STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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DOUBLE NUMBER
STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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As you will see, this is an unusual issue of the C.D., in fact two issues - March and April - combined. I've decided to produce this so that I can "catch up with myself"; otherwise I fear that further issues of the magazine would get behind schedule. This double number, hopefully, will give me the opportunity to return in May to the usual first-part-of-the-month publication date. Recent delays have, of course, been brought about because of the immense amount of work in connection with our removal.

We are getting more ordered here every day but there is still much to do. Happily, we (my husband and I and all our effects) are now BACK HOME, so my address is once again

46 OVERBURY AVENUE, BECKENHAM, KENT, BR3 6PY.

A few comments on this double number of the C.D.. Our striking cover is by Tony Glynn, a long-term subscriber and an enthusiast for the old papers and comics. His illustration is inspired by *Comic Cuts*, which many of us will remember with affection.

This issue of the C.D. carries two obituary tributes to Len Hawkey who supported our magazine for many years and contributed several very interesting articles about illustrators and their work. Although I never met Len, through his letters and telephone calls I felt that he was indeed a friend. He will be much missed and we send condolences to his family.

Because of the special nature of this C.D. it departs slightly from the customary format. I have been able to publish one or two longer than usual articles as well as most of our regular features. Many readers will welcome the return of *Nelson Lee and ESB*. In fact, at present this deals with Brooks as a contributor of Sexton Blake and not St. Frank's stories - but I am retaining *Nelson Lee* in the series heading so that we keep in mind that paper's place in the world of old boys' books. To endorse this I have included a short St. Frank's item by the late Bob Blythe who did so much to keep "alive" his favourite fictional school.

I send warmest Easter greetings to you all.

MARY CADOGAN

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YESTERDAY'S HEROES

Brian Doyle's subject in the latest article in his series is author Peter Cheyney and his creations Lemmy Caution and Slim Callaghan. Cheyney was Britain's biggest-selling popular thriller-writer when he died comparatively young in 1951, and his drab yet strangely-colourful twilight world of private-eyes, 'G-men', crooks of all types, glamorous women, double-crosses and crime, set in night-clubs, gambling-joints and bars, in London's Mayfair and Soho, and New York's darker places, fascinated the reading public - for a few years, anyway . . . .

Peter Cheyney knew at least one of the worlds he wrote about; the other one he imagined, but fooled everyone into believing that he did know it personally. Callaghan's world he had lived in; Caution's world was in his head.

Cheyney wrote prolifically of the chilling, twilight, often blood-red, half-world of double-crossing dames, grubby private detectives and American 'G-men', sordid swindlers, fake-forgers, phoney heiresses, conniving con-men (and women), muscle-bound mobsters, jewel-snatchers, thieving thugs, crooked cops, shady lawyers, gun-molls, orchidaceous blondes, midnight brunettes, red-hot red-heads, peroxided popsies, crafty killers, vicious wielders of knife, gun and blunt instruments of every kind, and criminals of all sorts and sizes - small-time, big-time, high-time and good-time (and you could bet that they'd all **done** time at some time in their corrupt and corrupting careers).

There was plenty of violence in Cheyney's worlds but, despite all the beautiful, classy ladies and cheap curvaceous dames, there was virtually no sex. Cheyney always steered well clear of the s-word and the bedroom doors remained firmly closed. There was perhaps a kiss and embrace or two and a promise or three, but that was it. It was Cheyney's choice, but remember he did nearly all his writing between 1936 and 1951, when the moral climate was like the English weather, usually damp and dull and chilly. When "No sex, please, we're British" was the order of the day (although the British James Hadley Chase started to pave the way to the bedroom with his *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* in 1939, and Mickey Spillane's American "Mike Hammer", and others, continued the trend later).

Cheyney wrote about the law and the lawless, the cops and 'tecs and crooks in their worst aspects (the good, the bad and the ugly' as a certain famous Western movie had it) and even his so-called 'heroes' were usually 'anti-heroes'. His 'good guys' weren't noticeably good - they were often unheroic, unfriendly and untrustworthy; they could, and would, double-cross and betray their clients at the drop of a battered fedora or trilby, or, more likely, a crisp fiver, or ten-dollar bill, or three.

Cheyney usually gave his thrillers provocative titles such as *I'll Say She Does; Dames Don't Care; Ladies Won't Wait; Your Deal, My Lovely; Can Ladies Kill?* and *Dangerous Curves*. And it all seemed to work, because Peter Cheyney was the biggest best-selling author of thrillers from the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s. Servicemen during World War Two especially loved his books and, as somebody once said (possibly Cheyney himself!) "There's a Cheyney in every kit-bag!" There was very probably a Chase, a Charteris, a Berkeley Gray and a Hank Janson or two as well, but Cheyney certainly seemed to out-sell them all.

Cheyney's characters often existed in London, but not the London of Tooting, or Peckham, or Camberwell, or Putney; it was much more likely to be the London of Mayfair,

or Knightsbridge, or Belgravia, or Chelsea or, at the other end of the spectrum, of Soho, or occasionally, of the East End. The West End was really Peter Cheyney's London, especially at night over cocktails or dinner or the gaming-tables, in night-clubs, bars, casinos and restaurants. It was at a time, after dark, when crook met crook, crook met woman, and under-cover detective or 'private eye' met them all. when false flirtations were fostered, when promises were made only to be broken, when 'brief encounters' were the norm and friendships non-existent, when deals were done. As that great American writer, Damon Runyon put it (and it also became a memorable song in *Guys and Dolls*, the musical based on some of his stories): "My time of day is the dark time - a couple of deals before dawn . . ."

If you were a Peter Cheyney hero (or what passed for one) you spent much of your time in a dinner-jacket and made-to-measure shoes and a tan and you looked good and as near handsome and 'tough' as you could manage on the money. If you were a Peter Cheyney heroine, you existed (after seven in the evening anyway) in designer evening or cocktail dresses, perfect hair-styles, elegant high-heeled shoes, flawless make-up (the eye make-up had to be especially perfect) - and not forgetting an expensive jewel or two, or even three if it was a special occasion. A tiny but exquisite tiara might be the perfect gilt on the gingerbread (especially if you were a red-head . . . .) Cheyney, by the way, invariably described his women in great and fascinating detail, from top to toe, and really made them something special, even throwing in the odd fashion hint or two.

If you were a Peter Cheyney hero you also behaved with some style. One of his characters wraps a bunch of violets in four £5 notes (the old, large white ones, of course - it would have to be a mere button-hole to do that with today's fivers) and presents it to his lady-companion with the words: "That should take care of the new frock . . . ." (Sadly, we're not told exactly what happened to the old frock . . . . !)

Cheyney wrote in the 'tough' style of the American 'hard-boiled' school, especially in his 'Lemmy Caution' stories - Dashiell Hammett (*The Maltese Falcon, The Glass Key, The Thin Man,* the Sam Spade stories) was one of his idols and a major influence in his writing, together, later, with Raymond Chandler and bits of Hemingway, Faulkner and James M. Cain in there somewhere. It's interesting to note that Chandler (creator of private eye Philip Marlowe) didn't start to write detective fiction until he was 45 and introduced Marlowe into his first successful book *The Big Sleep* when he was over 50, while Cheyney began to write his own detective stories (or more accurately thrillers) when he was 40.

Cheyney tried to make 'pulp fiction' - the usually bad, tacky and sensationalist writing to be found in innumerable cheap American 'dime' magazines with lurid covers - more respectable and to cloak its tawdriness in hard covers. But, so far as Lemmy Caution and his style went, it was probably a case of 'the Emperor's new clothes' - poor writing remains poor writing no matter how you dress it up. And Cheyney's Cautionary Tales - told in the present tense and first person in 'sub-Runyonese American gangster style' (though the 'hero' was supposed to be a 'good guy', in fact a 'G-man' or 'Government-man' working for the FBI) - were often painful to read and reminded this reader, at least, of a bad parody that didn't come off. But before I write about Caution and Callaghan and the rest, let's glance at Cheyney's own life and career . . . .

It often rivals those of many of his characters, though he occasionally 'stretched' the facts of his early life, so don't believe everything you may read in his *Who's Who* entry . . .

Poster for *Meet Mr Callaghan* at the Garrick Theatre, London, 1952. Slim Callaghan was played by Terence de Marney and the play was directed by his brother, Derrick, who became the screen Callaghan in 1954

PETER CHEYNEY

EXIT ALONZO!

With a bride on his arm Alonzo MacTavish says goodbye tonight at 9.15, when you will hear how he trumped Detective-Inspector Gringall's ace.

'AGAIN CALLAGHAN'

The best laid schemes are apt to go astray when Slim Callaghan gets interested. There was a double-twist to the case of Mrs. Gervase's necklace as you will hear this evening at 7.10 (Forces).

(Interested readers will find most of the facts in Michael Harrison's biography *Peter Cheyney: Prince of Hokum*, published in 1954 by Neville, Spearman, London.)

Reginald Southouse (he later added Peter Evelyn) Cheyney was born on February 22nd, 1896, in Whitechapel High Street, in the East End of London (not in County Clare, Ireland, as he sometimes stated!) of Irish descent and in poor circumstances. His father was a fishmonger (who also ran a cockles, whelks and winkles stall in an outdoor market) and his mother was a corset-maker. Both were Cockneys and young Cheyney was one too and was also known as 'Reggie' throughout his early life. He was educated at Whitechapel School, Hounslow College, the Mercers' School and Clark's Commercial College in Chancery Lane, London (though this became 'London University' in later 'biographies').

At 16 he became an office junior in a solicitor's office in Cannon Street, London (this became 'law clerk' later!); some accounts say that he was destined for 'a career in the Law' but, in reality, he became bored with his routine office chores and left after about a year to write material for various music-hall entertainers he had met, and also to work as a small-time actor and singer himself.

Who's Who states that Cheyney had been 'a professional writer since 1910' (i.e. when he was only 14). What actually happened was that, at that age, he was paid half-a-guinea (52p) for a short story called *Tomorrow* which he had submitted to a boys' paper. The story goes that Cheyney was so irked that it wasn't a full golden guinea that he marched into the editor's office and demanded full payment. He so disarmed the great man with his cheek that he duly received his 'pound-and-a-bob' forthwith.

