

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL.52

No.618

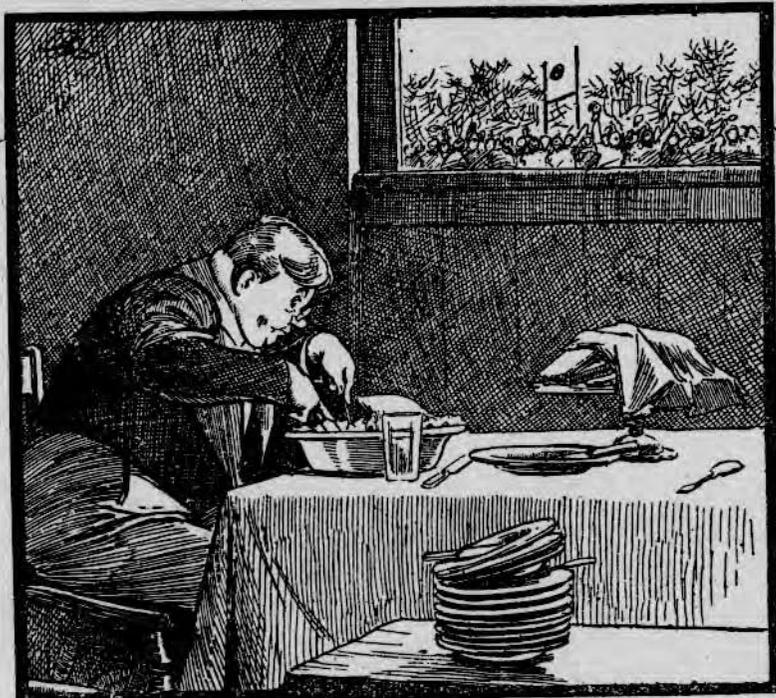
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Between Friends



Upheavals

First of all I must thank everyone who has written to sympathise with my family's underpinning upheavals, which I mentioned in my last editorial. My account of having to select a few books to come with us while having to put the great remainder in store has obviously touched a chord with many of you. Indeed, one subscriber has suggested that this could become the basis of a regular series: readers could list the books they would never want to be separated from, and comment on

the whys and wherefores of their selection - a kind of "Underpinning Desert Island Books" choice!

Holidays

The sun streams through the windows as I write this editorial, and puts holidays very much in mind. By the time you receive this issue of the C.D. my husband and I will have had a short break in one of our favourite places, the Lake District. Strangely, I cannot recall the juniors at Greyfriars, St. Jim's or St. Frank's, or any other Co. from the old papers ever visiting this most lovely part of our country. At any rate, while I am in the Lake District I shall hope to be able to dip again into a holiday series and hike with the Famous Five along leafy lanes or go on boating trips with them on luscious willow-hung rivers.

Time Passing

To me there seems little doubt that our interest in so many wonderful books and papers for young people is a rejuvenating process. Nevertheless, the clock and calendar constantly remind us of the passing of time, and at the end of the merry month of May I celebrated my 70th birthday. I must admit that, in the throes of our recent removal upheavals, I occasionally felt the full weight of my three-score-years-and-ten. More often, however, I feel *inwardly*

not very different from the seven-year-old girl who had started to read the *Magnet* and the *Schoolgirl* in the middle of the 1930s.

Happy reading!

MARY CADOGAN

I would like to draw readers' attention to an important auction of books and papers shortly to take place (see page 31). Our very long-standing subscriber and contributor, Len Hawkey, following the recent sad passing of his wife, will be moving to smaller accommodation and is therefore disposing of the bulk of his great collection.

A CAKE AND A SPOT OF STICKY - CHARLES HAMILTON AND FOOD

by Una Hamilton Wright



Frank Richards/Charles Hamilton imitating Billy Bunter with Easter Eggs in the back garden of his sister's bungalow opposite *Rose Lawn*, photographed in the 1930s by Una Hamilton Wright.

For this article I have chosen a subject which I believe was very close to Charles Hamilton's heart: Food, glorious food!

Food figures largely in my uncle's writing - whether as descriptions of study feasts, or the contrasting spartan teas in Hall, or picnics on or by the river, or campfire meals with Billy Bunter shining as cook as he did in *Bunter The Hiker* and *Billy Bunter's*

Barring-Out. Food also appears in connection with the adult characters - for example Mr Quelch and his tender digestion.

The appearance of food in Charles Hamilton's writing seems quite natural, but why does it command so much attention in stories written for boys?

According to the author's mother "children are always hungry" - her answer to Dolly who declared that as a child she was always hungry - so perhaps the graphic details of tasty eats were merely a wish-fulfilment. But what of Charles Hamilton? Was the emphasis on

food a wish-fulfilment for him too? Were his memories of the economical and sometimes scanty meals of his childhood the trigger for the compensatory daydreams of 'food, glorious food' such as would satisfy the demands of even the hungriest schoolboy?

The young Hamiltons' childhood had been tough, treats were scarce and much appreciated when they came. Unfortunately their mother was not a good cook, in fact, her cooking had a dreadful reputation. I think she was hurried and did not appreciate the importance of accuracy. Suet puddings that failed to rise (the water having been allowed to go off the boil) achieved fame as 'killumquicks'. The children had borrowed a word from the Red Indian stories then so popular.

Sister Edie, who was enshrined in Mr Quelch, attained her eighteen-inch waist by lacing herself in so tightly that she suffered with indigestion, and her elder brother Alex darkly hinted at 'tummy rumblings'. This was reflected in Mr Quelch's caution regarding the size of portions and his willingness to forego what would have been erstwhile a treat. His uncertain temper was linked to his digestion, as was Sister Edie's.

Bread was a staple of the youngsters' diet: Dolly said she had to eat so much of it and so often that it seemed to turn sour in her mouth. Meat came in the form of mutton stews or chops, boiled beef and bacon, peas, beans and lentils frequently appeared, and puddings, though plentiful, were mostly based on bread - bread and butter pudding, boiled bread and baked bread puddings, with dried fruit and black treacle in them, and bread yet again in apple charlottes.

In contrast Aunt Annie, their mother's sister, used to cater generously for her husband and four boys, and the Hamiltons loved to visit there and share the beautiful food - succulent roasts and sumptuous pies, rich gravies and interesting vegetables. She also would arrange summer picnics on Ealing Common and Hanger Hill when the two families would meet to play and eat in the fresh air.

Charles and Dolly were especially fond of animals, and it occurred to Charles that it was unpleasant and downright cruel to eat animals, especially if they had been bred for the purpose. He decided to be a vegetarian and Dolly followed suit after much discussion in the hope of persuading other members of the family to join them. This fad only lasted a year - poor Dolly's health gave way. She needed animal proteins or a well-balanced vegetarian diet, whereas all she and Charles did was to omit the meat from a normal diet and eat the rest of the food. Dolly was about seventeen and Charles five years older. He was more robust. Dolly got very thin and went into a decline and had to be forced into eating meat again. She caught diphtheria through being so run down and Charles nursed her back to health, no doubt feeling somewhat responsible for her predicament. On doctor's orders they both decided that they would have to eat meat, but Charles kept to the smallest portions he could manage on, eating it for health, not pleasure. This attitude remained all his life. Meanwhile their mother was relieved that 'the children had given up their folly'.

As a young man about town Charles loved good meals out - dinner at the Café Royal, Café de Paris and Frascati's with Dolly and friends. As a traveller abroad he loved the cuisine of other countries. He marvelled at the ingenuity of the Swiss hoteliers who would provide 13-course dinners - thirteen minute courses: amazing in their diversity. German and Dutch meals he found too vast to complete. On one occasion at a hotel in Holland he and Dolly and her husband were served with an enormous dish of various roasted meats

beautifully sliced and liberally accompanied by stewed prunes. Dolly was just serving it out into three generous portions when the waiter appeared with two more similar dishes - one for each of them! They felt defeated before they started. But it was the Italian cooking which they all liked best and Dolly used to exercise her Italian by asking for the recipes. Italian cooking always figured largely in my mother's catering - much appreciated by Charles and his brother-in-law.

When the Great War came and caught the trio in Austria, it is interesting to read Charles's comments on the food situation both on his journey (he dallied longer on the homeward journey) and on his arrival in Hawkinge in the hills behind Folkestone. On 5th September 1914, newly installed in digs at Hawkinge Post Office, he wrote to Dolly: "About my digs, I could have got them cheaper, but 30/- is only 50 francs a day. I have eggs and bacon for breakfast, (plenty), good dinner. Big tea. Supper. I paid 6 francs at Grandola - Also I have a beer with supper and dinner thrown in. Living in England is amazingly cheap. The same fare in Italy (if obtainable) would be at least 9 or 10 francs a day - £3 a week. At Grandola an egg was 2d. Here I have two eggs and two rashers every morning - no extras."

Dolly and Charles ran three allotments during the Great War. Dolly did most of the work as Charles's time was limited, but he loved working out of doors. Dolly and her husband had taken a house in Hampstead Garden Suburb and Charles had taken one there too, to be near them. The allotments were a few minutes' walk away. They enthused about the beautiful vegetables they grew. Rationing hit quite hard and both bread and butter were judged very inferior, and some said the tea was undrinkable. When people talked excitedly about what they were going to do after the War, Charles, very laid back, would declare he was going to have "a cup of tea and a piece of bread and butter". The two households, in the same road, decided to share a cook in order to give Dolly much-needed time for gardening. Food was always of prime importance but especially so during wartime.

During the inter-war years, when I was a small and very observant child, I noticed that Charles ate the least of all my grown-ups. Small helpings and no seconds, Birds' Dinners my father called them. He thought Uncle was ridiculous and distinctly odd. Uncle retorted by accusing father of having eaten a line of sheep stretching up to Scotland and a line of oxen from Cornwall to London. This joke came up quite often: it worked rather hard.

