbone's charm was reinforced by the 1939 *Hound of the Baskervilles*. Always a devotee of Sherlock Holmes, I found this portrayal utterly convincing, and over the next few years I made a point of

seeing the dozen or so Hollywood films featuring Rathbone's detective. The sad thing was that the film studios never again used Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories properly - just an occasional incident would be featured in this updated series. The big drawback was Nigel Bruce's Dr Watson - an obtuse buffoon very different from the author's original plain-spoken, practical medico. Nevertheless, one film in particular - *The Scarlet Claw*, set in the province of Quebec - was gripping.

To my mind, no one else has ever equalled Basil Rathbone's Holmes. On television, Douglas Wilmer in the 1960s came nearest, but he was handicapped by a Watson (Nigel Stock) nearly as thick as Bruce. The more recent TV series with Jeremy Brett promised well at first, with surprising fidelity to the text, but soon Brett's own personal problems made him turn the great detective into a hysteric. The chief assets were two superb Watsons - first David Burke, and then Edward Hardwicke (son of Sir Cedric, famous actor of the '30s). But a Sherlock Holmes dramatisation cannot just rely on its Watson.

To return to the film world of half a century ago, my great opportunity came in 1940, the Battle of Britain summer. My school was so depleted of masters that it was for a time only possible to have classes in the mornings - which meant that every afternoon was free. The local cinema had two changes of programme a week, and a reasonable seat cost only ninepence (about four new pence). That really broadened my film education. Sometimes rather frighteningly - Robert Newton in *Hatter's Castle* for instance, or *King's Row* in which the future President Ronald Reagan had a leg amputated and came round to ask "Where's the rest of me?" Often I was made to laugh by the antics of George Formby (*It's in the Air*) and Will Hay, but chiefly I remember the straightforward adventure stories. There is nothing like them nowadays.

Like Mr Holman, I delighted in *The Prisoner of Zenda*, with memorable performances by Ronald Colman, Madeleine Carroll, Douglas Fairbanks junior, and the tough old grandee (and ex-county cricketer) Sir C. Aubrey Smith as Colonel Sapt. I liked the 1952 re-make, too, which used the same script and starred Stewart Granger and Deborah Kerr - but an American Sapt was out of place, and James Mason played the debonair Rupert of Hentzau as though he was auditioning for his later role as "Rommel - Desert Fox".

Thanks to the 1937 *Zenda* film, I read the original novel by the barrister Sir Anthony Hope Hawkins, and its sequel *Rupert of Hentzau*. I was only 11 or 12, but I became a lifelong enthusiast for these charming, elegant tales. Why has "Rupert" never been filmed? - perhaps because the hero Rudolf Rassendyll is assassinated in an Abraham Lincoln-like finale. It has been presented once as a TV serial, around 1964.

Another film I enjoy as often as it is shown is Sir Alfred Hitchcock's *The Lady Vanishes*. The basic story is far-fetched (matronly British spy remembers secret formula by turning it into a tune, then gets kidnapped on the Orient Express), but it was acted with the utmost conviction by Dame May Whitty, Sir Michael Redgrave, and the lady who won my heart then and forever, Margaret Lockwood. It was also notable for the first appearance of the besotted cricket enthusiasts Caldecot and Charters (Naunton Wayne and Basil Radford), who returned in *Night Train to Munich*, and as late as the 1980s, I think, became a radio series.



Margaret Lockwood will never be forgotten for her films with James Mason, Stewart Granger, Phyllis Calvert, and other big names of the '40s - *The Man in Grey*, *The Wicked Lady*. Usually she was a villain, but I have a soft spot for *Love Story* (1944), in which she was a concert pianist with a fatal illness and Stewart Granger was an RAF pilot going blind. Part of it was filmed at the awe-inspiring open-air Minack Theatre in Cornwall, where the audience sit on the very edge of a cliff-top. The music was Hubert Bath's "Cornish Rhapsody".



**ONE OF OUR AIRCRAFT IS MISSING**

*Characters:-*

SIR GEORGE CORBETT	GODFREY TEARLE	THE ORGANIST	ALDO CLOSER
TOM EARNSHAW	ERIC PORTMAN	THE DRIVER	HECTOR ASSAS
FRANK SHELLEY	HUGH WILLIAMS	LOUIS	JAMES CARSON
GEOFF HICKMAN	BERNARD MILLS	WILLEM	BILL AKKERMAN
JOHN GLYN HAGGARD	HUGH BODDEN	MAXETJE	JOAN AKKERMAN
BOB ASHLEY	EMRY'S JONES	JANNEE	VALERIE MOON
ELS MEERTENS	PAMELA BROWN	HENDRIK	PETER SCHRIJNE
JET VAN DIEKEN	JOYCE KELMAN	NAVAL OFFICER	ROLAND GILVER
JO DE VRIES	GOOGIE WITHERS	STATION COMMANDER	STEWART BOME
BURGMASTER	HAY PETRO	LEN MARTIN	DAVID EVANS
BURGMASTER'S WIFE	SELMA VAZ DIAS	GERMAN SENTRY	JOHN SALEW
PIETER SLUIJS	ARNOLD MARLE	GERMAN OFFICER	WILLIAM D'ARCY
DE JONG	ROBERT HELMANN	GERMAN AIRMAN	DAVID WARI
THE PRIEST	PETER USTENOV	SECOND GERMAN AIRMAN	ROBERT DUSTAN

As a schoolboy in World War II, I was naturally very air-minded, and some of the films I liked best had an aviation background: *The First of the Few* (a rather sentimental biography of the Spitfire designer R.J. Mitchell), *One of our Aircraft is Missing*, the Bomber Command documentary *Target for To-night*. The much-vaunted *Way to the Stars* (1945) had a brilliant cast, but was too episodic for my taste. I think the film which made the deepest impression on me was *Dangerous Moonlight* (1941), remembered today chiefly for its music - Richard Addinsell's "Warsaw Concerto". I liked it for other reasons too - the Battle of Britain sequences, the lovely Sally

Gray as a journalist trapped in Poland by the German invasion. But most of all I cannot forget that great Austrian actor Anton Walbrook as the Polish pianist pilot, playing Chopin in the ruins of Warsaw.