Cheyney was apparently a keen and regular reader of such boys' papers as *The Magnet, The Gem, Chums, Captain* and *Boys' Own Paper* in his youth, but his top favourites were the somewhat exotic and eccentric detective Dixon Brett, and S. Clark Hook's turbulent trio, Jack, Sam and Pete, whose adventures ran in *The Marvel*.

His first real writing break came when he was 17 and began contributing material to the acts of such busy and popular stage artistes as Bransby Williams (Cheyney's monologue 'The Last Bottle' was a staple part of his act for a long time), George Carney and Albert Whelan - among the most popular performers of their time. Cheyney wrote monologues, songs, sketches and 'patter' for several other music-hall artistes of the period (around 1912-13) too. He occasionally sang his own songs as well and eventually, through the contacts he had made, appeared in 'bit parts' in plays and shows. He appeared in both general and Shakespearean repertory and in such London productions as 'Everyman', produced by and starring Sir John Martin-Harvey at the Garrick Theatre in 1923, and in other productions. But he made little or no impact as an actor.

During the First World War, Cheyney served with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and rose from Private to Lieutenant. He was badly wounded at the second Battle of the Somme in 1916 and sent back to Britain, where he spent the rest of the war in a Staff position in Nottingham. He was demobbed in 1919. During this period he published two small books of poems: *Poems of Love and War* (1916) and *To Corona, and Other Poems* (1917). It might also be mentioned here that, untypically perhaps, he edited the *St. John Ambulance Gazette* from 1928-43 - and received the Order of St. John for his services to this worthy organisation. He also served as a Special Constable with the Metropolitan Police, 1927-36. And, incidentally, with the Home Guard during World War Two . . . .

In 1926 he founded and directed the Editorial and Literary Services Agency. He and his staff researched, wrote and sold stories and features to newspapers and magazines throughout Britain and overseas. His agency was extremely successful and sold nearly 800 press features in its first year alone. Cheyney specialised in writing about real-life crime and criminals and did his own 'research' by hanging around London night-clubs, bars and gambling 'joints', and getting to know their *habitués* and what they got up to. At one time he was a member of nearly 100 so-called night-clubs, mostly in Mayfair and Soho. He gleaned a lot - and wrote a lot about what he had gleaned. Cheyney made the old saying 'making crime pay' do just that, so far as he was concerned (and it also became the title of one of his books!). He also wrote a few short stories and even broadcast regularly from the BBC's first radio station '2LO' from Savoy Hill, London, as part of a quartet of entertainers called 'The Shadow Folk'. He never stopped. Indeed, he lived to write, and wrote to live.

In the late 1920s, Cheyney came to know a writer named Gerald Verner (well known in the field of Sexton Blake authors under the name 'Donald Stuart', as well as for many fine detective stories under his own name) who was then writing for the *Union Jack* and the *Sexton Blake Library*. He told Verner that he was writing a Blake yarn and asked him if he would be good enough to show it to H. W. Twyman, the Editor of the *Union Jack*. Verner obligingly did so, but Twyman turned Cheyney's story down flat! That was the beginning and end of Cheyney's career as a Blake writer. Except . . . .

Except that Cheyney then put an idea up to Twyman that he should contribute a regular feature called 'Tinker's Notebook' to the *Union Jack*, in which Tinker, Blake's young assistant, would supposedly discuss modern police and detective methods, famous criminal cases, and so on, as well as recalling some of his 'Guv'nor's' own cases and adventures, as illustrations and examples. Twyman liked the idea and agreed, and Cheyney wrote the feature in collaboration with an ex-Scotland Yard Detective-Inspector named Harold Brust; it began in 1927 (in *Union Jack* No. 1216) and was quite successful, but Cheyney's connection with it ended around 18 months later (in *Union Jack* No. 1288), though the feature continued, written by other hands. Later Cheyney 'ghosted' a popular book of reminiscences by Brust called *I Guarded Kings* (1935), followed by a sequel two years later.

Peter Cheyney had been a keen Sexton Blake reader, by the way, and had taken the *Union Jack* since his schooldays. Later he read *The Thriller* and countless detective and mystery stories in book-form. He liked to keep up with current trends and tastes in the genre, little realising that he would be creating a sub-branch of this particular genre himself before long . . . .

Friends and colleagues and fellow-journalists (and Cheyney was News Editor of the *Sunday Graphic* newspaper, 1933-34, so now had numerous examples of all three in Fleet Street) recalled that he often adopted a pseudo-American-gangster way of talking when drinking and chatting with them, and also talking about himself in the third person: "Boy, time's money, I'm busy, I gotta eat, I gotta drink, so what's in it for Cheyney? Say, did I tell ya, Cheyney saw this doll and boys was she sumpin' - tell me another, buster - she was more than somewhat!"

Cheyney decided to write a thriller in this rather Damon Runyonesque vernacular and for his odd-ball 'hero' he hit on the name Lemmy Caution, who was a tough American 'G-

Man' (or 'Government-Man' or FBI Agent). The name derived from his opening gambit when questioning a suspect: "Let me caution [you] - Lemme Caution . . . ." Cheyney once recalled that he remembered the name from an old *Union Jack* serial he had read in the 1920s, and apparently just dredged it up from his subconscious when he was trying to think up a name for his tough hero.

Peter Cheyney's first novel *This Man Is Dangerous* was published by Collins (who gave him an advance of £100) in 1936, and it introduced Lemmy Caution to an unsuspecting and probably ill-prepared reading public. Sales were slow to begin with but it was so unusual (to the British public anyway) that it became a talking-point and sold and sold until it became a best-seller, with the public clamouring for more. Cheyney had arrived!

To give you a flavour of Caution's (and Cheyney's) style (all the Caution tales are told by him in the first person and present tense and very much in character), this is the opening of a story called *They Had It Comin'*:

> It is eight o'clock when I blow inta Filipino's joint an' I see Rosie Kells sittin' in the corner. I reckon that dame woulda carried a gun for Satan if he'd paid her enough dough. "Look, Rosie" I tell her, "I am very interested in some guys who have shot a mail carrier on the East State Highway last week. I reckon this job was pulled by Gabba Tirla an' that side-stepper of his, Mugs Eagles. I also reckon that you was around somewhere at the time." She looks at me an' her eyes are sorta pathetic.

The story ends with several dead bodies lyin' around and Lemmy sayin' to Rosie: "Well, they had it comin'. I guess **you** got it comin' too, honey . . . ."

It's a style combining slang and wisecracks and semi-illiteracy (not to mention bad punctuation) that you either like or hate. The American writer Damon Runyon got away with it because he practically invented it (on paper, anyway) and it was popularised in the 1950s especially by the musical show and film *Guys and Dolls* which was based on his writings and characters. Cheyney's crook-speak (and remember, if you will, that Caution is a 'G-Man' or cop!) is ersatz and the spuriousness, as Hurree Jamset Ram Singh of Greyfriars might say, is terrific. Cheyney's fake Runyonese was more Guyed than Dolled (though there were plenty of the latter around too!) Lemmy Caution himself was a tough, hard-boiled, two-fisted, rye whiskey-drinking and violent New York lawman who didn't like too many people including himself. In truth he was a grubby, nasty, vicious little man who made Lieutenant Columbo seem like a sophisticated, well-mannered, articulate, snappily-dressed man-about-town. In his debut novel *This Man Is Dangerous* the story opens in London, but Lemmy, thankfully, doesn't become 'Lumme' Caution . . . .

The Caution stories use more slang than any other thriller yarns I have ever read, I think. The English language takes a back seat while the American slanguage takes over. When someone shoots a gun in one of them (a not infrequent event) you almost expect the shooter to shout: "Slang - you're dead". Cheyney was obviously an adherent of the late American Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Carl Sandburg, who wrote: "Slang is a language that rolls up its sleeves, spits on its hands and goes to work".

Peter Cheyney followed his first novel with a trio of other Lemmy Caution books, all published within a year (1937): *Poison Ivy, Dames Don't Care* and *Can Ladies Kill?* Also

in that same year *Poison Ivy* was serialised in *Detective Weekly* (beginning in issue No. 216 on April 10, 1937) and *Dames Don't Care* was serialised in *The Thriller* (beginning on July 31, 1937).

Although he wrote more Caution books, in 1938 Cheyney decided to create a brand-new character and his name was Slim Callaghan, who made his bow in *The Urgent Hangman*. And this time Cheyney would write about an English 'hero' based in London and one who would speak English. (In case I omitted to mention it, Cheyney had never been to America or met any real-life 'G-Men' like Mr Caution or met anyone who talked remotely like him. Caution and his sleazy world were all in Cheyney's fervently-imaginative head. Callaghan was different. Cheyney had met him. Or people like him.)

Callaghan was 'Sam Spade Meets Philip Marlowe' (except that Marlowe hadn't been created just yet!). Callaghan was a wisecracking but often dour, chain-smoking, whiskey-drinking, quick-witted and charming-when-he-wanted-to-be English private detective who usually worked in London's club-land, gang-land and girl-land and who was a dab-hand at chicanery and shady investigations.

As Cheyney described Callaghan in a subsequent novel *Dangerous Curves* in 1939: "Callaghan was 5 feet 10 inches high; his shoulders were broad, descending to a thin waist and narrow hips. His arms were long; his face was thin with high cheekbones, a decided jaw, ears that lay flat against his head. His eyes were of a peculiar blue, his hair black and unruly, and women liked the shape of his mouth. Looking at him, one got an impression of utter ruthlessness and a cynical humour."

Named Rupert Patrick Callaghan but always known as Slim, he is a seedy, rather scruffy cigarette-ridden (all Cheyney's 'heroes' are heavy smokers as he was himself) private investigator, based in a 4th floor office off Chancery Lane in London. He has a sexy, curvaceous, red-headed secretary named Effie Perkins who, despite her flip, brittle shell, probably harbours love and desire (both unrequited) for her uncaring boss who ignores her most obvious assets but notices her efficiency (or lack of it).