I noticed Uncle was very particular about his food: he distrusted tinned food of any sort: salmon, corned beef, even soup. Everything had to be freshly cooked; when living at Kingsgate freshly caught dabs were delivered for breakfast. He didn't trust sausages or any man-made foodstuffs. His breakfast was always a boiled egg with brown bread and butter, Keiller's marmalade and a large cup of strong tea, sweetened. Fish appeared frequently in his diet - Halibut, Salmon, Sole and Plaice. Cheese dishes and eggs, omelettes, together with fresh peas, beans and cauliflower were regular choices. He liked puddings and desserts but not pastry. Just like Billy Bunter he had a sweet tooth. At bed-time - about 10.30 p.m. - he could be found tucking into cold boiled suet pudding or rich fruit cake. Somehow his digestion coped. He didn't cook and had no feeling for it; he could make tea, coffee and cocoa, boil an egg and make toast. That was his limit. Bananas were his great standby - always for elevenses while walking round his garden.

When we stayed with him during the school holidays, he was very protective over my food - I was not to eat anything tough, for example beef - he didn't either - and the number

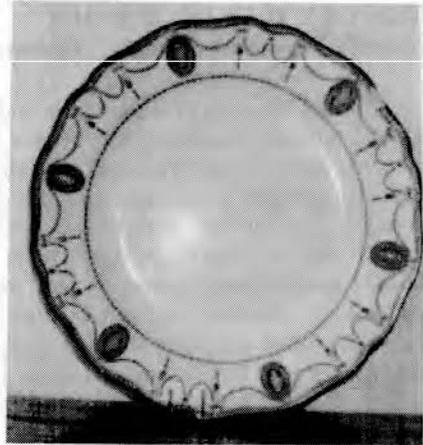
of things that were tough increased even to include fish skin! That really made me laugh. He was quite unrestrained when it came to buying me sweets. Bars of chocolate and whipped cream walnuts arrived in spate, still in their wholesaler's cardboard boxes. Tins of delicious Sharp's toffees (Blunt's toffees in the *Magnet*) were always on hand. As for boiled sweets - he would carefully sort out the green ones and throw them away saying that they were nasty tasting and not good for his 'little pet' - me. I think he associated the green colour with poison!

The Second World War led him to grow vegetables again, first in Thanet and then in the Hampstead Garden Suburb. We were living in Cheltenham and parcels used to arrive containing apples from his bungalow in Hawkinge where he had a little orchard, and small tea-boxes came filled with Nescafé tins each in turn containing an egg wrapped in newspaper.

Rationing altered his diet whether he liked it or not: tinned food was issued on a points system and his housekeeper somehow got him to eat minute quantities of corned beef and tinned fish and even Heinz beans cold with salad!

In the post-war years he never lost his interest in food although he pretended that eating was just a necessary chore. There is no doubt he had a tender tummy and he dreaded becoming like Mr Quelch. Uncle's descriptions of his boys' hearty appetites - they were at the delightful age at which they could eat anything - comprise one of the many autobiographical elements in his writing. In one of the interviews he gave to the Saturday Book he admitted that there must be an element of Billy Bunter in Frank Richards because an author contains elements of all his characters.

When he created Billy Bunter, nearly ten years before he wrote of him in the *Magnet*, he was able to express all his own feelings about food - grossly exaggerated - but nonetheless the suppressed longings of his childhood found an outlet. If you know how to listen you can hear the author in Billy Bunter, you can see his Aunt Annie in Mrs Bunter and in Coker's Aunt Judy, both of whom cooked for and indulged the young. At Colonel Wharton's Christmas table you can meet his Uncle Stephen Trinder celebrating Yuletide in his big house in Ealing. All those hampers and parcels of tuck lived again - in the First World War as food parcels to lonely soldiers; in the Second World War to my mother and me as parcels of goodies hard to come by - in my case 'a cake and a spot of sticky', meaning sweets. He very kindly gave me his sweet ration, regarding himself as being too old for such pleasures. Food, for him, had become mainly food for thought. Cakes - even from Fullers - had lost their magnetism and the spots of sticky were safer in the hands - and mouths - of the young.



The last of the service which Charles chose for *Rose Lawn* - dinner, breakfast and tea were all eaten off this pattern.

(The following is a facsimile of Uncle's typing of one of his favourite recipes.)

RECIPE FOR CHEESE-AND-ONION PIE.

Line a flat tin or enamelled plate with thin pie-crust;
cover well with grated cheese.
Cover cheese with very finely-chopped or minced onion.
Cover with top crust.
Bake in ^{oven} for ten to fifteen minutes.
HOT
It is best served hot, straight from the oven.

----- POTATO-AND-ONION pie, same as above
but use mashed potatoes instead of
Pie-crusts.

(Text and pictures copyright Una Hamilton Wright)

THE DAY WAR BROKE OUT

An article on the papers of D.C. Thomson & Co. Ltd. by COLIN MORGAN

The day war broke out the editors and writers of the Thomson story papers must have worked overtime - Sunday or not. To find out why, read on!

It is only at times of national crisis that some things become clear and Thomsons can never be accused of revealing unnecessary details of their operations to an eager public normally - but this time, 3rd September 1939, was a crisis time to end all crisis times.

So, the first thing to come to light, or rather to be uncovered, is the fact that the 'Big Five' Thomson papers were, by and large, always printed five weeks in advance of publication. Therefore, all you have to do is to add five weeks to the date of the papers out for week ending 2nd September and you get 7th October - and you also get for that week obvious signs for the first time that war is going on.

Each of the five papers showed different indications of this and I shall deal with each one as appropriate.

The senior paper, ADVENTURE, also incidentally the paper with the lowest circulation, had begun running a World War One story in No. 929 (19.8.39) titled 'The Iron Shark' which featured the British war against the German U-Boats of 1914-18. The story came to an abrupt end in No. 935 (30.9.39) after just seven instalments, at that time a very short sequence for that paper, so a conclusion can be drawn that the series was dropped immediately the new outbreak of war was announced. In its place came 'The School of Deadly Secrets' (936 - 7.10.39) in which German agents of the present were being watched over by pupils of a school set on a narrow strip of land in Switzerland between the borders of Germany and France. This story does not mention Britain being at war but suggests work being done by agents of both sides.

ADVENTURE must have been the last of the five to be printed because the size of the paper, in common with the others, was cut from 28 pages per issue to 24 a week prior to its

One Lone British Boy Fights To Save His Country From The German Menace !



companions. This reduction was made for issue No. 955 (30.9.39) at the same time as a new story, 'Bing Bang Baxter' was trailed for inclusion in No. 938 (21.10.39). Baxter finally turned up in No. 946 (16.12.39) just when the readers must have given him up.

All the papers, with the exception of THE WIZARD, had carried a headline across the top of the front cover regarding the paper shortage situation and readers were advised to order the paper from their newsagents to ensure continued supply. This appeared on ADVENTURE on the cover of No. 941 (11.11.39) although it must have been an afterthought as it had first been on the other three who ran it on their issues of 7.10.39.

It took quite a time for the first 'real' war stories to appear in the paper as it was March 1940, six months after the outbreak of war, before we were able to read 'The Slippery Slink' and 'The Human Torpedo'.

The editor of THE ROVER had to organise a re-writing job for his paper and this perhaps is the most novel and inventive thing to come out of the Thomson papers at this time.

In issue No. 908 (9.9.39) a story entitled 'The Grim Dwarfs of Darga' began. This told the story of an African hunter called Lee White who, accompanied by dwarfs from the Darga region of Africa (Lee White and the Seven Dwarfs?), has the job of bringing back to Britain the plans of the mine in which the new mineral duralanite is found before the Germans can find out about it. In the first four instalments, i.e. up to No. 911 (30.9.39), Lee and his seven companions fight German agents all the time, but in No. 912 (7.10.39) it is revealed that there is now a war between Britain and Germany and, from then on, Lee and his pals battle with the Nazis as they cross France and Germany on foot *en route* back to Britain. It would seem that a very quick amendment to the story had been made and

done so successfully that the story continued with 'new' opponents without anyone being aware of the re-write that must have been done virtually 'overnight'.

That same issue (No. 912 - 7.10.39) carried the front page banner headline about the paper shortage, the new 24 page format and a temporary dropping of one and a half pages of 'comic' features. Only Nosey Parker retained his place on the back page although his pals would be back the following week when more time made more subtle adjustments possible.

PAPER SHORTAGE—In order to avoid disappointment readers should make sure their copies of "The Rover" are regularly kept for them by the newsagent.



September 1941 before the four remaining papers would become fortnightly, but more of that later.

The biggest change to be noted in THE WIZARD came with the reduction to 24 pages in No. 879 (7.10.39). Since the inception of the paper in 1922, its two centre pages had been occupied by cartoon characters, with slightly later emphasis on Spadger and his Islanders. Suddenly in No. 879 there was no Spadger, Skipper Sam and the gang. These

The story count was reduced from seven to six by dropping 'Mary's Lambs At School' after No. 913 (14.10.39). This series of completes featuring the woman teacher, Miss Mary Gentle, at the tough school for boys in Tolby, had only been a regular for five weeks and didn't return at a later date. In the same issue, a 'boxed' note from the paper's editor ran: 'DON'T MISS THE BOAT, BOYS - there's a paper shortage on just now. That means that there will be a bigger rush for 'The Rover' than ever. If you don't want to miss you copy, tell your newsagent beforehand to keep it for you. You don't want to lose touch with Cast-Iron Bill, the Darga Dwarfs, Trigger Grant, The Big Palooka and all the others, do you? Then toddle along NOW, boys! Tell the man behind the counter that you mustn't miss your 'Rover'.'