What memories of the silver screen! And how different the films were from anything showing today. But thanks to the BBC we continue to see the old classics on TV. They make the licence fee well worthwhile.

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**SONG TITLE QUIZ**

by Eric Lawrence

The following are extracts from the lyrics of popular songs originally published between 1920 and 1973. Can you give the correct song titles?

1. Till the roses turn to ashes, till the organ turns to rust
2. Your love will cling to me through the lonely daytime
3. When they've all had their quarrels and parted
4. I never planned in my imagination, a situation so heavenly
5. Your face beams in my dreams
6. I thought that you'd want what I'd want

7. I was both proud and shy as I felt every eye
8. Then we'll have time for things like wedding rings
9. I'm looking for an angel to sing my love song to
10. You know she's waiting just anticipating
11. The radio and the telephone and the movies that we know
12. And though everything's dark all the while
13. For tears would fill my eyes, my heart would realise
14. I still hear you saying dear one hold me fast
15. Where is that worn out wish that I threw aside?
16. I hear the trains rattling by above
17. Then with disillusion deep in your eyes, you  
learned that fools in love soon grow wise
18. If ever the devil's plan was made to torment man
19. Since you went away the days grow long
20. Fate is kind, she brings to those who love

(Answers will be published next month)

[Eric Lawrence will award a modest cash prize to the winner of this quiz (first correct answers received). Please write to him at 2 Blagrove Lane, Wokingham, Berks., RG41 4BE.]

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## SOME MAGNET CHRISTMAS SCENES

Selected by Andrew Miles

(Andrew comments that this item was inspired by the books *Greyfriars for Grown-Ups* and *From Wharton Lodge to Linton Hall* and by the C.D.'s *Gems of Hamiltonia*.)

Christmas was coming - the season of peace and goodwill to men - and it would pass without his seeing the faces of his friends - and he [Wharton] had his pride left, for what it was worth!  
(Magnet 1296)

The car was gone in a moment more. Under the glittering stars, in a sky of dark velvet, Wharton walked on - alone! This was his Christmas, and it was his own fault, and he knew it now.  
(Magnet 880)

The delights of Bunter Court, and the fascinating society of Sammy and Bessie, had apparently palled on the Owl of the Remove . . . "Better go back to Bunter Court" said Harry laughing. "Telephone for the Rolls Royce from home, you know. If Bunter Court is crammed with royalties and there's no room for you, try your relation the duke, or your other relation the marquis."  
(Magnet 984)

"Come on, old beans!" said Harry. "You fellows are staying, of course. By Jove, this is going to be a Merry Christmas!"  
(Magnet 1296)

"You can hang on if you like, Bunter," said Coker. "Oh really Coker . . ." The juniors chuckled. Coker's invitation was not one that most fellows would have cared to accept. But Bunter was a sticker.  
(Magnet 984)

Colonel Wharton himself was driving the car, and he greeted his nephew and his friends with cordial geniality. The car drove by the road across the heath towards the Lodge. Winter mists hung over the heath; the hollows were stacked with snow. Snow had begun to fall again in light, powdery flakes. The lights of Wharton Lodge gleamed at last through the falling December dusk. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here we are!" said Bob. Miss Wharton greeted the merry party in the old oak-panelled hall, glistening with holly and mistletoe. Harry Wharton and Co. were home for the holidays and it was going to be a merry Christmas.  
(Magnet 931)

Harry Wharton and Co. wore very bright faces, Miss Wharton smiled and beamed, the old bronze-complexioned colonel unbent and was almost boyish.  
(Magnet 931)



Billy Bunter unrolled the paper and revealed—a cake of soap bearing the inscription: PRICE THREEPENCE. "Beasts!" he roared angrily.

Loder's face was dark and clouded. The festive season apparently had not had a cheering effect on him. (Magnet 931)

In that Christmas parcel lay a bar of soap, a nail-brush, a scrubbing-brush, a tooth-brush and a packet of soda! There was one present from each of the Famous Five - undoubtedly things that Bunter wanted. (Magnet 1610)

He [Bunter] selected a handsome, natty grey coat. It was a new coat, and Wharton had worn it only once or twice over Christmas. It was, in fact, going to be his best coat for the coming term at Greyfriars. Being the best coat in the collection, it was naturally selected by Billy Bunter. Bunter did not believe in helping himself to the second best in anything. (Magnet 1351)

Five minutes later Brian Mauleverer stood at the open door below, with the Famous Five. Outside, the night wind howled, the snowflakes drifted against the old windows of Mauleverer Towers. The adventurer looked into the snowy winter's night - he looked at the juniors. There was no relenting in their faces. As he hesitated on the threshold, Bob Cherry raised his hand. "Get out you cur!" he said. And with a black scowl on his face, and a curse upon his lips, Brian Mauleverer went, and quitted Mauleverer Towers - for ever! (Magnet 776)

Bunter groaned. "I can't make it out, you fellows! It wasn't the turkey, and it wasn't the stuffing, and it wasn't the pudding, and it wasn't the mince pies, and it wasn't the candied fruit, and it wasn't the walnuts, and - and -" "Perhaps it was the lot of them together," suggested Bob. (Magnet 1141)

And Billy Bunter grinned a complacent grin: a grin so wide that it seemed almost to meet around his fat head. Bunter, in coming for Christmas in so remarkable a way, had feared for the worst while he hoped for the best. But in his most optimistic moments he couldn't have expected this! Actually, everyone at Wharton Lodge was glad that Billy Bunter had come! (Bunter Comes for Christmas - Cassell)

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**"SAPPER'S" SHORT STORIES** by Leslie S. Laskey

While "Sapper" (Cyril McNeile) is best remembered for his *Bulldog Drummond* stories, he was also a prolific writer of excellent short stories.