In due course, Callaghan moves up in the world and acquires luxurious offices and a flat in London's Berkeley Square, a Jaguar, good clothes and a Canadian assistant with the unfortunate name of Windy Nickolls (though he retains the faithful Effie too). His weaknesses remain the same: smoking, women, rye whiskey and money. If the women are rich, as well as attractive, and also smoke and drink, all the better. As some might say, that's all private-eye-wash . . . .

The opening of the very first Slim Callaghan novel ran: "Callaghan turned the corner into Chancery Lane. A gust of cold wind met him, blowing back the flaps of his not-so-clean raincoat, sending the rain through his threadbare trouser-legs. He was five feet ten and thin. He had sevenpence-halfpenny and a heavy smoker's cough. His arms were a little too long for his height and his face was surprising. It was the sort of face that you looked at twice in case you'd been mistaken the first time."

Another popular Cheyney character was one Alonzo MacTavish, a charming, handsome young criminal known as 'the Kid Glove Crook', Europe's premiere remover of considered trifles. He was an immaculately-dressed crook in the tradition of Raffles and Blackshirt and he stole only from those who could afford it. He wore a monocle and sometimes behaved like a character from Wodehouse. He featured in three books of short stories: *The Adventures of Alonzo MacTavish, Alonzo MacTavish Again* and *The Murder*

of Alonzo, all published in 1943. Which brings us to a cosy little theory of mine: Peter Cheyney was a keen reader of *The Magnet* in his youth, as I've mentioned. Alonzo Todd, brother of Peter and well-known resident and pupil of Greyfriars School, made his bow in the pages of that paper in 1910, when Cheyney was 14 and quite possibly still reading it. Did he remember that Alonzo with affection and later use his first name in creating Alonzo MacTavish? After all, Alonzo is hardly a commonplace name! And, curiously enough, the three Alonzo books were published by a company named Todd and Co. of London . . . . My case rests, m'lud, as brother Peter Todd might have said . . . . !

Peter Cheyney wrote 10 Lemmy Caution novels, 7 Slim Callaghan novels, 7 'Dark' novels, 3 Johnny Vallon novels, 6 other novels, 33 collections of short stories, and 6 other books - a grand total of 71 books (plus radio plays and series, and hundreds of other stories and articles). He was known as a prolific hard-worker. By 1944 his sales were 1½ million copies a year. At his peak he sold over 300,000 copies a year in the USA alone, and no less than 900,000 a year in France, where he was incredibly popular. And in 1947 he was fanfared as "the only author with a certified million copies a year sold in the British Empire".

The 'Dark' series of seven novels referred to above, by the way, all had the word 'dark' in the title and were World War Two spy and espionage stories; Cheyney considered them his best work - and the great Raymond Chandler was once quoted as saying he thought *Dark Duet* was 'damn good', which pleased Cheyney greatly.

Despite his success, Peter Cheyney wasn't, in my humble opinion, a particularly good writer; he was competent and racy, but derivative. And he had one overriding and highly irritating habit which tended to put me , and no doubt many other readers, off. This was the use of the words 'grin' or 'grinned' or 'grinning'. Everyone does it to excess and it's difficult to find one page without the appearance of the words. People 'grin' all the time. "He grinned . . . she grinned; he was grinning as he . . .". On just one page of *Dangerous Curves*, for example, there occur: "Callaghan grinned", "Callaghan was grinning like a devil", "he grinned" and "he stood there . . . still grinning". Anyway, enough of all that, said Doyle, with a faint grin.

Also people are forever lighting up cigarettes and blowing smoke everywhere. "He lit a cigarette", "she lit his cigarette", "he carefully selected a cigarette from his silver cigarette case", "he lit her cigarette and then his own", and so on. Sometimes Cheyney actually pulls off 'the double': "he grinned as he lit her cigarette". The two films featuring Callaghan are the same - most of the action takes place in a perpetual haze of cigarette smoke.

It should perhaps be mentioned that Cheyney was an early and active supporter of Sir Oswald Mosley's Fascists in the 1930s. He was a Steward at meetings of Mosley's 'New Party', for example. But he seems to have dropped out by the time the New Party had become the British Union of Fascists. So it appears that he was an early Mosleyite but gave up his active support in later years.

Peter Cheyney was a keen fencer and studied and trained for the sport for many years. He was a founder-member of the Salle Paul, London's leading fencing club, and won the club's épée championship in 1932 and 1935, also representing England against Scotland in 1938. He was also an expert exponent of judo. He was by all accounts a marvellous raconteur and was twice-married. A big-built 6'2" hunk of a man, he was balding, well-

dressed, often wore a monocle and a beret, a red carnation, a bow-tie and a thin moustache. He smoked heavily (like all his fictional characters) and often used a cigarette-holder. He liked a drink now and again too.

In the theatre, Peter Cheyney scored one big hit and one minor miss. *Meet Mr. Callaghan*, a comedy-thriller adapted by Cheyney's old friend Gerald Verner from Cheyney's novel *The Urgent Hangman*, opened at London's Garrick Theatre in May 1952, and ran for nearly a year. Callaghan was played by Terence de Marney (and when he took a break or holiday his well-known brother, Derrick de Marney, took over the role). Effie the secretary was played by Lisbeth Kearns, and also in the cast were Harriette Johns, Jack Allen, John Longden (veteran of many British films) and Frank Sieman. The play was co-presented and directed by Derrick de Marney. There was a musical theme composed by Eric Spear (who wrote many TV and radio themes, including the one for *Coronation Street*) which soared to the 'Top of the Pops' both in Britain and America; indeed, the tune was so catchy that I can still hum it myself to this day. Although the play was a big hit with the public, the critics weren't so keen. *Theatre World Magazine* said, in July 1952: "A tussle of words punctuated by endless lighting of cigarettes . . . . a 'whodunit' without action . . . . Chicago-type thuggery in Chancery Lane . . . ."

Dangerous Curves, a sequel to *Meet Mr. Callaghan* (and that's how it was advertised), adapted by Gerald Verner from Cheyney's novel, opened at the Garrick Theatre, London, in April 1953, following a provincial tour. Slim Callaghan was again portrayed by Terence de Marney, with Effie the secretary (now mysteriously renamed Eve Thompson) played by Beryl Machin, and others in the cast included Cal McCord, Cecile Chevreau, Nicolette Bernard and Shaw Taylor (famous years later for TV's *Police Five*). This time it was presented and produced by Terence de M. with brother Derrick nowhere to be seen. It was not a success and Mr Callaghan appeared to have outstayed his welcome with the London theatregoing public. The play received, by the way, the strange and dubious 'honour' of a 'revised edition' production (same theatre, same cast) which opened in June 1953. But apparently, that didn't last for long either . . . . !

There were many Cheyney films, but I haven't the space to write about them in much detail. There was *Uneasy Terms* starring Michael Rennie as Callaghan in 1948, and *Meet Mr. Callaghan*, the screen version of the play, in 1954, with our old friend Derrick de Marney repeating his part-time stage job as Slim. I saw this on TV a few years ago and the entire action took place in a haze of cigarette smoke. Whole scenes would grind to a halt as characters passed cigarettes around and lit them for each other before puffing away furiously. They weren't so much actors in it as Players . . . .

There were also nine or more French films made about Caution and Callaghan from 1952 onwards. The tough American actor Eddie Constantine seemed to base his entire movie career on playing Lemmy Caution in French pictures, making his debut as the character in *La Mome Vert-de-Gris* (prosaically translated as 'Gun-Moll') in 1953, and taking Caution to the peak of his cinematic career in Jean-Luc Godard's acclaimed and now-classic film *Alphaville* in 1965 when the movie won the 'Best Film' Award at the Berlin Film Festival.

The other best-known film from a Cheyney book was *Diplomatic Courier*, an American production made in 1952 and based on the novel *Sinister Errand*. It starred Tyrone Power, Patricia Neal, Karl Malden and Lee Marvin.

There were at least seven BBC radio series based on Cheyney characters, including Caution, Callaghan and MacTavish, between 1939 and 1945. The actor who played Callaghan most was Ralph Truman.

Peter Cheyney died after a long illness at his home in Belgravia, London, on June 26th 1951, at the age of 55, just after he had been dictating the synopsis for a new Slim Callaghan novel. His last book, *Velvet Johnnie,* was published posthumously in 1952. He left nearly £53,000 - a tidy sum in those days.

As Cheyney might well have murmured at the end, with his well-known ironic sense of humour, and in the words of the title of one of his books: *"You Can Call It A Day"* . . . .

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PREP. FINISHED, NO COKER AND TWO MUGS OF COCOA

by Bob Whiter

Horace Coker of the Fifth Form hurled open the door of his study, and strode triumphantly into the room. There was a smile of great satisfaction on his rugged face. His study-mates Potter and Greene were busy sorting out their books, getting ready for the evening's preparation.

"Have I ever told you two that I have a short way with fags?" he grinned.

Potter looked at Greene. "Well, er, yes, a few times", he murmured, venturing a wink at his friend. Unfortunately the beefy senior caught Potter's wink. He frowned darkly. "If you two fatheads don't think I can control cheeky fags . . ." he started to say. Greene hastily interjected. "I'm sure Potter didn't mean anything of the sort, we know how good you are at it". Which, considering how Coker's encounters with the juniors usually ended, was straining the bounds of veracity more than a little.

Fortunately, it was always easy to pull the great Horace's leg and his face regained its previous happy expression. "I've just knocked Skinner and Snoop's heads together", he announced with great relish. "Those two cheeky fags had strung a cord between the two elms near the tuck shop, and I came a purler!" Coker paused to rub his rather prominent nose, which, now that Potter and Greene took a second look, resembled Marion's, which in Shakespeare's poem was stated to be 'red and raw'. "I say old chap, hadn't you better bathe it?" ventured Greene. "I would if I were you" added his study-mate. Both seniors were anxious to get started on their preparation. Greene had just received some special cocoa from home. They both intended to sample some, after they had finished preparing the passage they probably would be called on to construe the next day. That this would be hardly practical if the third occupant of the study started one of his jawbone solos, they knew from past experience.