The 24 pages remained constant until June 1940 when for one week only (No. 948) the paper had 22 pages before reducing yet again a week later to 20. It would be

two cartoon pages were left out as half of the four page cut - and this 'apology' was printed: 'Spadger, Softie Simpkins, Nero and Zero have all been lost in the black-out this week. Look out for them all coming back soon in new war-time adventures.' Obviously, they would return when a story could be dropped to make room, or so we thought. But, no! Simpkins and the 'Rollicking' Romans' had gone for good, but there was better news for Spadger fans because he and the gang reappeared on the cover of No. 884 (11.11.39) at the expense of the front page full colour picture. I have to admit that, to a certain extent, this spoiled THE WIZARD for me from that point, although the series, which would run unbroken through to August 1950, did make the paper distinguishable from its stablemates. Spadger's Isle had appeared on the cover prior to No. 884 a couple of times but this sudden change was, well, sudden!

The issue of 23.9.39, No. 877, was advertised in ADVENTURE No. 934 (23.9.39) as having a free gift in the nature of a 'Wizard Midget Souvenir'. This free gift did not appear, obviously not included due to the prevailing new war-time conditions, but one wonders if they were printed and whether one or more survive to this day in Thomson archives. The Midget was stated to contain seven stories of your favourite characters, and was most likely in a similar format to an earlier Rover issue.

When it came, the new cover was, as indicated, totally devoted to the Islanders' approach to hostilities. All manner of secret weapons, defence tactics etc. were invented and deployed to stop any German invasion which, of course, never came!

The last full picture cover (on No. 883 4.11.39) was devoted to a new war story, 'The Phantom Flotilla', which was the first war yarn to appear in THE WIZARD during the Second World War.

As a footnote to the story of THE WIZARD, the editor chose the following as his Christmas dedication in Issue NO. 890 (23.12.39): 'Best Wishes for the Merriest Christmas Ever!' Unlikely eh?

THE HOTSPUR'S earliest new war story, and I would expect it to be as much a surprise to you as it was to me, came from the Red Circle series. 'Red Circle in War-Time' began in No. 321 (21.10.39) and told the story of dozens of evacuees being absorbed into Red Circle School.

If anything showed that Thomson's September issues had been printed before the war began, it was an advert for Brock's Fireworks in the 9th September issue (No. 315). By then, fireworks had already been banned from general use!

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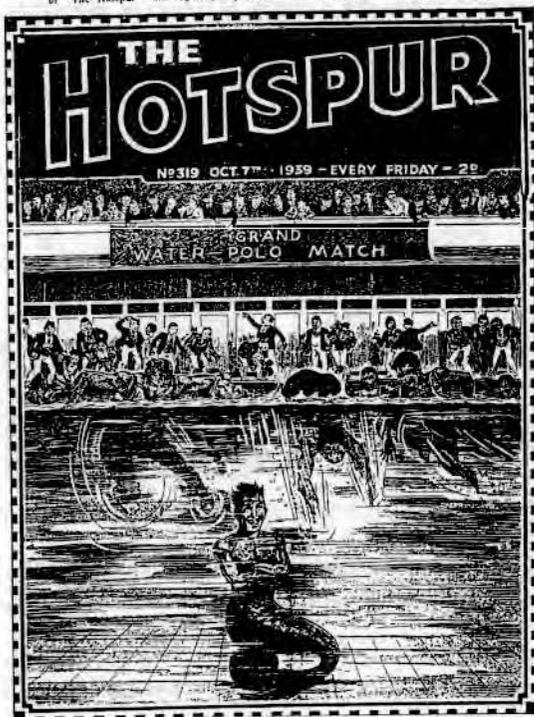
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In preparation for the new series of Red Circle, it was announced in No. 318 (30.9.39) that there would be no Red Circle story in No. 319. This was done, apparently, without any reference to war events but simply to accommodate a complete story, of all things, but the preparation was there in hindsight, because Red Circle DID appear in No. 319 but - NOT in the following issue for 14.10.39 when it was replaced by a complete about an earlier 1939 character, 'Skimpy Skewer - The Skinflint Headmaster'.

A famous resident WIZARD character, the tough schoolmaster, Thick Ear Donovan had transferred (the word actually used in THE WIZARD) to THE HOTSPUR and first appeared in No. 320 (14.10.39).

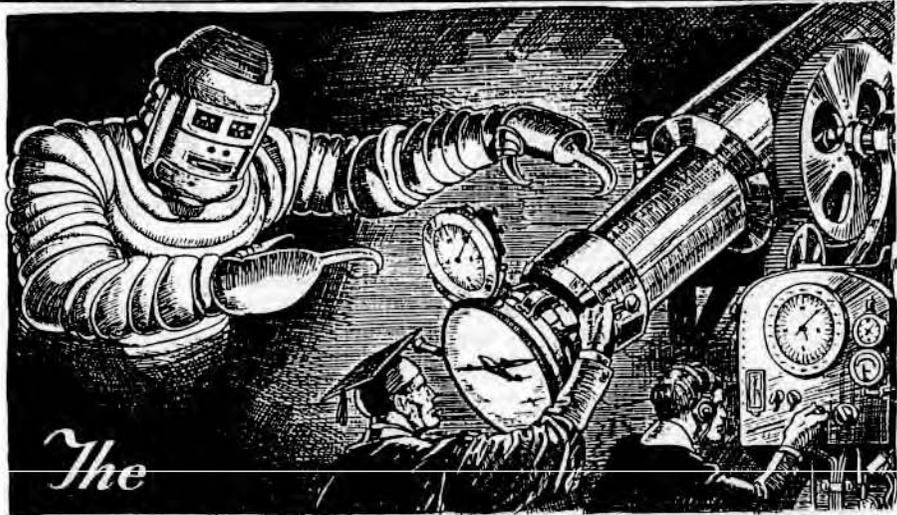
PAPER SHORTAGE—In order to avoid disappointment, readers should from now on make sure that their copies of "The Hotspur" are regularly kept for them by the newsagent. Please tell him to-day.



And so we come to the last of the Thomson papers, THE SKIPPER. It had, perhaps, the most straightforward adaptation of the five as one story, 'The Revolt of the Cowboys' ended naturally in No. 474 (30.9.39) and nowhere in the paper was there any reference to a replacement. It was therefore easy for the paper to go down to 24 pages the following week so, complete with the front cover heading, No. 475 set up the future of the paper - or what was left of its future - quite nicely.

To this paper also went the honour of the earliest war story of all, when in No. 477 (14.10.39) schoolboy Bill Hawker fought his pals, his teachers and German spies to help win the war for Britain in 'The Silent School'.

IT STARTS TO-DAY—THE STORY OF THE SCHOOLBOY WHO CAN SAVE YOU FROM THE NAZI BOMBERS.



SILENT SCHOOL

But that first 24 page, six story issue of 7.10.39 had one extra feature besides the front cover heading - the one-liners over the all-text pages carried facts on the Union Jack flag and other flags of the Allied Nations. Very much up to date, THE SKIPPER.

Well, we've told the story of the Thomson Big Five in September and October 1939. Exactly two years later, with the SKIPPER having closed in February 1941 with issue No. 544, the four remaining papers went fortnightly with two coming out each week. ROVER and WIZARD went together, and HOTSPUR and ADVENTURE formed the other pairing. The total page content then was 16 per paper and this was soon to go down even further to 14, thus meaning that both papers each week totalled 28, the same as each one was, pre-war, when we could buy no less than five different issues. Had not Thomsons made this fortnightly arrangement we may have lost two more, leaving just two papers to soldier on weekly for the duration, with the others maybe lost forever, just like THE SKIPPER.

Thomsons coped well with the war-time restrictions and kept us supplied with magnificent stories, many of which are well remembered today. I hope that I've reminded you of some more which arrived in the most worrying of eras when the boys of Britain were perhaps more concerned about the fates of their favourite characters week by week.

(Pictures accompanying this article are Copyright D.C. Thomson)

FOR SALE (preferably to a C.D. reader north of the Border who might be able to collect) VALIANT from 6/10/1962 to 6/7/1968: HOTSPUR from 24/10/1964 (no. 262) to 26/6/1971 (no. 610) ROVER (& WIZARD) from 24/10/1964 to 20/1/1973. GERALD HUNTER, 3 Monmouth Terrace, Edinburgh EH3 5QT. Tel: 0131-551-1486



A 'SAINTLY' CHARACTER

by J.E.M.

I have often thought that an encounter with Leslie Charteris's famous creation, the 'Saint', would have made an exciting addition to the great case-book. After all, on at least two occasions, Sexton Blake did cross swords with another well-known fictional law-breaker, the gentleman cracksman, A.J. Raffles. And, if I may stick my neck out, Simon Templar, alias the 'Saint', has always struck me as an incomparably more colourful figure. Raffles is, no doubt, a very charismatic chap but he does not quite reflect, as the 'Saint' does, a tradition founded more than six hundred years ago by the immortal - if equally fictitious - Robin Hood. Not only thumbing his nose at the law, Templar is a scourge of the rich and ruthless ("the ungodly", as he regularly calls them) and a protector of the oppressed; in short, a rake-hell buccaneer on the side of right, if rarely on the side of the courts.

Recently re-reading a 'Saint' story in which this engaging scamp is actually referred to as a modern Robin Hood, I was suddenly reminded of a character from the Blakian annals who was himself often given that same label. Blakians will, of course, instantly recognise Rupert Waldo the Wonder Man, the creation of E.S. Brooks. Waldo surely comes as near to being a wayward "saint" as the 'Saint' himself, robbing well-heeled baddies, rescuing the poor and defenceless and defying not only the law but often - in the most engaging way - Sexton Blake as well. There is just no-one else like him in the Blakian canon.