Sapper first became known to the public through his stories of life in the battlefields of the Great War. They brought home to the people the horrors of the trench warfare. After the War was over Lieut. Colonel McNeile resigned his commission to become a writer. *Bulldog Drummond* was published in 1920 and it was a huge success. From then until his untimely death in 1937 Sapper produced further *Drummond* stories interspersed with other novels and volumes of short stories.

The short stories always made compelling reading, for they were penned in a lively style with many dramatic twists and turns which provided mental jolts for the reader. Few readers can ever have dozed off while reading a Sapper narrative.

There were a dozen or so assorted stories in each volume. Often the title of the first story served as the title of the book. Sapper introduced a private detective named Ronald Standish in a novel in 1933. Subsequently he devoted a whole volume to short stories of Standish.

One short story volume that was different from all the others was *The Dinner Club*. The Dinner Club was a very exclusive club consisting of only six members, an actor, a barrister, a doctor, a soldier, a writer and an ordinary man. On a given date one of the

members would stand the rest a good dinner, after which he would tell them a story. The story had to be connected with his own occupation. The only other rule was that the story should be of sufficient interest to keep the other members awake. If a story failed to do so the offending member had to pay the sum of ten pounds to a deserving charity.

Each member's story was told in *The Dinner Club* and these were all excellent yarns. The barrister's story was most intriguing. An English judge found himself suddenly facing an appalling personal dilemma. He had a decision to make - quickly - and this involved a mental battle with his own conscience. As soon as he had announced his decision there came a sudden, startling intervention that totally altered the situation. This was not just a good short story - in my view it was a brilliant one.

All Sapper's books were immensely popular with the reading public. *Out of the Blue* was published in February 1925. There were four more editions in that year and three more in 1926.

The short story volumes are listed below. They can still be found quite often in second-hand bookshops or at book fairs.

*The Man in Ratcatcher* (1921)

*The Dinner Club* (1923)

*Out of the Blue* (1925)

*Shorty Bill* (1926)

*Word of Honour* (1926)

*John Walters* (1927)

*The Saving Clause* (1927)

*The Finger of Fate* (1930)

*When Carruthers Laughed* (1934)

*Ask for Ronald Standish* (1936)

(All published by Hodder & Stoughton.)

## CHRISTMAS IN THE HOLIDAY ANNUALS

by Peter Mahony

The *Greyfriars Holiday Annual* was a popular Christmas present. Through 22 editions (1920 - 1941) roughly three generations of schoolboys and girls found Christmas pleasure galore. Stories of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood, Cedar Creek, the Rio Kid etc. were augmented by poems, articles, puzzles and lovely colour and plate illustrations. A feast of holiday literature.

But, surprisingly, the Christmas story was a fairly rare item in the Holiday Annuals. The middle years (1927-35) contained no Christmas yarns at all and most of the other years included only one tale with a Christmas setting.

Nevertheless, from this fairly sparse field, a few 'gems' emerged. There was *The Mystery of the Priory* (1923) - a Rookwood tale; *The Shadow Over Eastwood House* (1938); *The Mystery of the Christmas Candles* (a Greyfriars yarn - 1939); *Sir Fulke's Warning* - Greyfriars again (1940); *The Moat House Mystery* - Len Lex of Oakshott (1941); all gripping yarns, with ghostly/criminal themes. Good reads, but not exactly conveying the true spirit of "Peace and Goodwill to all".

*Billy Bunter's Bust-Up* (1936) was a cheerful, pre-Christmas story, based on the "Owl's" efforts to lay on a big feed before breaking-up day, but again the true meaning of "Christmas" was obscured by the emphasis on festive celebrations of the gluttonous kind.

All of which leaves only four 'different' stories. Three of these involved Cedar Creek School in British Columbia; the fourth, surprisingly, 'starred' George Alfred Grundy. All were excellent stories; and two were truly faithful to the "caring for others" which should be the uppermost aim of a "Merry Christmas".

Taking the Cedar Creeks in reverse order of publication, we have *The Cedar Creek Pantomime* (1938); *Snowbound* (1926) - this was reprinted in the 1941 Holiday Annual; and *How Father Christmas Came to White Pine* (1924). There was a more adult 'feel' to the Cedar Creek stories in general. Frank Richards, Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc had a tougher existence than the 'Friars, Saints and Rookwooders. Life in the Canadian 'outback' was rugged and lacked most modern comforts and facilities. Consequently, two of these Christmas stories involved hardship and determination beyond the scope of most of the England-based yarns.

The exception was the "Pantomime" - an hilarious romp. Frank Richards - naturally - had written a pantomime, "The Three Bears", for a "Boxing Night" performance at the school. With a mixed cast, including Molly Lawrence and Kate Dawson, the pantomime had a more professional aura about it than some of the Greyfriars/St. Jim's Thespian efforts. All seemed set fair for a "bumper" production.

Dicky Bird & Co. of Hillcrest (Cedar Creek's rival school) had other ideas. Smarting under his cronies' criticism of his failure to "keep their end up" against Cedar Creek, Dicky decided to sabotage the panto. With Blumpy and Fisher, his pals, Bird ambushed Bob Lawless in the shed used for a dressing-room. Bob, due to appear as the "Great Huge Bear", was made prisoner and Dicky donned a real bearskin to take his place.

From that point onwards, the panto departed from the script. "Little Wee Bear" was bonneted with his own porridge basin; the breakfast-table was upended; "Middle-Sized Bear" was vanquished in an impromptu wrestling match and ended up sprawling in the footlights. Laurel and Hardy would have been proud of Dicky Bird.