Before Coker could resume his account of his masterly handling of the two Removites, Trotter the house page put his head around the door, and seeing Coker, he addressed him, saying: "Master Coker, sir - you're wanted in Mr. Prout's study - he said it was urgent, sir - I think it's a gentleman on the phone from your home". Coker's face paled. Home meant, apart from his parents, also his Aunt Judy, who had the softest place in his sentimental heart. Without another word Coker rushed out of the study, almost knocking Trotter over.

The echo of his footsteps floated back as he raced for the stairs. "Any idea who was on the line, kid?" Potter asked Trotter.
"I think Mr. Prout said it was Mr. Coker's Uncle Henry."

The two seniors exchanged significant looks. "Poor old Coker", commiserated Greene, knowing that unless she was indisposed Aunt Judy herself would have called.
"Well, there's nothing we can do old man," said Potter, "we might as well get on with our prep". The two so-called friends of the great Horace industriously tackled the subject of the morrow's lesson.

At approximately ten minutes past eight, Greene with a yawn pitched his books into the corner. Sorting out the tin of cocoa, he proceeded to brew a couple of mugs of that refreshing beverage. Potter was just finishing his prep when his study-mate placed the steaming mugs on the table. Resuming his seat, Greene looked at Potter and lifted his mug.
"Well, whatever was the matter, and I'm really sorry for that silly chump, it's still nice to enjoy a quiet moment without his jaw."
"You are so right, Greene, old man." And the two quite unfeeling seniors sat and with smiling faces enjoyed the hot cocoa, which because of the inclement weather was both grateful and comforting.

* * * * *

In the meantime Coker had reached Mr. Prout's study in record time. Without knocking he burst into his form master's room, his face bearing a very worried look. Mr. Prout took one look and without speaking handed him the telephone. Normally a talkative gentleman, Prout showed exceptional tact and left the study, closing the door quietly behind him.

"Hello?" Coker spoke into the instrument, his voice lacking its usual timbre.
"Is that you, Horace?" questioned a husky voice. "It's your aunt, my boy. I'm afraid she's very sick and keeps asking for you. Please come home immediately!" Coker was too upset to comment on his uncle's husky tones, answering at once: "I'll catch the next train, Uncle", and without waiting for an answer he jammed the receiver back on its cradle and flew out of the study into the passage, almost bumping into his form master, who was in conversation with Mr. Quelch.

The Remove master had returned earlier than expected from his visit to the Reverend Lambe. Inclement weather had set in and a violent flurry of snow had driven Mr. Quelch back to the school. Having divested himself of his damp coat and hat in the school lobby he was anxious to seek the warmth of his study fire. A lion in his path had occurred in the shape of the Fifth Form master, Mr. Paul Prout.

Both stopped their conversation, albeit a one-sided one. "Ah, Coker my boy, not bad news I trust . . ." Prout started to say in his rich fruity voice. Coker didn't bother to answer the question, only saying "I have to go home right away, sir." Prout waved a plump hand. "I fully understand, my boy, go at once. I will acquaint the Headmaster with the necessity of your immediate departure from the school." Coker hardly heard; he was already heading for the dormitory to pack a bag. Five minutes later, warmly clad in overcoat, scarf and cap, and carrying a bag, he was heading for the gates.

Mr. Prout had already apprised Dr. Locke of the situation and the good doctor had in turn instructed his chauffeur to drive the Fifth Former to Friardale station. Timing it just right, Coker was glad to find the Head's car waiting at the gates for him . . . .

"Sorry, sir, you've just missed the 7.15. There's another in half an hour" informed the station master, and seeing the Fifth Former's harassed face and remembering the many tips the open-handed Horace had bestowed, he welcomed him into his warm and cosy office to wait for the next train . . . .

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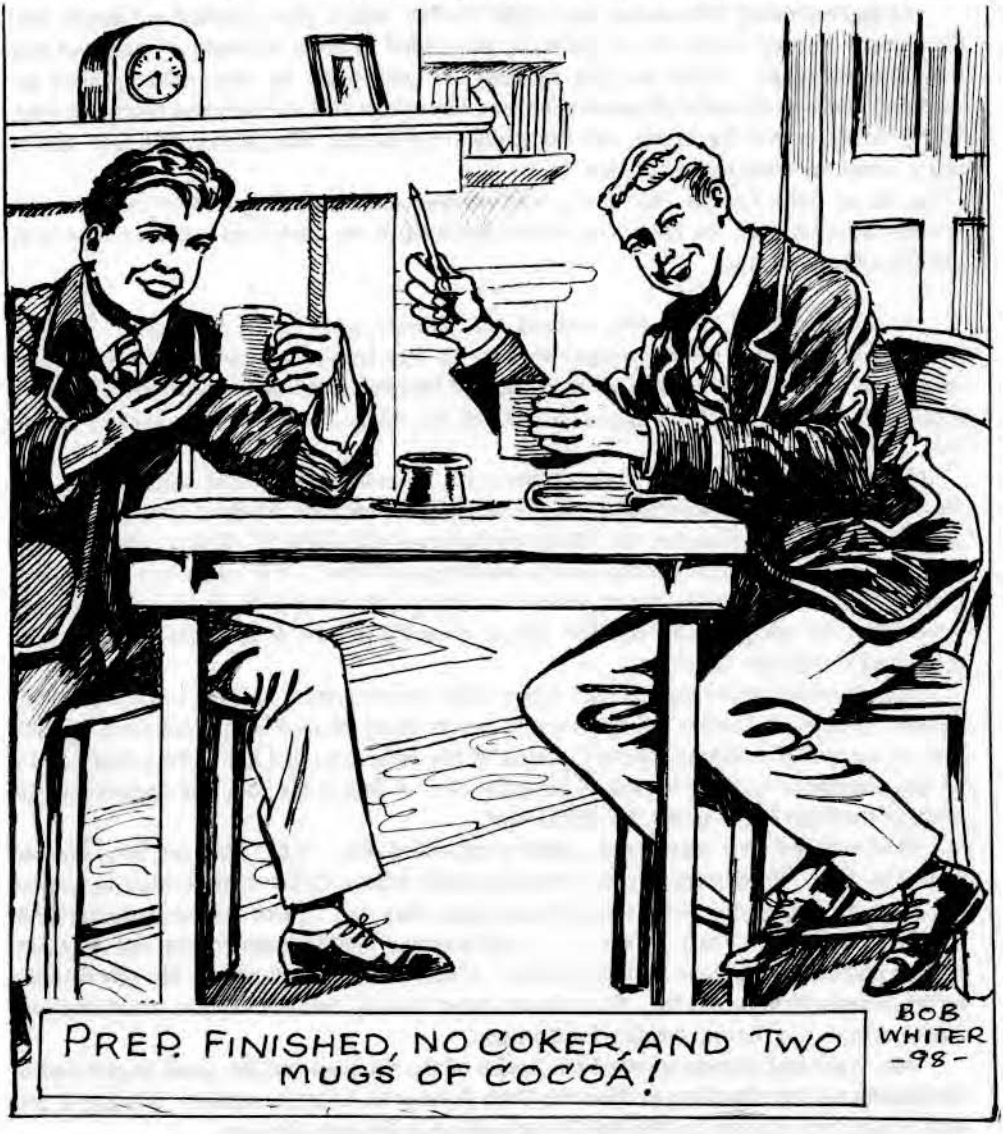
"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Quelch.

Following Prout's leaving for his visit to the Headmaster, Quelch proceeded down the passage to his study. Suddenly, to his surprise, the door was cautiously opened from within



and a furtive face peered out. "I say, Skinner - is the coast clear?" came a voice from inside. Before Harold Skinner could reply, he caught sight of his form master staring at him - the well-known eyes, described as gimlets, boring right through him.
"And what, may I ask, are you doing in my study, Skinner?"
"Oh lor'!" came the dolorous tones recognisable as those of Billy Bunter, who was the other occupant of the study.

At a sign from his form master, Skinner retreated back into the apartment, pushing the fat owl before him. Mr. Quelch followed him, glancing round at the room in search of any possible damage from 'ragging'. Seeing none, he repeated his earlier question.
"I - er -" said the hapless Skinner, cudgelling his brains for a suitable answer. "I - er - came to ask - er - for more time to do the lines you gave me". Even as he spoke Skinner knew his form master would not swallow such a flimsy excuse. Mr. Quelch switched his gaze to the fat owl, who was already quaking in his shoes.
"And what were you doing here, Bunter - you don't for once have any lines to do for me."
"I didn't come to use your phone, sir!" Bunter gasped. "You - you can ask Skinner, he knows!"
"And for what purpose did you wish to use my telephone, Bunter?" asked Mr. Quelch in a grinding voice.

Billy Bunter blinked at his master in bewilderment. He had just told him that he hadn't come to use the phone! "I never impersonated Coker's uncle - never knew he existed - and I never told Coker that his Aunt Judy was sick - in any case it was Skinner's idea, not that I did it!" assured the fat owl.

Skinner gritted his teeth. He realised it was no use denying anything. Bunter with his usual fatuousness had seen to that.

Mr. Quelch glared at the two juniors with a look that the fabled basilisk might have envied. Apart from being angry with them, he was thinking of the saddened senior en route for Holly House worried about the supposed illness of his favourite aunt. At last he found his voice. "I don't know how to deal with you boys - such depravity - I 'um - follow me, I'm taking you to your Headmaster." With a sweep of his arm, and making a sign to the two boys, he strode away with them trailing in his wake.
"You beast, Skinner, getting me into this mess!" Bunter mumbled to Skinner.
"Shut up, you fat idiot, if you'd kept your silly mouth shut . . ."
"Stop talking, there!" interjected Mr. Quelch over his shoulder. The two boys relapsed into silence.