Waldo is generally represented as being somewhere in his thirties, while the 'Saint' seems rather younger; and this is as it should be since Waldo did, in fact, make his first appearance roughly a decade before Simon Templar. There are some physical differences, too. Where Waldo is deep-chested and heavily built, Templar cuts a more dashing lithe figure. Perhaps, in a rough-house, Waldo might have been just a mite slower than the 'Saint' but he surely packed a heftier punch, being endowed by his creator with a literally super-human strength. In either case, the result was ever the same: the "ungodly" bit the dust. The similarities between or two cheerful outlaws far outweigh the differences.

So, in the absence of Blake-versus-the-'Saint', let us have a look at an episode from Blake-versus-the-Wonder-Man. Of all the Waldo tales I have read, my favourite is "The House of Light" (Union Jack No. 1528). The story begins with Waldo working, under an alias, as an assistant in a large London store where he is "particularly successful with the ladies" (compare Simon Templar!). His aim is to steal a valuable oriental necklace soon to be on display in the store. Circumstances, however, take him to the country mansion of an American millionaire whom Waldo protects from a bunch of hoodlums from Chicago. Waldo, however, recognises that his host is also a "retired" gangster named Skarvak.

Inevitably, the Wonder Man decides that Skarvak's secret nest-egg (after all, every refugee gangster must have one!) may be an even greater prize than the previously mentioned necklace.

Meanwhile, Blake and Tinker who have tracked Waldo down to Skarvak's mansion - the so-called House of Light - have themselves become prisoners of the gangster. Locked in a strong-room, they face death by rapid asphyxia but, of course, are rescued in the nick of time by super cracksman, Waldo himself, who then takes off with Skarvak's hidden loot (most of which, in true Robin Hood fashion, will find its way to the poor and deserving). Blake and Scotland Yard are left to round up the gangster and his cronies.

Throughout the story, Blake's opinion of Waldo is made crystal clear. Simply, the Wonder Man is one of the good guys - or, at least, a most endearing good-bad guy; just like the 'Saint' in fact. Read "The House of Light" for yourself and if, from time to time, you substitute 'Saint' for Wonder Man you will get two latter-day Robin Hoods for the price of One!



BLACK, WHITE AND GRAY
Part Six - Girl Power

by Mark Caldicott

The shock to Fullwood of finding his cousin, a fugitive from justice, in St. Frank's, in Fullwood's study, calmly occupying Fullwood's armchair, is merely the latest of a series of trials which have beset him. It seems, as it has seemed to reformed bounders before him, that it is the will to change itself which has brought down his world around his ears. Fullwood's trial is something of a roller coaster ride - at the zenith of achievement there is a sudden plunge into the nadir of despair.

After shock comes a kind of relief as Eustace Carey, the caddish cousin, explains how he is masquerading as Stanley Clavering, a new pupil of St. Frank's, having imprisoned the real Clavering in a dungeon in Bellton Priory. By acting in this way, thinks Fullwood, Carey has taken responsibility for his own actions, and Fullwood can honourably stand aside. Carey states his intention to use Clavering's passport to flee the country, a solution which will release Fullwood from his burden. However, Ralph Leslie is reluctantly roped into assisting Carey's ministrations to his prisoner. Fullwood takes the precaution of wearing a hood and maintaining silence on his visits to preserve future anonymity.

His former Study 1 chums, now led by the reprehensible new boy Bernard Forrest, pursue their persecution of their estranged colleague - making believe that as the cousin of a murderer Fullwood himself has the same trait. But if the cads of the school are revealing their true nature to Fullwood, so are the decent fellows, who are offering a hand of friendship.

Fullwood looked at them gratefully.

"I - I don't know what to say, you chaps!" he muttered. "Until this term I thought you were . . . well, I don't know. You understand, don't you? I'm beginnin' to find things out now. It's decent of you to . . ."

"Rats!" interrupted Handforth. "We're looking at things in the true light, that's all. You weren't at Oxford with your cousin; you haven't even met your beastly relative for years, and it's caddish to persecute you for nothing. Here's my fist!"
("The Prisoner in the Priory", *Nelson Lee Library*, OS 539, 03-Oct-25)

As well as the offer of friendship, Fullwood is offered a place in the inter-house football match in recognition of his dedication to training and his developing skills; consequently his spirits soar.

They plunge again when his cousin, no longer fearing a murder charge but still accused of theft, announces his decision to extend his stay at St. Frank's. Fullwood is horrified by the thought of the extended suffering of the real Clavering, the prisoner in the Priory, and this takes away Fullwood's concentration for the first half of the match. Fullwood pulls himself together for the second half and gives a sterling performance, but his elation is short lived, for Carlisle, refereeing, and of the opinion that "a leopard cannot change his spots", is expecting Fullwood to do something caddish. When through sheer misfortune, Fullwood appears to kick Crowe at the same time that that fellow catches his foot on the ground and ricks his ankle, falling to the ground in agony, Carlisle jumps to the immediate conclusion that Fullwood has committed a vicious and cowardly foul. Fullwood is sent off in disgrace, and, appearances being deceptive, the crowd in general believe that he deserves it. Clive Russell, in spite of the evidence of his own eyes, is willing to accept Fullwood's word, but there is a general feeling of ill-will towards him which Nipper and Co. share. This ill will does not last long, for Crowe appears from the sanatorium to explain the true situation.

Fullwood, meanwhile, feeling that the whole world is against him, is wandering aimlessly, and, in a moment of weakness, is tempted to report his cousin's whereabouts to the police. Before he can be tempted further to undertake this unworthy course of action, however, he meets Winnie Pitt, Reggie's sister, of Moor View School.

Winnie Pitt's introduction into the St. Frank's stories had been fairly recent - in fact only two weeks before the reform of Fullwood was suggested by Albert Hughes. ESB's advance preparation of the ground for the story of Fullwood's reform was so carefully laid that one wonders if Winnie's future role were a reason for her introduction.

Winnie had been a member of the voyage to the South Seas. Although the references to any growing friendship between Fullwood and Winnie were made only in passing, nevertheless they were significant, for now in the account of their meeting in the lane ESB tells us:

During the latter part of that summer holiday trip, which now seemed so remote, Winnie had grown to like Fullwood far better than she had ever expected. Irene Manners and Doris Berkeley had been startled, for they always regarded Fullwood as an utter cad.

But Winnie had maintained that Fullwood wasn't so bad when you got to know him. Perhaps it was her influence indeed which had started that change in the former leader of Study A.

Fullwood's meeting with Winnie brings him round again.

He was feeling so much better that he hardly knew himself. Winnie's companionship had wrought an extraordinary change. It set him thinking; it set his heart thumping. Was it because of her that he had come to St. Frank's with a different spirit this term?

He sees the St. Frank's crowd advancing towards him, and even though he believes they intend to harm him, he turns to face them. All they want to do, however, is to shake his hand and offer their apologies for wronging him.



Meanwhile Eustace Carey is proving, in his role as Clavering, to be a bully and a cad of the first order ("Fullwood's Uphill Fight", *Nelson Lee Library*, OS 540, 10-Oct-25). Willy Handforth learns of Carey's cruelty to Conroy minimus and resolves to do something about it. By chance he sees, using an experimental telescope, Carey entering Bellton Priory. Fullwood, who is now once again in high spirits, having been told of his selection to play in the match against River House School, is appalled when he hears Willy tell Nipper of his observations, and when Nipper begins to gather together an exploring party. In his reaction

Fullwood momentarily reveals his old temper to Willy, making Willy suspicious. In a desperate attempt to draw the explorers off the scent Fullwood plunges his bicycle, along with himself, into the River Stowe and shouts for help. The diversion works, for Nipper and Co. go to his rescue, but the current carries Fullwood away, and he is only just saved. The result is a thorough soaking, which is to have dire effects, since it gives Fullwood a fever. Carey refuses to substitute for Fullwood in the night visit to the priory and, forced to go, the biting wind makes Fullwood's condition worse. He is feeling so ill when he reaches the imprisoned Clavering that he tears off his head cover and confesses the truth, intending to set Clavering free. Clavering, having sympathy with Fullwood's predicament, suggests that he stay one more day in the priory while Fullwood tells Carey to flee, then Clavering will arrive at St. Frank's and say what has happened, leaving Fullwood's part out of it.

It is sheer bad luck that on the way back he sees Messrs Goole and Pycraft outside a window about to invade a gambling party at which Carey is present. Fullwood runs to give warning. Everyone escapes except Fullwood himself, who is discovered among the cards and the drinks looking flushed and dazed as if drunk. This is the final straw, for after all his efforts, he is threatened with expulsion, and to make matters worse the school in general, believing that he is back to his old ways, are shunning him.

Once again he meets Winnie Pitt. She has heard the rumours, but does not believe them. Winnie is annoyed that Fullwood cannot reveal the names of the real culprits even though they have not themselves come forward to clear Fullwood's name.

Once again, Fullwood is able to take fresh heart after an encounter with Winnie. She agrees to come to see him play in the game against River House School. Fullwood is delighted, but does not know at that moment that the football match is set to be Fullwood's greatest trial yet.

(To be continued)

THE FREE GIFT BOOKLETS IN "THE SCHOOLGIRL" MAGAZINES by Betty Hopton

Free gifts have always been very popular in the many papers and magazines that have appeared over the years. The publishers always publicised the various items that were to be given away the following week, with the intention of tempting boys and girls into buying these particular issues. This was probably a very good idea, as most youngsters would enjoy having something extra with their comic or magazine. These gifts would range from stamps, badges, stickers and small toys to little booklets, etc.

In my opinion some of the most delightful gifts that were given away were the "Small 16 Page Booklets" which were given with *The Schoolgirl*. These little books measure about 4" x 5½" and deal with the various activities of the girls of Cliff House.

Bessie Bunter's Cookery Book was written by the inimitable Bessie herself, (the introdukshun ov coars as we wood expekt contayns seviral spellink mistakes!) but after that Bessie graciously concedes that she has allowed Babs to do the editing, as she is much too busy. There are lots of tips and recipes for snacks and dinners, vegetables and puddings and especially for cakes and buns, which Bessie hopes will taste just as good as the ones that she enjoys so much in Uncle Clegg's.