Prince Charming had hold of the Great Huge Bear's head, and suddenly it came off. As a flushed face was revealed, the mystery was explained. "Dicky Bird!" yelled Frank Richards.

The curtain was lowered: Great Huge Bear grabbed it and jerked it down altogether. With several of the cast enveloped in the curtain - and the audience shrieking with laughter - Great Huge Bear proceeded to demolish the scenery. Prince Charming, the Wicked King, the Dwarf Page, the other two bears and the stagehands had to tackle Dicky Bird amidst the wreckage. A thrilling tussle ended with his ejection and the rescue of Bob Lawless from the "dressing-room".

Somehow, they managed to patch up the "sets" and finish the pantomime. The audience, thoroughly entertained by the mayhem, probably found the "real thing" rather tame. Instead of a "big finish", the Cedar Creek Pantomime had started with a bang - and then fizzled out. Poor Frank Richards! His "play" was doomed to be remembered for all the wrong reasons. One up to Hillcrest - and a rollicking Christmas story!

*Snow Bound* was altogether more sombre. On Christmas Eve, Bob Lawless and Frank Richards set out by sleigh to collect the Lawrences and Beauclerc to attend the "dance at the mission". The journey took them through Thompson town. On the northern side of Thompson the snow was thick - and still falling. They picked up the Lawrences and Vere

Beauclerc and returned to Thompson, where Chunky Todgers cadged a lift. On the way to the Mission Hall (three miles), Keno Kit, a Thompson rough, tried his hand at highway robbery. Bob Lawless slashed him with the whip and the ruffian fell from his horse. The sleigh party fled, but Keno Kit, infuriated, fired at the horses and killed the leader. In the crash which resulted one of the sleigh's runners was smashed.

The lads rallied to overpower the outlaw and he was disarmed and driven away - on foot - into the blinding snow. The party - five boys, two girls - had to shelter as best they could in the sleigh. And the blizzard continued.

They survived the night - but the horses did not. On Christmas morning, sustained by a frugal breakfast - Chunky Todgers was, as usual, carrying a "snack" with him - Richards, Lawless and Beauclerc set off through waist-deep snow to seek help. After a quarter of a mile - which took two hours of struggle - they were done. A freezing death - on Christmas Day! - loomed.

Of course, they were rescued. Algy Beauclerc, Vere's "silly-ass" cousin, had hired a sleigh - and a gun. While the native Canadians were searching for the lost party in the wrong places, Algy drove his sleigh at random, firing his rifle at frequent intervals. Frank Richards & Co. had Keno Kit's revolver and were able to reply to Algy's signal. The "dude" duly found them; then they drove back to the sleigh and rescued the girls. Christmas dinner at the Lawless Ranch was, after all, a happy occasion. Nevertheless, this was a tough yarn - happy only in its ending.

*How Father Christmas Came to White Pine* was much more touching. It had its full share of thrills, but the main theme was very appropriate. On Christmas Eve, Bob and Frank "did the rounds" with Christmas greetings from the Lawless Ranch. No postmen in British Columbia then! At the school, they learned that Miss Meadows had gone to "White Pine" to visit a sick child. They followed on.

Vere Beauclerc, whom they were due to collect en route, had found his wastrel father - Lascelles Beauclerc, the remittance man - in cahoots with Dave Dunn and Euchre Dick, a couple of reprobates. He sadly left them to it and joined his friends en route to "White Pine".



Before the schoolboys knew what was happening, they were tossed in the snow amid the maddened, plunging horses.

Micky Muldoon, his wife and daughter lived at "White Pine" - a picturesque name for a log cabin in a scruffy clearing. Like many emigrants, Muldoon had not made much success of "private enterprise". The added complication was Bridget's poor health. A delicate six-year-old, she was looking forward to "Father Christmas" coming. Her mother said that the snow was too heavy for him, but Bridget

stuck firmly to her belief in his powers to overcome all difficulties. Her desire to have a doll "that moves its eyes" caused some consternation. The Muldoons hadn't two pennies to rub together, and the nearest toyshop was in Fraser, a town thirty miles away.

The three lads, sorry for the child, brooded on the problem. Bob Lawless put forward the idea of a night ride to Fraser to do the "Father Christmas stunt". Without his parents' permission, Bob set out for Fraser, accompanied by Frank and Vere, in the sleigh.

The journey was not uneventful. To begin with, Dave Dunn and Euchre Dick ambushed the sleigh. They were thwarted - not without difficulty - and left stranded in the wilderness. Then, at Indian Ford, the ice-covered river started cracking under the weight of the sleigh. The lads just made it to the other bank before the river broke through.

A few miles from Fraser, the sleigh fell into a snow-drift. It took some time to right it and calm the horses. When they eventually reached Fraser, it was long past midnight. Mr Phipps, the storekeeper, was not pleased at being roused from his bed by a fierce tattoo on the store door. It took some time to convince him that they had made a special journey for a sick child. However, once the penny had dropped, Phipps rose to the occasion like a true Christian. He opened the store, turned out his stock of dolls and supplied the one selected at cost price - twelve dollars.