Before long they arrived at Dr. Locke's study. Mr. Quelch knocked and marched the two Removeites in. Dr. Locke, who was seated at his desk, rose to his feet. "Mr. Quelch, what is this?" he started to say. The Remove master interrupted him.
"Dr. Locke, I am sorry if I have startled you, but I really do not know how to deal with these two boys - such wickedness." In a voice trembling with emotion the form master acquainted the Head with their misdeeds. Dr. Locke, having directed his chauffeur to take Coker to the station, following Mr. Prout's explanation, already knew about the supposed illness of Coker's Aunt Judy. Nevertheless, it still took him a little while to comprehend that Coker had been sent on a fool's errand, and that the two boys standing in front of him could be guilty of such an ill-natured and vile trick.
"Is it possible, Mr. Quelch, that these two juniors could perpetrate such a cruel hoax?"

"Please, sir," the wretched Skinner cut in before the form master could answer his chief. "It was only a joke."
"You beast, Skinner!" moaned Bunter. "You tell Dr. Locke I had nothing to do with it - I wasn't even there."
"How dare you utter such falsehoods, Bunter, when I actually found you in my study!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "I suppose you imitated the uncle's voice on the phone?"
"Oh no, sir, I don't know what the old gentleman's voice sounds like - it's ages since I last saw him - and Skinner never told me to speak in husky tones as though he had a cold, did you old chap?" Bunter blinked at the cad of the Remove. "Not that I even thought of speaking on the phone!"

Dr. Locke gazed as if hypnotised as he listened to the fat owl's prevarications. "Bless my soul, Mr. Quelch, I really don't envy you in having such a boy in your class" - turning to the Remove master. "There doesn't seem to be any doubt" he continued "that Bunter is the main culprit."

Billy Bunter spun round to face Harold Skinner in alarm. "You beast, Skinner, you tell them it was all your idea - why, you offered me a dish of jam tarts to talk on the phone."
"Shut up, you fat rotter!" hissed Skinner.
"Silence, both of you!" interrupted the Head. "It is obvious you are both guilty. It only remains for you to tell me why you played such a despicable trick."
"The big fool knocked my head and Snoop's together and my head's still sore - I wanted Snoop to help but he wouldn't!" burst out Skinner in a sudden outburst of bravado.
"And what did you do previously to Coker?" asked Mr. Quelch scathingly. The cad of the Remove hung his head and didn't reply.

The form master then turned his attention to his chief. "Do you think it may be worthwhile telephoning the station, sir? - we might be in time to catch Coker and save him a needless journey." The Headmaster looked at the clock on the mantelpiece, and with a nod of approval picked up the telephone and dialled the station.

It is nice to record that as Coker had missed the first train and was sitting in the stationmaster's office, Dr. Locke was able to reach him. When Coker learned the truth he was full of fire and vengeance and could barely be restrained from committing assault and battery. The next morning he derived a certain satisfaction when he witnessed the public flogging of the two miscreants and heard their howls, and his wrath subsided.

It was after prep that night, when sharing some of Greene's wonderful cocoa, together with Potter, that his cup of happiness ran over. The two seniors were listening to his advice on how to play soccer with such rapt attention. I've been assured that an open hamper full of good things, received that day from Aunt Judy, had no bearing on the case whatsoever! The two study-mates even mercifully refrained from commenting on the great Horace's 'boko', which although already on the mend, still possessed quite a tinge of red!

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LIST WE FORGET! by Alan Pratt

Who out there remembers the record 'Deck of Cards' by Wink Martindale?

A young soldier, having been lambasted by his sergeant for playing cards in church, attempts to explain that his intentions were good and honourable.

He demonstrates (possibly to the satisfaction of his sarge, although this is not actually stated) that all of the cards have a religious significance and that he also uses the offending 'deck' as a calendar and almanac. As fortunate recipients of a standard education, most of us do not need to count the pips to know that there are 365 days in a year, nor the number of suits to tell us that there are four quarters. The idea is interesting nevertheless because it reminds us that we are able to age or date events in our lives by other means than diaries or calendars.

In 1972 I started to keep lists of the books that I read - nothing complicated, just titles and authors - because I thought it would be fun to look back afterwards and reflect on what I had, or hadn't, enjoyed. Now, some 27 years later, I have in front of me a pile of annual lists and the personal information that they provide is astonishingly extensive.

Obviously they show changing patterns of interest. A sudden liking for a particular type of book or author results in a list top heavy with my exciting new discovery, old favourites being re-introduced only when the novelty has worn off. There are also authors that I found stimulating 25 years ago but whom I now find much less readable. The world changes - whether we like it or not - and we change with it, as does our ability to suspend disbelief. Dornford Yates and Sapper (whose books I read avidly) were undeniably good writers in their way but the attitudes of their dogmatic and prejudiced heroes become increasingly wearing as the years go by. Likewise, as a result of increased public awareness, it is now somewhat hard to accept Sydney Horler's Commissioner of Scotland Yard issuing personal invitations to good chaps from the best families who like a jolly good scrap as he is thinking of forming a Ghost Squad!

This aside, however, there is another aspect of book listing that is even more personal and, at the same time, more revealing. Reference to my 1972 list, for example, instantly reminds me that I had just started work in the accounting department of a well-known soft drinks company. My new boss, a pleasant but rather pushy chap, was delighted to find he had taken on a 'reader', so much so, in fact, that he regularly passed on to me the library books that he had just finished reading, urging me to read them also before the date on which they were due back. It was useless to point out that I wasn't keen on, say, 'caper' novels. He would say "Ah, but this one's very readable!". If I explained that I was already reading something else he would say "This one won't take you more than an evening!". Attempts to bluff him failed also as he always wanted to chortle over the good bits and it would some have become apparent if you hadn't read the thing! Ah well, this was a temporary phase only. In 1973 I moved to another department and a new boss who confined his reading to the company statistics in the Financial Times.

One title in 1973 stands out though, Clarence Mulford's *Hopalong Cassidy Serves A Writ.* This was the book I took with me when I was unexpectedly admitted to hospital one Saturday with a painful swelling in the nether regions. With talk of the surgeon's knife on the Monday following, I was petrified and tried to lose myself in the adventures of the Bar 20 cowhands. Even now I can remember how difficult this was, not only because of my

own wimpishness but also because the chap in the next bed was a sort of mournful Al Read character who just wouldn't stop talking. Fortunately heavy doses of antibiotic worked wonders and by the Monday it was clear that I had merely suffered an infection. I left Al Read in the hospital and took Hoppy home with me!

In 1979 I rejoined the Scout movement. The local group was in danger of folding because of a shortage of leaders and I offered my services as an assistant cub leader, a move that was to radically alter my lifestyle for the next five years or so. I well remember my first evening in that astonishingly traditional hut (a wonderful time warp) heading home afterwards to read Zane Grey's *Mysterious Rider.*

1985 was a good year in that my book list contains crime stories by, among others, Clifford Witting, J.J. Connington and Francis Iles. I was working at this time for an ex-army Captain who was not only a jolly good chap but also a mentor in the true sense of the word. He lived out 'in the sticks' and would buy any old whodunits he found at local jumble sales or summer fairs and then pass them on to me. And what about 1988? Now that was a year to remember. My book list shows *The Mystery of Holly Lodge* by Martin Clifford, the first book I ever borrowed from Roger Jenkins's Hamilton Library, my having just joined the London O.B.B.C.

I could go on forever pinpointing different events in my own life, but I think, by now, you have got the point. Let me finish, though, with my *pièce de resistance.* This one is history in the making. In 1980 I was reading Edmund Crispin's excellent *Swan Song* when I heard noises that no-one else seemed able to hear. Were they coming from the fireplace, from outside or wherever? It soon became apparent that the noises were in my own ears and that they were to become a regular feature of my life, particularly at nights when the house was silent. I was referred to a hospital for tests and eventually told I was suffering from tinnitus and that, sadly, there was no cure. It was explained to me that, with some people, the condition was temporary, having been brought about by exposure to unexpectedly loud noises, such as aircraft taking off or explosions. I held no great hope as I hadn't experienced anything of the sort, but about a year later the symptoms abated. Some three years afterwards the noises returned temporarily following a course of dental treatment.

It was only through referring to my book list that I discovered that the first bout had also coincided with a visit to the dentist! I raised the question with a doctor, a dentist and the Tinnitus Association. Could there be any connection? I was told no. But - and here's the good bit - in a medical article in a newspaper in 1995 reference was made to the 'newly discovered' link between tinnitus and dental treatment. So how about that then, as Jimmy Savile used to say. I was years ahead of the medical fraternity. I was like Boris Karloff in those old pictures when he played a scientist with new ideas which no-one accepted, except that, unlike Boris, I didn't go around bumping off the non-believers! And if I had made good as a result of my discovery it would all have been put down to my invaluable book lists. I can just hear the G.P. saying to his patient, "I'm sorry to tell you, madam, that you are suffering from Pratt's Syndrome".

Alexander Fleming, eat your heart out!

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by Margery Woods.

MARCH - BEWARE THE IDES OF!

The month of March tends to disappoint, so often bringing the final bluster of the long British winter just as everyone is longing for promise of spring and warmth.

But one March early in Cliff House history (S.F. 43) brought a warm and humorous note. This was the March when Bessie Bunter fell in love! The object of her affection was Marmaduke, a new employee of Uncle Clegg, the pastrycook, whose shop was definitely Bessie's favourite port of call, provided she had funds of course. When he quite innocently supplied her order without questioning her wherewithal, Bessie fell in love instantly, especially when he responded to her coy overtures. The fact that Bessie's financial status stood at sixpence was only a mere mote in Bessie's eye.

Bessie in love, quite sure of her own beauty and fine figure, writing love letters and culling assistance in this from magazines, aided by the teasing assistance of her form-mates, makes hilarious reading, especially when Mabel Lynn disguises herself as Montague, supposed cousin of Marmaduke, and visits Bessie for tea. Bessie's love affair comes to a sorry end when Uncle Clegg sends the bill for Bessie's feeds to Miss Primrose, who in turn sends it to Bessie's father. No more pocket money for Bessie for a long time to come. Truly a barmecide's feast!