Schoolgirls' Book of Picnics gives advice on the sort of location to choose, e.g. near some trees, to give shelter from the sun, or near a stream, to rinse sticky fingers. It's also important not to pick a spot that's private and to be ordered off by a gamekeeper or farmer, which is what once happened to Bessie Bunter. The choice of food is also important. Clara always leaves that to Bessie, which is indeed a compliment. Leila Carroll likes to take her wireless along and Jemima takes her camera. There are tips on what games to play after the feast and, of course, on how to tidy up before you leave.

Book of Summer Parties contains once again plenty of recipes and also notes on how to write up your invitations and replies. If the weather is sunny the games can take place in the garden, and several games ideas are given e.g. Coconut Shy or Bob Apple. If it's raining, the entertainment would take place indoors.

Schoolgirls' Own Tuck Book gives excellent instructions on how to make your own home-made sweets and cakes to give as presents to all your friends and family. It also gives advice on the sort of containers to choose for packing your goodies and how to decorate them nicely.



The Fourth Form Fun Book is edited by Jemima Carstairs and includes lots of puzzles with answers, jokes, riddles, pencil and paper tricks and several limericks, about the girls of Cliff House. There are also lots of tongue twisters, schoolgirl howlers and conundrums.

Jemima Carstairs' Book of Party Magic is full of interesting and clever tricks. Jemima performs lots of magic, with cards and coins, keeping her audience absolutely enthralled. Even Bessie Bunter forgets to eat that extra doughnut.

Clara Trevlyn's Book for Girl Guides tells how to join the Guides and the laws that must be kept. It also gives information about uniforms, badges, first aid and camping and gives the names of the girls in each patrol. There is also an excellent section on how to send messages by Morse Code.

Marjorie Hazeldene's Book of Needlework shows how to make simple bags and pin-cushions and also how to mend and give old clothes a new lease of life. There are also tips on how to do some unusual and rather complicated stitching, and also some raffia work. Marjorie says that Mabel Lynn is a girl who is clever at sewing.

The Handy Home Book is again by Marjorie Hazeldene and gives lots of very useful advice on how to look after your study, e.g. taking good care of your furniture, books and clothing and how to remove stains. There is also a section on how to pack for the holidays and how to fold your clothing.

Book of Simple Gifts tells you how to make gifts for all the family, from toy animals for baby and an apron for your mother, right up to a "razor blade case" for Father and a "decorated biscuit tin" for Granny. All these gifts are simple to make and quite inexpensive and are wonderful presents to give at birthdays, etc.

Stella Stone's Book for Pet Owners gives a list of suitable pets and how to choose them. There is also advice on training and exercise, feeding, grooming and tricks. Stella also tells you what to do about your pet when you go away on holiday.

The Book of Cliff House Pets gives details of the girls' very interesting and varied pets, in the building which is officially known as the "pets enclosure" and contains fifty kennels. There is a pool, a sandpit and an aviary, where all sorts of unusual pets are kept. Next to the sandpit is the "zoological house", which is always kept warm, because it houses tropical pets, including a case of tropical snakes, all looked after very enthusiastically by Miss Drake. There are details of which pet belongs to which girl, and their ages and the prizes that they have won in shows. Mr Merryweather is officially in charge of the "pets' house" and is responsible for cleanliness and good order; he is assisted by two kennel boys, whose wages are paid by Sir Willis Gregory, the Chairman of the Board of Directors. His generosity enabled the pets' house to be built. Once a week a vet from Courtfield calls in to inspect the pets and their quarters.

Cliff House Confessions is one of the most amusing of the lot. The girls give details about themselves, age, favourite lessons, pastimes, film stars, ambitions and their most treasured possessions. Bessie Bunter gives her age as fourteen years and three months, her favourite film stars are Oliver Hardy and Walt Disney and her ambition is to be "FAMUS", her most treasured possessions are "The Bunter Crown Jewels", her favourite lesson is cookery, her favourite pastime is receiving letters from her titled relatives. Miss Penelope Primrose reveals her age as "A Secret" and has no favourite film star. Her most treasured possession is a shawl that belonged to Queen Alexandra. Piper reveals his age as "Gone Seventeen" and his ambition is to visit Paris. Jemima Carstairs' most treasured possession is her monocle. Mabel Lynn wants to go on the stage and Stella Stone wants to be a vet. There are lots more confessions and secrets revealed which make very interesting reading for all fans of Cliff House.

I believe that there are more booklets in this fascinating series and it would be lovely to have them all, as I really think that these superb little publications are collectors' items in their own right.

Editor's Note: I believe that John Wheway was the author who thought up these booklets. It is, perhaps, a pity that the usual Cliff House illustrator of the 1930s, T.E. Laidler, was not used for them.

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

HARRY WHARTON: HAMILTON'S FLAWED HERO

by Peter Mahony

Part II: The Rebel Victim.

Though Harry Wharton 'starred' in well over 100 of the first 600 *Magnets* written by Charles Hamilton, and though he was significantly featured in many of the yarns of the twenties and thirties, the full complexity of his character did not emerge until 'long' series became the vogue.

Between 1908 and 1924 there were only 4 long series in the *Magnet*. These were: "The Greyfriars Crusaders" (Nos. 247-254); "Bunter's Double" (569-585); the "Congo Holiday" (768-774); and "Levison's Return" (793-799). The "Sahara" series (862-869) came in 1925; after that long series proliferated. Well over half (431 out of 750) of the remaining *Magnets* to be written by Hamilton were episodes of long sagas. Of these, five revolved around Harry Wharton.

These were: the "First Downfall" (879-888); the "Da Costa" series (1059-1067); "Second Downfall" (1255-1261); the "Rebel" series (1285-1296); and "Wharton's Double" (1422-33). The last *Magnet* of all - 1683 "The Shadow of the Sack" - was the start of another "Wharton saga"; but World War II kiboshed it. In these five series, the range of Harry's strengths and shortcomings was fully - and fascinatingly - exposed.

The first Downfall series broke new ground for Greyfriars. The hitherto upright, responsible, well-disciplined Captain of the Remove allowed full rein to his excessive pride and hasty temper. As a result, he went rapidly downhill. Defiance of authority brought demotion; quarrels with his friends led to blows. But Hamilton did not stop there; such ground had been covered before. This time Wharton stooped to sharp practice and blackguardism, and became quite unsavoury in the process.

The decline was almost entirely due to inherent faults in Wharton's character. Almost, but not quite. The early stages were vitally influenced by the busy-bodying of William George Bunter. Usually Bunter was a source of comic relief; now, Hamilton employed him as a 'plot-mover'. Bunter caused most of the initial trouble - but Wharton's moodiness aggravated it to an excessive degree.

On the football field, ready to kick off against Highcliffe, Wharton received a telegram from his uncle. Colonel Wharton wanted Harry to meet him at Ashford that afternoon. Against his friends' advice, Harry decided to play in the match and travel to Ashford afterwards. As Captain, he convinced himself it was his duty to 'stand by the team'. Greyfriars won the match, with Wharton kicking the winning goal; afterwards second thoughts prevailed and Harry become worried.

A guilty feeling that he had been lacking in respect for his guardian made him peevish. (It was the Colonel's fault for giving him such short notice!) The Co.'s silent disapproval of his decision also annoyed him. Then Bunter set a rumour going that Colonel Wharton was ill and that Harry had heartlessly neglected him. Skinner, as always, made matters seem worse and a 'scene' took place in the Remove passage. Wharton, already 'touchy', spent a restless night worrying about the Colonel.

Anxiety breeds mistakes. Next day, Harry skipped breakfast to intercept the postman. A letter from Colonel Wharton explained that he had stopped - briefly - at Ashford en route to Russia! Realising that his uncle was on a 'dangerous mission', Harry's self-reproach quickly escalated into a 'guilt complex'. He spent a tearful hour out of gates and was very late for morning school. Mr Quelch, naturally, was not amused.

Here, Hamilton showed a subtle touch. Most boys would have told Quelch the full story - and, no doubt, would have received sympathetic treatment. Wharton, apprehensive of the Remove's sarcasm and scorn, preferred to keep the matter dark. Quelch, displeased by Harry's attitude, demoted him from 'Head Boy'.

Harry showed the letter to his friends, who were properly sympathetic. Then Bunter nosed it out and told Skinner. Soon it was common knowledge and Wharton, worried about his uncle and 'miffed' by his demotion, accused Cherry & Co. of 'tattling'. Justly resentful, the Co. did some plain speaking. Johnny Bull led the way (of course!), but it was the usually good-tempered Bob Cherry who put the lid on: "You're slanging us because you've done wrong yourself! I told you you ought to go to see your uncle. If you'd done so, there wouldn't have been any trouble!" Wharton, predictably, flounced off in a temper.

The Christmas holidays came. Harry went to the Riviera with Vernon-Smith; the Co. went to Nugent's home in Wiltshire. The Bounder's idea of a 'good time' was too 'rorty' for Wharton. He returned to England intending to make it up with his friends. To pave the way, Harry sent a conciliatory telegram, arranging to be at Nugent's home town (Wold) in time for Christmas. Re-enter W.G. Bunter!

Nugent & Co. were out when the telegram came. Bunter (who had gate-crashed the party) took charge of it - and 'lost' it. Wharton reached Wold expecting to be met by the Co. They did not come, so he jumped to the conclusion that "they didn't want him". Resentful pride surfaced again.

Wharton fell in with Jimmy Silver & Co. and joined them for Christmas. An outing to Stonehenge brought him in touch with Nugent & Co. He snubbed them. Frank, angry for once, confronted Harry; they came to blows; Wharton thrashed his former friend. Nugent took defeat badly; when a copy of the telegram clarified the situation, it was too late. Wharton's attempt to apologise was tersely rejected by Nugent.