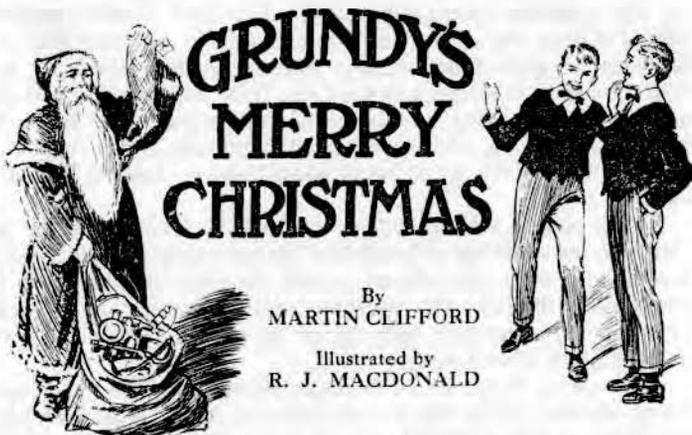
Then the return journey began. It seemed like plain sailing, but, before they reached the river, a pack of wolves appeared. The sleigh, with tired horses, had to run for it. Disaster was averted by throwing a bear-skin rug to the pack. While the wolves scrapped over it, the lads reached the river. The water had re-frozen in the meantime - it was now about 3 a.m. - and they crossed safely.

Dawn had broken when they reached "White Pine". Bridget was not yet awake, so "Father Christmas" Lawless was able to complete his mission. Bridget's joy - like that of any child on Christmas morning - was unconfined - and the three friends were more than compensated for their exhausting night. A lovely story, beautifully written.

In the same Annual (1924), there was another story with a difference. "Grundy's Merry Christmas" featured the usually overbearing George Alfred in a new light. It started with a supernatural touch.

On his way back to St. Jim's from Wayland, laden with parcels on which he had spent some of his Christmas "tips", Grundy was thinking of "Number One". His holiday was going to be one long bout of self-indulgence - not an uncommon way of anticipating Christmas. And then, he heard a voice!

"George Alfred Grundy, you are selfish!" The voice proceeded to give Grundy a thorough lecture about "helping the unemployed"; "avoiding selfish excesses"; "bringing Christmas to the unfortunate" etc. Grundy tried to resist the argument - "How



This story throws an interesting new sidelight upon the character of George Alfred Grundy, of the Shell Form at St. Jim's.

do you expect me to sort out the deserving cases from the undeserving?" This was brushed aside by the voice:

"The true philanthropist is the support of the weak and poor; not merely of the innocent, but of the guilty; of those who ought to have known better; of those who ought to be ashamed of themselves."

By the time Grundy arrived at St. Jim's this "voice of conscience" had fully convinced him of the need for practical philanthropy. When he recounted the experience to Wilkins and Gunn, they were inclined to scoff, but Grundy's unusually subdued manner won them over. So, the "Brighter Christmas Society" was born. Most of St. Jim's joined in, resolving to spread funds and food parcels in their own hometowns after breaking-up day.

Grundy & Co., instead of going to Uncle Grundy's from school, stayed on in Wayland. In the few days before Christmas, they unobtrusively and anonymously distributed "hand-outs" - cash and kind - to the destitute. By Christmas Eve, they were down to their last £3 (in 1924, a useful sum still). Grundy dressed himself as Father Christmas and they made a final round of the poorest district. A knock on a door; a present handed from "Santa's" sack; then a quick move on to the next call before the householder could recover from his surprise. By 11 p.m., Grundy & Co. were tired and footsore - and cleaned out, except for their rail fares to Uncle Grundy's.

And then, they found two waifs huddled in a doorway - homeless orphans. What else could Grundy do but "blue" the rail fares on a slap-up meal at a late restaurant and on a week's lodging for the hapless pair. Broke to the wide, the three friends faced a fifty-mile trek on Christmas morning - the price of "goodwill to all".

Of course, it all turned out all right. Uncle Grundy arrived early on Christmas Day to collect his hopeful nephew by car. Somebody - "the voice?" - had tipped him off about "The Brighter Christmas Society" and he was very proud of his nephew. Grundy & Co. joined him to celebrate their traditional Christmas in style. No doubt, their happiness was all the greater because their philanthropic venture had brought an inner glow to their spirits. An unusual story, well up to the Annual's highest standards. Merry Christmas, everyone!

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## **CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE SPECTRAL KIND** **by Margery Woods**

What makes a great Christmas story? One that can draw the reader back to it at the festive season or remember it with affectionate nostalgia.

The ingredients are fairly standard, like those of other traditional goodies, as in the making of large, dark, rich fruit cakes encrusted in thick marzipan to tempt far weaker wills than those of seven little lost boys and a crocodile. There has to be a groaning festive board and great crackling red log fires, holly and crackers and carols, games and gifts, snowballs and sledging, and congenial companions. But beside the material trimmings there must be giving, a forsaking of selfish pursuits, a remembrance of those needing help, not only of a material nature but of understanding. And the ultimate spice? There must be a ghost.

Most readers will have their own special favourite in the many classic stories of Christmas but at the top of the all-time list must stand Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Everything is there, the poverty outside the gates of wealth, the mean spirit outside the gates of love, the child who catches at all hearts bar one, and the ghosts. Three of the most potent ghosts in literature, who change the course of several lives for the better after their haunting of the miser Scrooge.

The classic recipe for a Christmas tale has stood the test of time and popularity, even though allowing the leeway for each author to add his or her own variations, while the ghost theme remains the perennial favourite to satisfy the strange need of human beings to be frightened, to shiver with a dread that is delicious only because it takes place in the comfort and familiarity of our own fireside.

Dickens' ghosts, though, belonged to what might be termed category A in the fraternity of ghosts. His were real ghosts, which could materialise at will, unhampered by the puny barricades of bricks and timber erected by human hands. But down the years of mystery fiction, from Sherlock Holmes to the host of forgotten lesser lights, the ghosts depicted and conjured in picture and print belong to categories B and C. On the one hand the simple tricksters in various disguises who worked the same theme over and over again to scare off those who might get in the way of their nefarious activities. Favourite disguises were monks, skeletons, sorrowful ladies in white or grey, ancestors in full fig as Elizabethan nobles or sea captains, headless horsemen and ladies who stopped short at their ruffs, all courtesy of a spot of luminous paint and the local theatrical costumier.