Still with the early adventures of the Cliff House chums we find an exciting example of the old favourite among plots, the frame-up. This was inflicted on Barbara Redfern's father and the resultant disgrace of his subsequent imprisonment reached out to his daughter. At that time Mr Redfern managed a bank; later on he became a wealthy businessman with his own manufacturing firm. The villains of the story were a Mr Greame, head clerk at the bank, his daughter Esme, at Cliff House, and a confederate called Sharkeigh. There were several characters at the school then who disappeared later on. One was Esme's toady, Hetty Hendon, who dropped her aitches and aired a somewhat shaky grammar to match this careless style of speech. Also among Esme's cronies were the well-known meanies, Marcia Loftus and Nancy Bell. They provided a willing back-up to Esme's schemes to further blacken Mr Redfern's character when he managed to escape from prison and Babs, helped by Mabs, hid him in the old priory ruins. A reward is posted for information leading

to his recapture, which prompts Esme and her cronies to look for his hiding place. They search Pegg Castle, even braving its network of damp dark dungeons, somehow losing Esme there - the best place for her? - but without finding any trace of Mr Redfern. Meanwhile Babs and the chums have discovered the identity of Greame's accomplice and passed the information to the police. Also, Mr Redfern, exploring the many tunnels around his hiding place, has discovered the money. The Greames discover to their cost that they do not have the monopoly on scheming and cunning; the plotters are now suspicious of each other, Sharkeigh believing that the Greames have turned traitor and taken the money for themselves.

Counter-action comes when the Greames discover the underground tunnel that links Pegg Castle to the priory ruins, and thus capture Mr Redfern and Babs. But Mr Redfern has hidden the money in a fresh hiding place and the chums, led by Mabs, are bringing a rescue force. Happy restoration of Mr Redfern's good name and unhappy prospects for the Greames and Sharkeigh. What a debt story-tellers owe to the schemers and traitors and dark villainy of medieval days who left such a wonderful legacy of secret panels, hidden rooms and mysterious underground nooks and crannies and passages.

March 35 (293 - 297) brought New Rule to Cliff House in the strong and emotional series featuring the much loved Valerie Charmant, the Fourth's mistress, and her foster cousin, the vindictive wastrel, Shaw Dennis, who has succeeded in getting a post at Cliff House on the strength of forged papers. His motive is the single purpose of revenge on Valerie, who has displaced him in the affection of his wealthy aunt and uncle.

Once the girls discovered this and began to suffer his tyranny, Shaw Dennis didn't stand a chance of ever succeeding, not against their combined efforts to oust him from Cliff House and out of their form mistress's life. It took five issues, carrying the series on into April, before the final part in his downfall was brought about by, of all people, Bessie Bunter. One of the most outstanding of the March chronicles of Cliff House.

March 33 SG 187 - 188 found a small new girl, Mary Treherne from Australia, put into Bessie Bunter's care. Of course the new girl had an enemy and Mary herself was a wilful, mutinous young person who proved a considerable handful for Bessie. But with the aid of tomboy Clara Trevlyn and Jemima Carstairs, not forgetting the mysterious Mother Meg, who was actually Mary's older sister in disguise, the plotters are unmasked and Mary's precious gold bangle with its secret of her inheritance is kept safe.

In this entertaining series Clara, supposedly on a week's leave to see her brother Jack off to Nigeria, takes a job as a maidservant at the plotters' home, which must have been quite an experience for them as well as Clara; Clara being a lively girl, known to be rather clumsy on occasions. And when the plotters first encounter Jemima, who has tied their car to a tree, they dismiss her as a presence not worth bothering about, deciding that she is not quite right in the head. A mistake many plotters have made about Jemima - to their cost.

But March was not a good month for Miss Primrose, august Head of Cliff House. New headmistresses, unpleasant governors, tyrants all, beset the good lady. In SG 450, March 38, a certain Miss Shale arrives, supposedly to take over some of Miss Primrose's duties to give her a much needed rest. True to type (essential for plot) Miss Shale is a generous purveyor of lines, punishment and oppression as well as having a secret, long held grudge against Primmy. But in this single story Jemima plays Sherlock and brings off a great coup when at the vital moment she manages to switch on the microphone in Miss

Primrose's study and the loudspeakers in the Big Hall, thus broadcasting to the entire world the perfidious, incriminating words of Miss Shale. Another tyrant bites the dust! (Whoever was stupid enough to say that Jemima Carstairs was not quite right in the head?)

And so to another March, one fraught with passion and great excitement, in SG 34 240 - 244. This one starred Diana Royston-Clarke. Add the elements of a hidden treasure trove, a secret society, the enforced resignation of Miss Primrose by the ruthless tactics of Diana's father, a tyrannical new headmistress, Miss Talmar Tylor, and the final denouement; the expulsion of Diana! How could this major series fail to grip the reader more sharply than the traditional wild winds of March?

(See page 55 for April exploits.)

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THE MAN WHO MET HIMSELF

by Mark Caldicott

Part One: Introducing Useful Eustace

September, 1929. Sexton Blake is investigating a mystifying occurrence. Who would want to send the magistrate of the North Western Police Court a parcel containing a dead cat? Close upon this discovery, Blake discovers that two other eminent persons have received similar parcels, each containing a deceased black cat. Thus opens "The Case of the Three Black Cats" (*Union Jack* 1354, 28-Sep-29).

Things turn even uglier when public figure Sir Howard Denison is found dead from strychnine poisoning, suffering the same fate as the cats. Moreover, he is found dressed entirely in a black costume similar to that worn by the Black Cat, a notorious burglar. There is a message stuck to his body reading "Black Cat! You have taken your last prowl!" Thomas Brand, convicted and imprisoned in the belief that he was the Black Cat, has just been released from prison. Was Sir Howard really the Black Cat? - and was this a revenge killing by Brand?

Help for Blake was at hand from an unexpected quarter:

> Sexton Blake had left the Grey Panther outside the Embankment entrance to Scotland Yard; and when he came out he was rather astonished to find a perfect stranger sitting in the front seat, next to the driver's place.
>
> The stranger was a young man of exceedingly dandified appearance. His morning coat was exquisite, his top hat was a glory of silk, his neckwear was in excellent taste. He lolled in the Grey panther at his ease, his somewhat vacant face in complete repose.
>
> "Excuse me," said Blake, looking at the young man rather hard.
>
> The stranger opened his eyes, sat upright, and jammed a monocle into his right eye.

"Oh, rather!" he said amiably. "Jump in, old cocktail!"

"This is my car," explained Blake.

"Absolutely!" nodded the other. "I've been waiting for you, Mr. Blake. Absolutely waiting. Not that I minded that. When it comes to patience, old man Job was a raw amateur compared with me."

"I am very sorry," said Blake, rather amused, "but I'm rather busy . . ."

"I wouldn't dream of bothering you, old boy, only there's a bit of a problem on the little mind," said the other. "As it happens, I've just been biffed out of the good old Yard, and when I saw this priceless piece of machinery parked against the curb, I recognised it. Absolutely recognised it, if you know what I mean."

"I regret, Mr . . ."

"Cavendish, old boy - Eustace Cavendish," said the other, beaming. "Now about these black cats . . ."

"Black cats!" ejaculated Blake.

When Blake returned to the Grey Panther, he was rather astonished to find a perfect stranger sitting in the front seat.

Blake's first reaction is that of most people - he regards Cavendish as an "amiable ass". Eustace relates how, happening to be sitting in Regent's Park at one in the morning, he sees a figure putting a cat into a handbag. He follows the figure to a house and, in order to find out more about this suspicious activity, finds a way around the back of the premises and through a partly opened blind sees "the unfortunate moggie performing its death throes on the kitchen floor".

As Eustace begins to relate to Blake his exploits of the previous evening in his affected manner, Blake realises that Cavendish's silly ass manner is a façade behind which the

reality is a remarkably gifted and astute individual. Eustace also reveals that he is observant and resourceful when he reveals how, only being able to see the mysterious cat-snatcher's shoes through the blind, he nevertheless took note of the peculiarities of the shoes and waited next day for someone to emerge from the building wearing those shoes with those peculiarities. Thus he had identified the culprit as Rev. Bartholomew Smiles.

Eustace thereby has revealed himself to be a rather good detective. Blake reviews his opinion:

> This young man, it seemed, was not such a fool as he looked. Blake regarded him more closely than ever as he sat, monocle in eye, smiling with that same bland amiability. Blake was not the kind of man who could be easily surprised, but it certainly astonished him to hear this young fellow's story.

However, Blake is astute enough to realise that Cavendish's whole story could be a fabrication, and checks Eustace's credentials at the Wayfarer's Club.

> "Mr. Cavendish?" smiled one of the club officials, when Blake had made his inquiry. "Oh, yes, Mr. Blake; he's often here. One of our members you know."
>
> "Rather a nice young fellow," said Blake.
>
> "An amusing one, at all events," said the official. "The Hon. Eustace is a bit of a joke with the other members . . ."

Thus Blake learns that Cavendish is the son of Lord Halstead, which given Blake's English public school class-values means Eustace is a "thoroughbred" and is beyond question. This conversation also emphasises the contradiction between Cavendish's outward appearance as a buffoon and the evidence from his activities that he is the very opposite. In this first adventure, while Blake is still getting used to this contradiction, this can be disconcerting. As they get onto the track of Rev. Smiles, Eustace tells Blake:

> "By the way, I've brought a gun, in case there's any real scrapping."
>
> "A gun?" said Blake sharply. "Do you mean a revolver?"
>
> "One of those automatic things," said Eustace.
>
> "I think you'd better hand it over to me, Mr. Cavendish," said Blake grimly. "Automatic pistols are dangerous things to handle."
>
> "Oh, absolutely!" agreed Eustace. "But I'm to be trusted with one - really. I mean, I'm pretty good with a revolver."
>
> "Ever had any practice?"
>
> "A fair amount," said Eustace. "By a fluke, I won the revolver-shooting prize at Bisley last year."
>
> Blake chucked.
>
> "You are certainly fond of springing your little surprises, Mr. Cavendish," said Blake dryly. "You are more useful than I first imagined. Good man! You'd better stick to that automatic."

And so as Blake comes to realise Eustace's real measure, an understanding is reached:

> . . . Blake switched on an electric torch.