Back at Greyfriars, matters got worse. Nugent changed out of Study No. 1: Bunter promptly moved in! Harry threw him out; Bunter called Quelch in to protect his 'rights'. Quelch lectured Wharton, and set off a series of clashes between boy and master.

The Bunter/Wharton menage did not thrive. William George, annoyed by Harry's stinginess, destroyed lines Wharton had delivered to Quelch's study. Quelch doubled the 'impot'; Wharton decided he was being victimised. He told Quelch he was 'unjust'. (There's nothing like asking for it!) A Head's flogging loomed. Bob Cherry interceded; Quelch accepted that the lines had been written; but he detained Wharton for insolence.

Wharton was needed to play at St. Jude's, but he would not 'go cap in hand' to Quelch. Cherry tackled Quelch again and got the detention postponed - provided Wharton made the request personally. More 'high horse' ensued: the request was not made.

Then a letter arrived from Colonel Wharton, safely in France. He wanted Harry to meet him at Folkestone. When Harry belatedly approached Quelch for an exeat, it was curtly refused: "Yesterday, I should have acceded to your request. Your only acknowledgement was insolent ingratitude. I shall not listen to you." Henry's back was well and truly up!

So what did dear Harry do? He took French leave! Quelch, assuming that he had gone to St. Jude's, followed on and butted into the football match - only to find that the truant wasn't there! Embarrassment all round - especially for Quelch! He returned to Greyfriars in high dudgeon. The Remove, humiliated by the ridiculous interruption, could only scramble a draw. Resentment of Wharton was rife.

Harry, having seen the Colonel, returned late - to a packet of trouble. He admitted going to Folkestone, but - the high horse again! - gave no explanation. He had 'humbled himself' asking for leave; he was not going to do it again by pleading extenuating circumstances! Skinner's 'His Magnificence' jibes really had some truth in them! Pride was certainly taking over from common sense.

Quelch, seething over the St. Jude's fiasco, deprived Wharton of the form captaincy. Wharton promptly challenged his 'right' to do so. Insulted, Quelch lost his 'rag' and handed out a vicious caning - one of the very rare occasions when Henry overstepped the mark. The outcome was open warfare.

Harry hit back via the captaincy election. Excluded from standing himself, he buttered Lord Mauleverer into running against Bob Cherry, Peter Todd and Smithy. Johnny Bull summed it up: "Wharton's pulling you leg, you silly ass, to dish us! And a pretty low-down trick, too." Mauly was offended - on Wharton's behalf - but the Remove thought Bull had it right.

Even Skinner was shocked: "Taking in a simple chap like Mauly to pay out his old friends - well, I should baulk a bit at that myself." If Skinner jibbed at it, Wharton must have fallen a long way indeed.

To get Mauleverer elected, Wharton acquired some dubious cronies. All the slackers and grafters rallied to His Lordship: the 'Old Gang' were defeated. In a bland exchange with Johnny Bull, Harry revealed his true intentions:

"So that's your game! Using Mauleverer as a stalking horse!"

"How bright you are getting, Bull!"

It all came a dreadful cropper. Wharton, captain in fact if not in name, omitted his old pals from the Rookwood match. Several others resigned in protest; Greyfriars tackled Rookwood with only Wharton and Smithy of the regular team in the ranks. A 7-1 thrashing resulted. Mauleverer, whose trust in Wharton had been total, was sorely disillusioned. He resigned the captaincy; Bob Cherry, runner-up in the election, took his place. Wharton, uneasy in conscience, had to take a dressing-down from the friend he had used as a dupe. Ostracised by the Remove, Harry once again mounted the 'high horse'.

A clash with Cherry over games practice ended in blows. Wingate broke it up and warned Wharton about 'slacking'. Wharton, his temper out of control, insisted on 'finishing it' in the Rag. Bob gave him a much-needed hiding. Harry, never a particularly good loser, burned with resentment.

From this point, Wharton outdid the Bounder at his worst. A deliberate rag on Quelch humiliated the form-master in front of Dr Locke. Later, he refused to be caned by Quelch - it was 'unjust'. Sent to the Head, Harry absconded instead to the 'Cross Keys'. Mr Prout spotted him there and ended up in a brawl with Mr Cobb and his barman. Hauled before the Head, Wharton admitted that he had been 'blagging'. (It was not the downhill path now; more like the helter-skelter!)

Dr Locke, mindful of Harry's previous good record, gave him a chance to 'repent and reform'. One of the conditions was to apologise to Mr Quelch. Harry refused - so he collected a Head's flogging.

Another 'Cross Keys' episode followed. Wharton deliberately misled the spying Loder into believing he had gone there. Quelch had prefects watching the 'pub' all afternoon. When Wharton turned up he proved to the Head that he had been at Hawkscliff with Smithy and Redwing. More egg on Quelch's face!

Tagged 'the worst boy in the form', Wharton set out to deserve the title. He was caught at night out of bounds. Facing the sack, Harry broke out of 'punny' and tried to run away from school. Dr Locke, recognising desperation when he saw it, gave Wharton a 'pep talk' and put him on his honour to do better.

The shamefulness of his behaviour was at last brought home to Harry. Making up his mind to it, he set aside sully defiance in favour of regaining his former reputation. An uphill struggle followed; but the Co. came round; the hatchet was buried; and matters gradually returned to normal. Patient endurance had its effect on Mr Quelch, who eventually eased his severity. The self-effacing Bob Cherry resigned the captaincy so that Harry could resume the leadership.

This 'full circle' treatment is the only weak link of this magnificent series. Wharton was a brand to be reclaimed from the burning, but a complete restoration of reputation and

status was, frankly, a bit much. Mr Quelch had endured a great deal from him; Lord Mauleverer had been hurt and deceived; the Co. had received a lot of unkind, undeserved treatment. When Bob resigned the captaincy, common decency required that Harry should not resume it. A spell with Squiff or Toddy or Tom Brown in command would have been more beneficial for all concerned. Wharton's resumption of the role sowed the seeds for future troubles.

Of all the remaining series, three plunged Wharton into trouble - but of other people's making. Arthur Da Costa and Ralph Stacey came to Greyfriars with axes to grind involving Wharton's disgrace. Both succeeded, initially, but their villainy failed to overcome Harry's basic integrity. The 'Rebel' series brought Wharton much lower, mainly because Gerald Loder was a more determined opponent than either Da Costa or Stacey. Before considering these sagas, let's have a look at the "Second Downfall" series.

The difficulties which beset Harry in this series were largely of his own making. All his worst features surfaced early - jumping to conclusions; resenting people for well-meant assistance; refusing olive branches; nursing hurt pride; making hasty, ill-considered decisions - these are all there. By the time the misunderstandings were cleared up, Wharton had lost respect and status.

He started off by being high-handed. Bunter had 'borrowed' Harry's bike. Skinner annoyed him; so Wharton coolly 'borrowed' Skinner's. Then he was ragged by Ponsonby & Co. who severely damaged the cycle. Skinner, naturally, wanted the repairs paid for; Wharton's first reaction was that 'it was down to Ponsonby' - how could he, Harry, be held responsible? Form opinion was against him - reluctantly he wrote to his guardian for a fiver. (Under the surface there was always a good deal of the 'I'm irrefragable' about Wharton. One has the feeling that if he had grown up to follow a military career, he would have become an unpleasant martinet.)

Unfortunately, Colonel Wharton was in financial straits - the fiver would be difficult to find. Harry withdrew the request (his better nature to the fore) and decided to sell his own bike to 'raise the wind'. Bob Cherry auctioned it; Smithy and Lord Mauleverer vied in the bidding; the Bounder captured the bike for £18. Both bidders had the laudable intention of 'helping a lame dog', but Harry (who had not attended the auction) regarded the £18 as 'patronising charity'. He returned the money - not very graciously - and the Bounder was justifiably angry. Wharton's touchiness hereabouts showed up the greatest weakness in his character. Normally intelligent and kind-hearted, both qualities disappeared when his pride was ruffled. He needed the money; but it must not appear that he needed it. Much better to create annoyance all round than leave the impression that he required a helping hand. The bike was trundled off to Courtfield and sold to a dealer for just about the needed sum.

As if this problem was not enough to contend with, Harry had created another one for himself. Bunter, bargaining about, had accidentally knocked Colonel Wharton over, scattering the contents of his pocket-book. A page of a letter was not retrieved in the confusion. Harry found it after the Colonel had departed. It referred, in the Colonel's handwriting, to "an ungrateful nephew, a burden . . .". Wharton jumped to the conclusion that it referred to himself. ("Me! Me! Me!" again.) He then resentfully decided to reject his guardian, and 'make his own way'. He set out to gain a Founder's Scholarship, saddling himself with a lot of hard work for a doubtful outcome. More stress, more nursing of grievances, and not a thought as to whether the criticism could be true! If the Colonel did regard him as ungrateful (which he didn't), a boy of Wharton's intelligence might (one would think) have asked himself if he had been amiss in any way. But not Harry! How dare his uncle find fault with him? He was not going to put up with that. Does one detect a degree of pomposity in Wharton on occasions like these?

With these pressures on him, Harry had an attack of high-mindedness. Smithy was dropped from the Rookwood match, ostensibly for having played 'selfishly' in the previous

game at Redclyffe. (One is prompted to think, like Skinner, that this was a way of hitting back over the auction episode. Wharton on reflection, probably realised that he had snubbed Smith for 'doing good'. Perhaps his conscience felt better when he punished the Bounder for failing in 'team spirit'!)