The third variety of spook, an illusion produced by mechanical means, was very popular in the storypapers and extremely effective in print when written by an author talented with a sense of the macabre. Many ghost stories were probably influenced by theatrical sources. Illusions and transformation scenes in theatre have long been effected by simple means of painted gauze and lighting, the main magic being supplied by a good scenic artist, a skilled "sparks", and a sober stage staff. A well painted gauze or scrim frontcloth with backing could in seconds dissolve into a totally different scene simply by dimming the footlights, flying out the backing and bringing up the lighting behind the gauze. The audience could see a panelled room, or whatever, suddenly become a stormy sea tossing a ghostly vessel with the legendary Flying Dutchman at its helm; or, from opera to pantomime, a wondrous transformation that progressed through the four seasons on full stage without a single frontcloth to disguise the mechanics, as achieved by the great Julian Wylie during the early years of this century. Today's spectacular effects are heavily mechanised and pre-cued by computer, and woe betide the careless human who is a few inches out of place during a blacked-out scene change. So it was not difficult for plotters possessed by a modicum of ingenuity to adapt the illusory tricks of theatre to terrify their victims, given a suitable collection of ancient ruins or a cavernous old mansion conveniently equipped with a plentiful supply of sliding panels and secret passages.

The projector, too, much used in theatre, was another godsend to creators of illusion, and a great favourite with storypaper authors. One outstanding use of this device came in the Robin's Roost Christmas series by John Wheway (*Schoolgirl* Dec. 1935) when the Cliff House girls met up with a very determined white monk. All of our youthful heroes and heroines were very brave and level-headed enough to know that the manifestations they encountered year after year at Christmas - and other times, too - were the work of enemies much more solid than spiritual. But in this series the courage of the girls was sorely tested, except for tomboy Clara Trevlyn, who experienced no less than four very close encounters with a spectral intruder and emerged triumphant from them.



"MR. LAL has a cine-projector," said Jim innocently. "Perhaps he wouldn't mind lending it to us." The boy did not miss the look of baffled fury which crossed the face of the Indian entertainer. It looked as if Gunda Lal had some reason for not wishing them to borrow his projector.

The old inn by the Thames near Richmond had been the quarters of a criminal gang for many years while it stood derelict, until Janet Jordan's aunt bought and restored it. Clara's first encounter with the white monk happened inside the inn when the spectre appeared and seemed to be walking on air. This spectre had a voice which issued dire warnings to the guests in deep and sombre tones. Everyone was terror-stricken, except Clara, who flung a plate at the spectre. There was a crash, then the lights came on to reveal a big scratch on the panelling where the plate had struck. Just a bit nerve-racking! Her second encounter comes when Babs and Co. find the old chart showing the grotto and secret rooms and passages beneath the old inn. They set off by boat to find the grotto and the hidden entrance. A creeping mist and snow showers do not deter the girls until suddenly the shape of the ghostly monk appears. The water ripples over its feet and the question possesses them: how can a human impostor walk on water? Janet drops her oar; Marjorie Hazeldene moans, Leila grabs the tiller causing the boat to swing broadside right into the path of the spectre, but Clara stands up, brandishing her oar, and smites the luminous form, only to see the oar pass right through it. The girls could be forgiven for taking to their oars as fast as they could.



Clara's third chance of attack comes during a spot of carol singing. While the girls argue as to which carol they should start with, and try to dissuade Bessie from launching into Land of Hope and Glory, the spectre takes shape and moves ominously towards them. Their instinct is to run, but Clara stays, then begins to walk towards the apparition. She walks right through it!

Afterwards, she said it was just like walking through a patch of light.

The white monk does not give up easily, nor does his determined schoolgirl adversary. His last encounter with her brings him a hail of nuts from her peashooter, and a pear flung by Babs which hits bang on target. A very human figure crashes down but manages to escape during the confusion, leaving behind a stilt painted a lustreless black.

The mystery of the indoor monk is solved,

showing how he managed to walk on air in the old inn. But his days on air are numbered now as the secret passages are explored, a kidnapped girl is rescued, the projector and films of the spectre so courageously challenged by the Tomboy are discovered and the identity of the villain revealed.

Tom Merry and Co. also encountered a similar phantom a year or so later (*Gem* Dec. 1937) when they take off for France and Chateau Cernay, home of their chum, Auguste Cernay. Within the extensive estate are the ruins of an ancient chateau, another hideaway for a gang of bank robbers. The last thing these baddies need is a group of resourceful and gallant schoolboys. The ruins are reputed to be haunted, and the music of a ghostly violin is said to be heard during wintry nights, a hangover from a long past murder tragedy at the chateau. This is quite enough to keep superstitious country folk well away but does not daunt the lads of St. Jim's when they are forced to seek shelter there during a snowstorm.

They manage to start a fire with a copy of *The Magnet* (a very cheeky touch, this!) and Fatty Wynn generously shares his packet of sandwiches, very un-Bunterish!

Then the ghostly image of a monk with the face of a skull appears, gliding towards them. Tom Merry hurls a heavy stick at it, following the stick with a large stone, with exactly the same result as Clara found. The boys, slightly unnerved, decide to seek shelter elsewhere. But they return later, see the monk again, repeat the missile attack, and see the spectre vanish when they switch on all the powerful torches they have brought. But the mystery deepens when they notice that the snow where the phantom had stood was unmarked by any human footprint. Tom refuses to be scared away and experiments with switching on and off the torchlights, which naturally causes the phantom to do its own switching on and off, and leads to the discovery of the projector. Of course Arthur Augustus manages to get himself kidnapped and

imprisoned in a secret cell, which gives the villains the same hold over the boys as that of Mr. Lamb when Mr. Quelch was kidnapped and would be left to die where he would never be found. So, although the mystery of the close encounters with a scary ghost is solved, there is still much excitement and suspense until D'Arcy is rescued and the lads can get on with the celebration of Christmas.