"I've got one of those jolly things, too," whispered Eustace, producing it.

"I should have been very astonished if you hadn't," murmured Blake. "Well, Mr. Cavendish . . ."

"I say, you know, that sounds frightfully formal," protested the young man. "Why not Eustace? Much more pally, old boy."

"Eustace, then," smiled Blake. "We'd better separate here, and make a thorough search of the house. If you get into trouble, yell."

"I won first prize at school for yelling," said Eustace promptly. "We had a sort of competition, and the best yeller won a pair of boxing gloves. I won."

"You would!" smiled Blake.

It is Eustace who, in the end, saves the day after Blake loses the track of the culprit, leaving Sexton Blake more impressed by Eustace than ever. Cavendish has handled the affair in a quite masterly way. He has proved himself to be possessed of initiative - and a capacity for acting decisively. Sexton Blake expresses the hope that they would meet again one day, and, of course, it is not too long before they do.

Eustace, as he is portrayed here at the outset of his career, is from a long tradition of fictional characters who are superficially frivolous and affected in speech and manner, masking a competence beneath the surface. The list of such characters is long, being found not only in Brooks' work (e.g. William Bonaparte Brown, Archie Glenthorne, etc.), but throughout the story papers and, with such as Sayers' Lord Peter Wimsey, into "respectable" literature. Eustace has all the affectedness of language which is the hallmark of the silly ass, and as with many, he has an aristocratic background. Unusually, however, he lacks the underlying authority which is almost invariably found accompanying the aristocrat. Nor is Cavendish playing the part of a silly ass to cover up his real personality, as with, for instance, Brooks' early character Frank Kingston (of the "Iron Island" series in *The Gem*). It is more the sense that Eustace himself does not take his own talents seriously, and wonders why anyone else should.

In "The Case of the Three Black Cats", Brooks introduces us to one of his more enduring creations. It is an excellent story, and a fitting introduction for the debut of such an immediately likeable character. Readers of this issue of *Union Jack* would doubtless have been looking forward to the re-introduction of the Hon. Eustace in another story. And indeed they did not have to wait too long.

(To Be Continued)

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RAY HOPKINS has sent this additional list to complete the Joan Inglesant index he provided for the 1997 CD Annual.

The Inglesant Files: The Final Input

The long list of Joan Inglesant story titles which appeared in the 1997 *Collectors' Digest Annual* turns out to be incomplete. I neglected to include those stories which appeared in the Annuals of the 1920s and 1930s. In the event they may be wanted by anyone who collects the writings of this author (actually the boys' adventure serial author Draycot M. Dell) the remainder of this short "top-up" article may be useful.

The Schoolgirls' Own Annual. 1924: "Maid Marion." 1925: "The Secret of the Sands." 1928: "Cynthia's Mystery Present." 1929: "The Secret of Garston Castle." 1930: "Her Scholarship Renounced." 1931: "Squirrel." 1932: "The Quaker Girl's Quest." 1933: "The Forbidden Room." 1934: "The Wayside Flower." 1935: "Fortune's Flower." 1936: "Priscilla's Prisoner." 1937: "The Unexpected Spectre." 1938: "The Belfry Under the Sea." 1939: "The Girl Who Wouldn't Be An Orphan." 1940: "She Shall Have Music."

The School Friend Annual. 1927: "The Merry Heart." 1930: "Two Girls in a Tangle." 1933: "Swift - But Sure." 1935: "Letters of Gold." 1936: "For Bonnie Prince Charlie." 1937: "'Young' Jennifer."

The Golden Annual for Girls. 1925: "The New Girl at St. Naomi's." 1926: "The False and the True." 1927: "The Girl Who Schemed." 1929: "Yasmin of the Moon City." 1930: "Nelda of Mystery Mountain." 1931: "Captive of the Desert." 1932: "The Silver Toboggan." 1933: "'Cinderella' of the Caravans." 1934: "Her Feathered Friend." 1935: "A May Day Mystery" and "Singing for Santa Claus." 1936: "Just A Satin Dress." 1937: "The Better Part." 1938: "The Weird of Weirdslea Grange." (Regret I have no contents listing for the 1939 final issue of this annual.")

The Popular Book of Girls' Stories. 1931: "Her Secret Performance." 1932: "Dancing To Fame." 1934: "The Mystery of Merlin Castle." 1936: "The Ghostly Caravan." 1938: "When Lightning Was Lost!"

Regarding Draycot M. Dell's use of other female pseudonyms, their very few appearances are as follows: In *The Schoolgirls' Own Annual* - 1925: "Loyalty's Reward" (as Ellen Draycot). 1931: "Mamie - The Odd One" (as Mary Ellen Shirley). 1942: "That Exasperating Algy" (as Daphne Anson). In *The Golden Annual For Girls* - 1925: "The Little Lady of the Lillies" (as Ellen Draycot). 1927: "The Silver Arrow" (as Ellen Draycot). 1933: "Just A Gipsy Mongrel" (as Daphne Anson).

I am presuming Daphne Anson was a Dell pseudonym because the Lofts/Adley "Men Behind Boys' Fiction" shows that he used Piers Anson as one of his boys' story nom-de-plumes. I neglected to explain this in the original article.

***(Editor's Note:** There are no stories in the 1939* Golden Annual for Girls *under the D.M. Dell nom-de-plumes.)*

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EVEN IN THE BEST FAMILIES OR, SEXTON BLAKE'S SIBLINGS

by Derek Hinrich

Part Three

More than twenty years pass.

Sherlockians speak of The Great Hiatus - that period between May 1891 and April 1894 when Sherlock Holmes was believed to lie dead below the Reichenbach Falls - but Sexton Blake in 1956 underwent the Great Metamorphosis.

In SBL3/359 he became an Organisation with offices in Berkeley Square and the "fourth series" was born. Tinker became his "Junior Partner" whose real name was said to be Edward Carter (odd, because Jack Lewis had revealed it to be "Smith" some ten years before, while Gwyn Evans had appeared sure it was Tinker, which, after all, is not unknown as a surname).

Sexton Blake had served his country well during the Second World War but now he did so again, for several of the New Look Blake novels harked back to the War years. One of these, SBL 3/451 of May 1960, *The Angry Night*, by W. Howard Baker, reintroduced us briefly to Nigel Blake.

When we last saw him, Nigel Blake was haggard, grey-faced and white-haired, half-mad and malaria-riddled. Time and Dr Sarola (how he must have deserved that knighthood!), and a new author, have evidently wrought their healing work, for Nigel Blake is now healthy and in good trim, lean and black-haired.

The coming of the Second World War has indeed proved the salvation of Nigel Blake for his country's danger has woken the latent patriotic spark in the breast of the wastrel and petty criminal. He was in India in 1939 and volunteered at once to work for the Secret Department under the direction of that old but ageless master of intelligence work, Eustace Crail'e, he of the Egyptian cigarettes and the face of old parchment (to my mind one of the three most memorable spy-masters for whom Sexton Blake ever worked). In the next three years Nigel Blake proved himself to be among the best of Craille's agents and his best man east of Suez.

It is now Friday 13th March 1942 (the date is accurate; I've checked it by the perpetual calendar in an old copy of *Enquire Within Upon Everything*) and the Second World War is at one of its moments of crisis. The victorious Japanese Army is sweeping through Burma towards the frontier of India and treason is afoot in Calcutta. A plan to stir up unrest and insurrection, "worse than the Mutiny with Muslim and Hindu making common cause", is nearing fruition.

Nigel Blake has wind of it and is closing in on the mysterious ringleader of the scheme, one Madhu Nath, when he is discovered eavesdropping on the plotters. His attempt to escape is foiled and he is trussed up and burnt, alive and conscious, on a Hindu funeral pyre.

Poor Nigel, a truly terrible end! His blood cries out for vengeance and, what is more, the secret he was seeking is absolutely vital to the conduct of the War. Craille, who was in Calcutta waiting anxiously for Nigel's report, sends for Sexton Blake to complete his brother's work. Blake is thunderstruck when Craille tells him how the War has been the salvation of his brother and of the splendid work that he has done in the Far East since 1939.

But all Craille has been told by Nigel in the present case is that the mysterious agitator Madhu Nath, whom no loyal servant of the Raj knows by sight, is confident of destroying the Government of India within the next fortnight by unknown means.

It is a Buchanesque problem not unlike, in principle, the search for Greenmantle undertaken by Richard Hannay in the earlier war.

Blake, knowing his brother's habits, casts about to find his brother's mistress, certain in his own mind that Nigel will have confided more to her in pillow talk. He discovers that she is a beautiful Anglo-Indian girl, Caroline Perkins, and eventually, after much incident, finds her, only to lose her again to Nath's men - but not before he has learnt that Madhu Nath's scheme turns initially on the disruption of food supplies to Calcutta and the expectation that serious riots, which he can turn to his purpose, will follow. The first step in attacking the food distribution system is to be the sabotage of rail communications at a major junction.

S.B.L. PORTRAIT GALLERY SERIES

No. 9

EUSTACE CRAILLE

DOSSIER :

Name: Eustace Craille.

Occupation : Chief of Intelligence department which works on behalf of the British Government. Blake's former wartime boss. He still calls on Blake's services from time to time for particularly ticklish Intelligence assignments.

Office address : Belgrave Square.

Home address : RESTRICTED.

Physique. Height, 5 ft. 10 in. Skin, brittle and parchment-like. Hands, skeletal. Of indeterminate age.

Interests : Britain's Security. This is his sole occupation in life. He has an aesthetic regard for feminine beauty—and a strong predilection for Egyptian cigarettes which he chain-smokes incessantly.

Blake suddenly remembers that Caroline Perkins' father is Stationmaster at Allahabad. With the Military Police, he mounts a trap at Calcutta Station and waits for Madhu Nath to board the Allahabad Express. When Nath's party arrives all is resolved. Nath is revealed to be - but I can't give all the story away!