Smithy's replacement was not a good old dependable, like Nugent or Redwing, but that shining light of reliability, Peter Hazeldene! Wharton would not face a charge of favouritism by picking his best pal, Nugent: he had to replace the undisciplined Vernon-Smith with the least reliable reserve of the lot. There's leadership and tact for you! (It's episodes like this that show Wharton to be far inferior as a captain to Tom Merry or Jimmy Silver.)

Greyfriars were beaten - of course. The usual inquest - Greyfriars, on the whole, never lost philosophically - resulted in Wharton resigning the captaincy. Guess who replaced him: Herbert Vernon-Smith! A feud had already developed; this aggravated it and they came to blows. Wharton beat Smithy - and animosity ruled.

Easter vacation arrived. Harry, still swotting for his scholarship, decided not to go home - much to his guardian's surprise and annoyance. Bunter, desperate for a holiday haven, tried his luck at Wharton Lodge. Faced by an angry Colonel Wharton, Bunter threw caution to the winds and actually lectured the amazed old soldier: "It won't do, sir! Leaving Wharton to fend for himself!" Exasperated, but mystified, the Colonel went into the matter, and a surly Harry was amazed to learn that Paul Tyrrell (Major Cherry's wastrel nephew) had been the subject of the offending letter. An embarrassing episode - for both Whartons.

One wonders why the Colonel did not confront his disdainful nephew earlier. Harry's very infrequent contacts with home had bordered on the downright insolent. Perhaps he was not the only member of the Wharton clan with over-developed pride and self-righteousness!

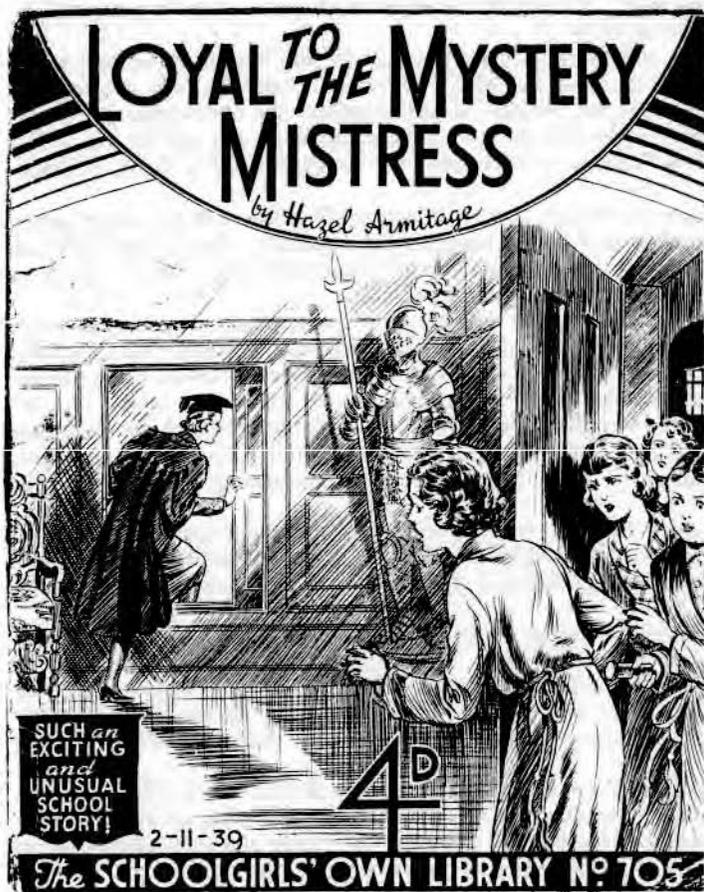
With home affairs back to normal, Harry was able to resume at Greyfriars in the summer term on more or less the old footing. Except that Smithy was still Captain of the Remove! A number of dramatic incidents occurred, causing the Bounder to lose support in the form and to end up in Quelch's bad books. The crash came - inevitably - and Smithy resigned the captaincy. Wharton soon regained his old position - perhaps a little wiser than before.

In both of these 'Downfall' series, Wharton's troubles arose from defects in his own character. A number of unpleasant traits came out. His treatment of his uncle left a lot to be desired in both series. Mr Quelch had to endure disrespect and disobedience to an inordinate extent in the first series; while if Harry had kept his pride and temper in check there would have been no falling out with his friends (No. 1) or the Bounder (No. 2). Added to all of this was his crafty manipulation of the trusting Lord Mauleverer; and the descent to gambling, smoking and breaking bounds.

Wharton emerged from No. 1 with his integrity badly impaired: in No. 2 he did play the game more - though his initial reaction to the 'Skinner's bike' problem was not particularly 'pukka'.

Both series showed the troubles that arise from jumping to hasty conclusions; being over-sensitive; and seeking to 'get one's own back' by misuse of power and position. Wharton's positive qualities - common-sense, courage, straight dealing etc. - seemed to be swamped in a tide of passionate self-righteousness. Harry may have learned to deal with Kipling's first impostor, 'Triumph'; but he failed to cope with the other one - 'Disaster'. Two fascinating series!

(The Da Costa, Rebel and Stacey series will be dealt with in Part III of this trilogy.)



My lifetime love affair with the *Schoolgirls' Own Library* began in 1969 when I was a teenager and read my first story, and from then on I was hooked.

Perhaps the love affair started when I was a child and Mum arranged to have *Schoolfriend* /*Girl's Crystal/June*, at various stages, delivered weekly, along with the morning paper. The weeks when these girls' papers were not delivered, I remember going into a deep rage and then depression. At that same time I was also into Enid Blyton's *Famous Five*. I remember getting that rush of adrenalin when playing with various friends and looking at their books, seeing that they had stories that

I had not read, and begging to be allowed to read them. Christmas was never Christmas unless I received the *School Friend Annual*, *Girl's Crystal* or *June Book*.

Anyway, years later, we come to 1969. I remember borrowing these little books, nine at a time, from a friend of Mum's who had a family several years older than me. They were in the No's 200. I especially loved the stories by Hazel Armitage, Anne Gilmore, Jane Preston, Sheila Austin, and the Co-Eds stories by Evelyn Day.

The first thing I'd do would be to look at the inside and back covers to relish the story lines and illustrations in forthcoming stories. Then, into the story that I had at hand. The story line got well under way by the first few pages, and by page 51, action was really hotting up. Of course, the temptation to look at the last couple of pages was overwhelming to see *Who was the enemy/Was it really that person?* Of course, it was safe to read all of page 64 to see the accused vindicated and brought to full glory but without ruining the story by finding out who the enemy was.

After this first supply dried up, interest gradually moved to other things but still always on the lookout for *SOLs* in op shops.

In about 1979, interest was fully renewed when I came upon a pile for sale in a second hand book shop. The adrenalin rush which followed this find, led to the realisation that I had an addiction, which prompted me to write to Fleetway Publications seeking more information. They informed me that no plans were afoot to re-publish, so the long search began. This search culminated in my advertising for these books.

During 1991, I was rewarded by an answer from Anne Devrell who had quite a large number to sell. I purchased these in two lots and then started on research into the history of the *SOL*. Imagine my shock when I found out that the authors were males! Over the years I had built an imaginary picture of what Jane Preston, Anne Gilmore, Sheila Austin etc. looked like and wondered if their children had any interest in the books.

Then the next realisation (that there was a first series) threw me into a spin and just made the addiction more acute. (By now I realised I had an addiction.) Tony (?) in NSW sold me my first copy of this first series.

Around this time I also started collecting the *Schoolgirls Own Annuals* (I have most of these now) and also possess three *School Friend Annuals* (1927, 1928 and 1929). The illustrations in these books are just superb, especially in the *School Friend Annuals*.

The recent articles in *SPCD* by Margery Woods regarding Cliff House, and Dawn Marler regarding *SGOL*, have prompted me to write an article as well, so here it is, albeit in dribs and drabs, perhaps!

Editor's Note: There will be more, from Dawn Marler next month, about the *SGOL*.

THE COLIN CREWE PERMANENT WANTS LIST: of boys' and girls' storypapers, comics, libraries and annuals. Both loose issues and bound volumes sought. I will pay good prices for quality items & collections. I support the Old Boys' Book Clubs & Collectors' Digest. I will keep your treasures circulating merrily around the members of our hobby circle.

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Conclusion: All My Own Work

SOLs often have 'scratches' and 'nicks' on the front pictures. I have had varied success with the use of felt-tip pens. Where the damage has been slight, the touching-up has been successful and the picture much improved. Where the covers have suffered greatly, I can only hope that anyone who saw them 'before' would say they looked much better 'after'.

Reds and blacks 'fill in' well but I find the blue borders hard to match.

Some of the magazines have punch holes where collectors have obviously kept them in ring binders. I confess to 'punching' a few precious *Magnets* in my youth. Nothing can be done to restore the lost fragments or wording in the centre pages but the holes can be filled. I use circular white pieces of paper from my large punch. I put a little paste round the edges and place and press in position with tweezers. This is fiddly and time-consuming but it works and, when bound, the repairs should not be noticeable.

Bound To Please

I am still experimenting with old books before I tackle *Holiday Annuals*. Readers will also notice that I have not mentioned Thomsons. These can be very difficult to repair. The old *Wizards* and *Rovers* have a strange folding which is glued and seems impossible to take apart without causing damage. Also, the paper can be very brittle. Of those I have repaired I have relied on pressing and then repairing the tears with tiny bits of tape as described.

So there it is. Fellow collectors may have other ideas, different advice. Some may say this is too desperate and it is better to leave the old papers tape-bound and ragged. I can well understand even the keenest collector not wishing to embark on this time-devouring task.

I am well satisfied that of the many, many papers I have restored their second condition is better than their first. Just smoothing out creases improves their appearance.

I certainly believe that the very least collectors should do is to remove rusting staples before they do more damage. The books can be kept in folders or bags.

Meanwhile, if anyone knows of a magic glue stain remover or a scientific paper tear joiner I will be delighted to hear about them.