The projector device was also exploited by Edwy Searles Brooks in his classic St. Frank's mystery, *The Ghost of Bannington Grange*. He also introduced other tricks when Solomon Levi decides that his father should buy the gaunt old mansion (haunted, naturally!) to convert into a cinema because the existing cinema in Bannington was out of bounds to the boys owing to the unsuitable nature of the films shown by the rascally proprietor, a certain Mr. Webb. He views the proposal for a new cinema with deepest displeasure and immediately puts a plan into practice to nip this threat in the bud. Besides the projector angle he also resorts to chemical means and rather childish tricks of clammy bits of stuff suspended on strings to brush on the faces of intruders like clammy hands. His effects, however, are quite daunting, enough to send the boys hurtling out of the old mansion after they experience the terrors of one certain room. E.S.B.'s mysteries were always strong on

## Grand Christmas Number!



atmosphere and the old grange in this story was no exception. The smell of the graveyard (asafoetida?), the clammy touches, the chill, and the ghastly white shape emerging from the corner of the room, complete with a skeleton head, combine to test the nerves of the lads to the utmost. But Nelson Lee's verdict is a chemical spray, chemical unspecified, and the brave stand by Solomon Levi in confronting the ghost is enough to send said ghost fleeing out into the streets of Bannington, still in full ghostly fig, to the horror of the local constable and such populace as is still abroad at midnight. Thus the haunting of Bannington Grange was to be talked of for some years to come, especially after filling four columns of the local newspaper. Thus ended another close encounter for our young heroes. Whether the legendary haunting of the grange ever affected the public's patronage of the new cinema on the site E.S.B. wisely leaves to the imagination, and perhaps a later story.

If all the spectral encounters in the pages of our favourite papers were put together, a vast treasury of joyous stories to quicken the pulse and cause more than a few fleeting glances into that dark corner behind us would result. So on Christmas night open your favourite volume, put another log on the fire, summon your favourite character to take the opposite chair and enjoy yet again all those happy, happy ghosts of Christmas past.



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**ANSWERS TO ST. JIM'S QUIZ**

- |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. Gordon Gay             | 11. Tom Merry, Harry Manners, Monty Lowther.               |
| 2. Koumi Rao              | 12. Dick Redfern, Leslie Owen, Edgar Lawrence.             |
| 3. Grimes                 | 13. Gerald Cutts, Arthur St. Leger, Herbert Prye.          |
| 4. George Gore            | 14. Wally D'Arcy, Frank Levison, Reggie Manners.           |
| 5. Berrymore              | 15. Gordon Gay, Harry Wootton, Jack Wootton.               |
| 6. Joe Frayne             | 16. Mr Lathom  |
| 7. John Rivers            | 17. 'Fatty' Wynn   |
| 8. James Silverson        | 18. Hookey Walker  |
| 9. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy | 19. Baggy Trimble  |
| 10. A donkey              | 20. Tapp; Taggles; Piggott; Smythe; Curill; Lumley-Lumley. |

Christmas Greetings  
 To All  
 Our  
 C.D. Chums

Love,  
 Max Jones

Chin up!  
 Fernina  
 Cheers,  
 Smithy

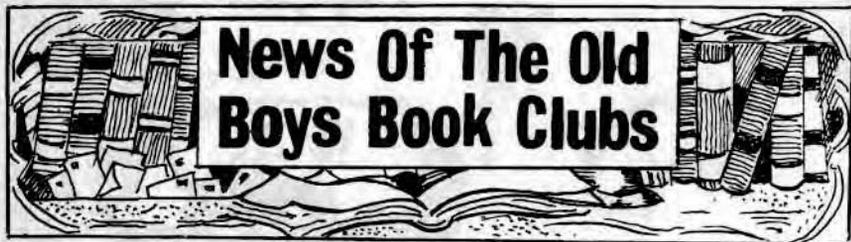


The Bounder

Bob White

(M.W.)





# News Of The Old Boys Book Clubs

## LONDON O.B.B.C.

A jovial crowd were in attendance for the November meeting at Chingford. Members enjoyed a splendid buffet lunch provided by our generous hosts, Tony and Audrey Potts, in the genial surroundings of the Horticultural Society Hall.

Following official business, the meeting was taken up by an extremely entertaining and meticulously researched talk by Brian Sibley on the Disney Studio's ground-breaking feature cartoon, *Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs*. This was enthusiastically presented in a multi-media format which utilised rare film-clips, audio excerpts and original animation drawings from Brian's extensive collection of Disneyana.

The next meeting will take place at our traditional Christmas venue, Bill Bradford's house in Ealing, on December 14th.

**Vic Pratt**

## NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

A warm welcome was given to those attending our November A.G.M. The official business was soon accomplished: all the present officers agreed to stand for one further year. The accounts were adopted by the meeting.

We discussed potential arrangements for our 1998 annual luncheon, and arrangements for the second Jennings meeting. This will take place on Saturday, 20th June 1998, at the White Hart Hotel in Lewes, Sussex. Our Vice President Anthony Buckeridge will be attending. (Please enquire if you would like to come along - details would be sent by return of post.)

An extremely good item about the club had appeared in the privately circulated *Safeway Pensioners' Association* magazine. On the occasion of the splendid 90th Birthday Anniversary Dinner for John Wernham at Leeds Castle, our club Chairman and Treasurer stayed at the guest house home of the magazine's editor and so were able to tell him something of our hobby which resulted in his writing a very acceptable report. It is good to get the hobby thus publicised in a serious way, without the usual tongue in cheek, flippant and almost insulting reports.

Some of us had seen our friends Johnny and Betty Hopton talking about their Noddy collection on an antiques programme on TV. Both Betty and Johnny had come over very well indeed.