WANTED: Howard Bakers, £4 d/w £7 slipcase.

W.E. Johns 1st editions, all magazines, *Modern Boys*, ephemera, books in d/w published by John Hamilton.

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As a boy he had voyaged among books, and they had given him a world where he could shape his career according to his whimsical fancy.

J. Buchan. *Huntingtower*.

Visualise if you will the young fellow of sixty or seventy years ago proceeding along the city or village street to his local newsagent with twopence clutched in his hand (that being perhaps the major part of his weekly stipend) wherewith to purchase his favourite weekly paper. It might be *Chums*, *Magnet*, the *Gem* or *Boys' Friend*. Any one of a dozen journals then extant for his delectation. He has a wide choice, most of them first class examples of boys' literature containing the writings of eminent authors in this field.

If it be *Chums* the reader will, most likely, be following an exciting pirate yarn by an expert in this particular genre - Samuel Walkey, and for additional enjoyment the chances are that it will be illustrated vividly by Paul Hardy. Nothing will be missing. Here he will find lonely, palm-girt islands (harbouring buried treasure of course), old charts, sea-stained through many vicissitudes, colourful and villainous pirates suitably equipped with cutlass and pistols (and emitting equally colourful sea-going language). There will be towering galleons, black, sinister and built for speed, and King's ships taut and smart. The former will have facilities for walking the plank and other similar pleasantries such as the rope's end. For the young hero come action, space, tropical seas and darting rapiers from the 'gentlemen' adventurers. Samuel Walkey, in this genre, usually left few 'stops' unpulled.

Perhaps our young reader will be waiting impatiently to resume the next instalment of a school story by S. Andrew Wood, another *Chums* stalwart? It might be "The Mutineers of St. Martins" in which the heroes experience all the thrills and excitement - and injustice - they could possibly desire. Here he will join them and participate in 'out of bounds' adventures after lights-out, usually in old deserted houses or ruined windmills (a particular penchant with this author). Rebellion against harsh authority; unprincipled and doubtful 'gentlemen' from the local village inn (an establishment with a somewhat evil reputation, bent on corrupting the fellows up at the school); inter-house rivalries. Few of the standard ingredients are missing and all are skilfully interwoven into really first-class stories.

Alfred Judd was always 'on tap' with his delightful and clever short stories, and the occasional serial, "Chums of Beechwood" and its companion yarn "The Amber Skull" being great favourites.

At a marginally more rarefied level our young friend will almost certainly examine the latest issue of the *Boy's Own Paper*. He will leave this more expensive monthly magazine to be purchased by his elder brother, who by virtue of seniority will be in a healthier pecuniary situation. But later, to be sure, he will be avidly following the current public school tales of Harold Avery and Kent Carr (Gertrude Kent Oliver) whose work is regarded quite justifiably as 'leading the field' in this particular genre.

Our young reader with this wide choice is indeed fortunate. Shakespeare tells us that "Memory is the warder of the brain". How true this is when we recall the wide choice of uniformly good papers available in those early days. It was far wider and more comprehensive than in later and, so it has been inferred, more progressive times. Also the content of papers served up today can in no respect be compared with the writings available to young readers all those decades ago.

It was a delightful experience to run one's eye over the neatly stacked, mint copies of the latest issues, and spot our own particular favourites. Seemingly small pleasures perhaps, yet it is true to say that youthful readers would not have forgone these pleasures

for a great deal. Many of those covers and stories have remained etched upon memory to this day.

Suddenly and devastatingly, out of the blue in 1940, came the harsh awakening. Overnight we were confronted with a vacuum. That such an important part of life (our favourite papers) could vanish so quickly and completely had never seemed possible. One can still recall, nearly sixty years on, the emotional impact of their demise.

We had complacently imagined that the *Magnet* and *Gem* were entities which were not answerable to the normal ravages of time. We could not conceive an existence that did not include Billy Bunter, Henry Samuel Quelch and the whole panoply of Greyfriars fellows.

1940 was, for us, a bitter dawning in more ways than could be imagined. It took some time for the unhappy fact to be completely assimilated. But the dear old companion papers had really folded their tents and passed into the 'things that were'. A way of life had ceased to be.

It has been wisely said that God gave us the faculty of memory that we might have roses in December. Equally wisely has it been said - *Bis pueri senes* - may it prove ever so.

My shelves are long, and wide, and deep
What splendid friends they hold,
Here Ballantyne and Henty sleep
With Judd and Avery bold.
The sweeping main with pirates grim,
The dear quiet fields of home,
On rainy days, where to begin?
With these I'm not alone.

COMPOSITION OF THE REMOVE

by Dave Marcus

In the post-war *Bunter Does His Best* (1953), there is a form election (Chapter 15). There are three boys away (Brown, Linley and Penfold), 23 voters, the two candidates, and Wharton who does not vote, making a total of 29.

The interesting thing about this book is that 29 boys are in fact mentioned in the story.

The story hinges around the selection for a football match against Courtfield. The initial team (Chapter 8) is Bull, Field, Todd, Russell, Morgan, Hazeldene, Nugent, Ogilvy, Redwing, Wharton and Hurree Singh.

The team is revised in Chapter 10, a further six are now mentioned as being in the team (Bolsover, Newland, Dutton, Wibley, Desmond and Mauleverer).

In Chapter 11, we learn that Elliot and Smith Minor are unavailable and Snoop and Skinner are not asked. Vernon-Smith is not selected and Cherry is injured. The final team now includes Bunter and Stott.

As already mentioned Brown, Linley and Penfold are away and Fish is mentioned in Chapter 17 making a total of 29.

However, in Chapter 11 we are told when Wharton is looking for recruits that "several others, probably not flattered by being called upon to fill up gaps at the last moment in a team booked for defeat, blankly refused". Who are these "several others"? Only Fish has not been mentioned at this point.

P.S. Do visit the London OBBC Web site at http://www.3.mistral.co.uk/d_marcus/
If you have any material that you would like to add to the site, please send it (in digital form only please, I do not have a scanner) to dmarcus@mistral.co.uk

Dominic Winter

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NEWS OF THE OLD BOYS BOOK CLUBS

LONDON OBBC

Members were treated to fine wines and a delicious salmon lunch at the Parsons household on Sunday May 17th, a glorious sunny day. Following a leisurely meal, Roy taxed our memories with a quiz which tested members' knowledge of old radio and television theme tunes. Then Bill Bradford took us on a stroll down Memory Lane, reminding us of a meeting from years past. Everyone present had a turn in the spotlight next as members had to speak on a hobby-related subject drawn out of the hat for a minute. For some members this was too long; others, however, had barely begun when their time was up! Finally, Roger Jenkins presented one of his legendary word-puzzles featuring Greyfriars celebrities. The next meeting will take place at Eric Lawrence's house in Wokingham on June 14th. See the newsletter for details.

Vic Pratt

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

For our April meeting we gathered at the Willingham village home of member Keith Hodkinson. The Portrayal of Prehistoric Monsters in the Boys' Papers and in the cinema was the afternoon's subject. After our usual short business meeting Keith, in a short introductory presentation, demonstrated the rather unexpected lack of these in the illustration of stories in the pre-war Boys' Papers. The adult science fiction genre created the best monsters: Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* along with works of H.G. Wells introduced the theme of prehistoric monsters in the late 19th century, then came the 1912 Strand Magazine story by Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle, *The Lost World*, which brought out the possibility of living dinosaurs in the present age. At this time the Boys' Papers were merely producing text parodies . . . One of the most outstanding was *Strang the Terrible*, a text serial illustrated by D.W. Watkins and originally published in mid-forties issues of the *Beano* - it was later reprinted in several other D.C. Thomson papers. To make up for the rather sad deficit of monster occurrences in the juvenile literary world, Keith introduced film excerpts which adequately demonstrated that, through clever use of special effects, time certainly didn't forget these creatures. We watched excerpts from the following films: 1919 *Ghost of Slumber Mountain*, 1925 *The Lost World*, 1933 *King Kong*, 1933 *Son of Kong*, 1940 *One Million Years BC*, 1966 *One Million Years BC* (Hammer remake), 1993 *Jurassic Park*.

Adrian Perkins

NORTHERN OBBC

We were very sad to hear of the death of Margaret Atkinson. Margaret was a stalwart member of our club who supported Keith very much in his hobby. She had a good knowledge of Greyfriars, and like Keith was a great one for quizzes and puzzles and had made contributions to such magazines as *The Puzzler*.

We had eleven members present on a very warm May evening. Joan reported on the excellent "William Meeting" held at St. Elphin's School in Derbyshire on 25th April. The Jennings Meeting planned for 20th June in Lewes appeared to be forming well and our Vice-President, Anthony Buckeridge, would be present - coincidentally it would be his 86th birthday on the very day of the meeting.

Joan read out a letter purporting to be from a "Colonel Biggott" of Boroughbridge, seemingly (unknown to us!) a member of our club, who regretted he could not attend the meeting that evening in person to present his paper. So Mark Caldicott took over and read "the paper" prepared by "Colonel Biggott" which made references to various Nelson Lee stories and Norman Conquest novels. This was, in fact, a superbly amusing item from Mark, which he had entitled "Political Incorrectness". Paula Johnson actually carried on the theme to some degree, by speaking about "Literary Lawyers". She and Chris Scholey are members of that particular profession and Paula tried to show us how solicitors are often depicted in fiction. She selected excerpts from different authors, including, of course, a helping of the lawyers in Frank Richards' stories. They were usually depicted as shifty, law-breaking people but Peter Todd, who was heading towards a career in law, was at least honest in his judgements. An excellent presentation from Paula.

Our June meetings will be a summer break and informal dinner on 13th June at Brigg Shots restaurant, central Leeds. Our July 11th meeting will have presentations from Chris Scholey and Geoffrey Good.

Johnny Bull Minor

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