Geoffrey read the celebrated item by Herbert Leckenby *How My First Collection Started* - an extremely moving piece, followed by the usual hilarious antics of Bunter in the form room.

Our next meeting is the Christmas Party on December 13th beginning at 5.30 p.m.

**Johnny Bull Minor**

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Season's Greetings and Best Wishes to all followers of Greyfriars and to Mary our esteemed Editor. Here's to another year of nostalgic pleasure. MAURICE O'CONNELL, 12 BEECHWOOD PARK, DUN LAOGHAIRE, CO. DUBLIN, IRELAND

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FOR SALE: Large quantity of post-Second World War *Schoolgirls' Own Libraries* plus some Hamilton duplicates from my collection. List sent with SAE. B.R. Sayer, Moments, 20 Hereward Avenue, Minnis Bay, Birchington, Isle of Thanet, CT7 9LY.

\*\*\*\*\*  
FOR SALE: due to bereavement. My father's collection of books. Includes many Nelson Lee plus Berkeley Gray, Billy Bunter, Sexton Blake, etc. KEITH ANGUS, 35 ASPLEY CLOSE, CHESTERFIELD, DERBYSHIRE, S40 4HG. TELEPHONE: 01246-201404 (after 6pm).

\*\*\*\*\*  
FOR SALE: Film magazines of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s (*Picture Show* and *Picturegoer*). Also a few mixed Boys' Papers. Larry Morley, 76 St. Margaret's Road, Hanwell, London W7 2HL.

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**MARY ANN'S AUSTRALIANS**

The Australian Tour of 1909, by Peter Mahony (one of the C.D.'s regular contributors)

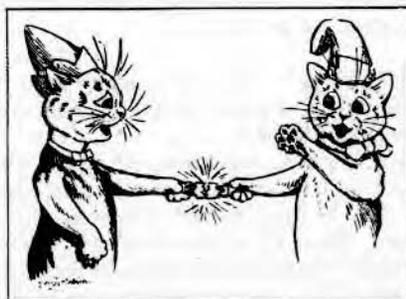
England won the first test, but lost the rubber; the Australians were at odds with their board of control; England's selectors were confused and fickle; Bunter and the Magnet were one year old.

This, the only full account of a fascinating tour, features photographs never before seen in a single volume.

A number of signed copies are available from the author at £6.95 (including post & packing) C.W.O.

Peter Mahony, 12 Riefield Road, Eltham, London SE9 2QA (0181-850-9316)

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## OUR BOOKSHELVES

REVIEWS BY

MARY CADOGAN

(Picture by Terry Wakefield)

### **THE GHOSTLY CROCODILE** by Jemima Vigar (Castle of Dreams Books, 8 Pease Street, Darlington. Price £4.00)

Don't be misled by the title of this book: the story has nothing to do with the crocodile in *Peter Pan* or indeed any other animal of that species. It refers to a school crocodile, and a long ago one. I think I am correct in saying that this children's story is the first of Jemima Vigar's to be published. I hope it will not be the last. Gently nostalgic, sensitive and intelligent, with lots of lovely literary allusions, it is pleasant reading for the Christmas season. Anna and Nicholas move with their parents into their new home away from the schools and friends they have known. Their trepidation in facing their new life is somewhat abated by excitement in the discovery of an old tower room which yields rich and ghostly secrets, starting with their sighting of the crocodile of children from a school which no longer exists. I will not give away the twists and turns of the spectral-sleuthing plot, except to say that it has a satisfying ending which leaves the door open for a sequel - which I hope the author will provide.

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### **"THIS IS AFN": The American Forces Network in Britain during World War II**

(Published by Patrick Morley, Spring Cottage, The Batch, Hill Road, Sandford, North Somerset BS19 5RH.

Price £5 for U.K., including post and packing. For U.S.A. and overseas readers the price is 10 U.S. dollars, which includes airmail postage. Dollar cheques are accepted.)

This 50-page booklet is a lively and informative account of the AFN's broadcasting history. Those of us who remember its transmissions from 1943 will have fond memories of many of its comedy and popular music programmes, and Patrick Morley has put together a wonderfully comprehensive survey of all that happy listening. There are pictures too of several of the (incredibly young-looking) G.I. linkmen for the programmes. Read this book, and re-activate your memories of the Jack Benny and Bob Hope shows, of Dinah Shore, Frances Langford and those big American bands. There is interesting background on it all, including the sometimes co-operative and sometimes conflictual relationships between the AFN and our own BBC.

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**PLEASE NOTE:** *Tales of Wrykin and Elsewhere* by P.G. Wodehouse, reviewed by Brian Doyle in last month's C.D., is obtainable from the publisher: Porpoise Books, 68 Altwood Road, Maidenhead, SL6 4PZ. Tel: 01628-627387

"Come like shadows, so depart."  
(*Macbeth.*)

Haunt pleasantly these form-rooms grey  
These corridors so quiet and dim  
Ye shadows of those other days  
We sense with fitful grin.

Let old doors creaking open be  
And far off laughter drift,  
You of the shadowy world we see,  
Our spirits well may lift.

The rustle of a passing gown,  
Some master of old time  
Upon his spectral face a frown  
(A not too healthy sign).

The keening wind sighs through the elms,  
And Gosling's fire burns low,  
Into the quad from other realms  
The shades of old boys glow.

For Greyfriars is a jolly place  
And happy ghosts abound,  
Here groans and shadows have no place  
Our feet are on the ground.



Squash ! Taking Bunter by surprise, Vernon-Smith up-ended the jam tart on the fat junior's head. "Whurrrooop !" roared the Owl of the Remove, staggering and spluttering wildly, as warm jam ran down his face, his ears, and his neck. "Gurrirrh ! Whoo-koop ! You horrid beast ! Yurrirrh !" "Ha, ha, ha !" yelled the Removites.

STORY PAPER  
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