A year later, Blake is home on leave and visits his father, happily after all not dead from sorrow at his younger (or youngest?) son's disgrace, but living in retirement in a small hotel somewhere on the south coast. Dr Barclay Blake (he, too, has apparently lost his

knighthood and, moreover, has changed the spelling of his christian name) is much moved, as any man might be, by the sad news of his wayward son's ghastly end, but sorrow is mingled with pride that Nigel Blake had died doing great service for his country in its hour of need.

Together, the surviving Blakes tear up and consign to the flames a file that Dr Blake has hitherto sadly kept of press cuttings of his dead son's misdeeds, for the manner of Nigel Blake's passing has expunged the stains of his earlier life.

So ends the strange saga of the brothers of Sexton Blake.

(But see page 54 - Editor.)

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THE WONDERFUL GARDENS — by Donald V. Campbell

7. Shoo Rayner

To end with then - a bit of fun:

The last and most recent of my "garden" books was published in 1994 and written by Shoo Rayner. This tiny book can be appreciated by both adults and children. It is packed with line drawings by the author which give a nice lift to the humour. The nearest example of similar books would be some of those by Roald Dahl, but whereas his books are generally of a fantasy nature this one is fantastic enough but rooted in the present and the madhouse that is officialdom.

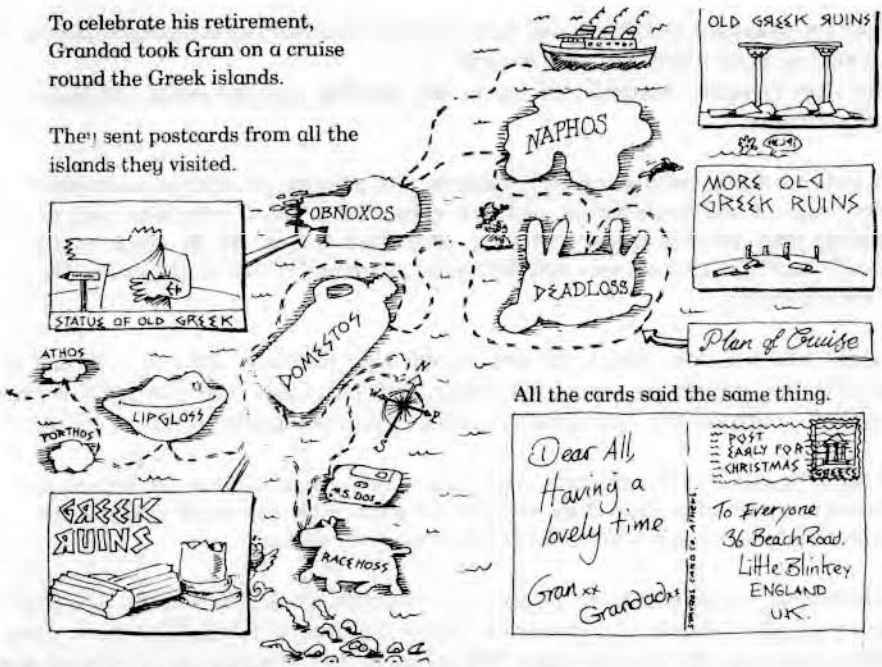
An indication of the link to adults and a piece of simple but effective humour may be seen in the Greek Islands joke. Grandad and Grandma go off on a Greek Islands cruise to celebrate Grandad's retirement. They visit Athos, Porthos, Domestos, Obnoxos, Deadloss and Lipgloss! Oh, and MS-Dos and Racehoss as well! You could say that it is all a bit childish but it made me and my wife fall about with our legs in the air (not unlike the old and much lamented "Smash" adverts). So there!

As a garden Grandad's concrete affair is unique.

But is it? Only down the road a few paces from here there used to be a garden with a notable set of garden gnomes. The garden included a garden railway specially constructed for the delectation of said gnomes. There were gnome windmills. There were gnome bridges. There were gnome fountains. And there were enough gnomes to stock all the gardens in the locality. So Shoo Rayner is not that far from the truth. And then - how many flowers and plants can we grow these days with diesel fumes pumping into the atmosphere? Even the stone walls here in Yorkshire require a change from "dry" (that is - no concrete) to "wet" (that is - concreted-up) to prevent collapse.

The reason that Grandad chooses to concrete the garden (backyard really) is that he just doesn't enjoy the things that the pundits suggest those "of a certain age" should take up - macramé, tatting, hang-gliding, water-skiing, rock-climbing, photography and suchlike. This is why the book has an extra appeal. Children can laugh at it and with it. Grandads can **feel** it!

It is a book that Grandads will certainly enjoy when reading to their grandchildren. But, take care, the two sets of people might be seen to laugh in different places.



And: A Conclusion to The Wonderful Gardens Series:

The business of producing a number of articles based on or around gardens and children's books was never arduous for me. It came about through a chance remark and my particular interest. It was spurred on by Mary and has given me a rewarding and pleasant time of research and reading. So, at the end, what can I say?

My order of merit remains the same as it was. But there have been bonuses. The discovery of Shoo Rayner's *Grandad's Concrete Garden* with wit and sensibility - and the book was only written a couple of years ago. In this instance the author is her own illustrator and so has an enormous advantage over the commissioned illustrator. She knows how it should look and what will work.

The Wonderful Garden/E. Nesbit "spun me off" into another look at both E. Nesbit's work and her life (*A Woman of Passion*/Julia Briggs/1987).

The lives of authors, and artists generally, often turn out to be (put gently) Bohemian. So it was with Edith Nesbit. Her many close friends included other writers - often younger than her - and she had a passion for George Bernard Shaw which was not returned in any fullness, although he remained her friend. She was always genteel but was often on her "uppers" and died in what was less than genteel poverty in Dymchurch. She needed, for example, to sell garden produce from a hut at her gates to help make ends meet.

Noel Coward lived close to her near the end and made it his business to visit. He worshipped her (and her books) and she responded by giving him warm advice about his writings - he was only 21.

The cheek that she has as author in *The Wonderful Garden* to promote "phoenix" and "amulet" and "words of power" is wonderful to behold. All three ideas appear in other of

her books for children: *The Phoenix and the Carpet* and *The Story of the Amulet.* So she is doing a kind of "post-trailer" for her own work.

My extra-curricular research led me to this startling passage which introduces *A Woman of Passion* -

> E. Nesbit is the first modern writer for children. She invented the children's adventure story more or less single-handed, and then added further magic ingredients such as wishing rings and time travel. Her books established a style and an approach still widely used today, yet she was forty before she produced her first great success, *The Treasure Seekers* . . ."

If this notion is true (and I, for one, would hope that it is) then we owe her an unrepayable debt - except that we can individually and collectively "carry the torch" for her and others of similar quality. The writer on children's fiction Marcus Crouch suggested:

> After E Nesbit children's literature might explore new worlds of ideas and themes; it would never return to the stuffily enclosed nurseries of the nineteenth century. No writer for children today is free of debt to this remarkable woman.

There always appeared to be at least two possible articles in a series devoted to children's gardens. Those two would be about *The Wonderful Garden* itself, which sparked the idea, and *The Secret Garden.* What became more amazing as time passed was that the whole thing, "like Topsy, of old" (as Frank Richards might have said) "grew!"

Tom's Midnight Garden was a natural follower even though it itself strays into the field of time-travel/ghost stories. *Grandad's Concrete Garden* appeared - with his alternate mixing and pouring of concrete - because the book was on the library computer. I found *Dead Knight's Garden* in the same way. But *The Painted Garden* was another matter.

Not mentioned in any discussions, it popped up before my very eyes at a book fair last October. The author's name - Noel Streatfeild - leaped off the shelf and then so did the title - *The Painted Garden.* So whatever it was, it had to be bought. 75p was paid up (for £1.50 the same fair gave me *The Phoenix and the Carpet*!)

The cover picture should have told me but - thick that I can be - it didn't. The heroine in this modern (1949) book is **shown acting** in a film of *The Secret Garden.*

How, in the end, could I possibly have left it out of a series which depended so on the Hodgson Burnett book? In it went. But, it is a skilful book in its own right. Maybe it would deserve a filmic adaptation to itself because of its links to the late forties and to the updating of *The Secret Garden* inside it.

Coming back to *The Phoenix and the Carpet* for a moment. Both it and *The Painted Garden* were re-published as Puffin paperbacks, *The Phoenix* in 1959 and *The Painted Garden* in 1976. The 1959 edition is **stitched** even though it is a paperback. The 1976 reprint is only glued. This means that it suffers from the besetting sin of "drying out and cracking". Sundry pages and sets of pages require sticking back in but they never look the same, do they? Who says things have only recently started to go from bad to worse? That grouse is out of the way, then . . .

What the exercise has done for me (and I really do need the exercise!) is to re-visit. Re-visits not just to books with "garden" themes but elsewhere as well. The E. Nesbit biography and *The Phoenix and the Carpet* are good examples. As are some of her other "fantasy" stories in the pages of the Strand Magazine *(The Magic City; Wet Magic* and *The Enchanted Castle.* From the same era I hunted up and found an F. Anstey story - illustrated by none other than Harold R. Millar - *The Brass Bottle. The Brass Bottle* is also a tale of fantasy and was, ostensibly, an influence on E. Nesbit.

One regret was to find that Noel Streatfeild did not write quite as well as I had remembered - but fifty years is a long time! To counter-balance this was the discovery of a splendidly satisfactory ghost story in *King Death's Garden.* Even if it suffers from the perennial problems of the ghost story (verisimilitude and a satisfactory explanation if attempted) it still moves the genre quite satisfactorily into the end of this century. Most of the best ghost stories were produced around the end of the last.

The difference between many exceptionally popular later children's books and these much earlier items is that the earlier stories, by and large, did not become "series" in the Enid Blyton or Malcolm Saville senses. But then there are many other early and late authors who have depended not so much on series as on "type" of story for their success. Percy F. Westerman, his brother John, Harold Avery, Talbot Baines Reed, David Severn, Alan Garner, and others.

This saunter backwards through my near past has become longer than I anticipated but there is much to think about and I can only hope that the great pleasure that I got from researching, preparing and writing the series has been reflected in some way by your own renewal of interest in things gone and not-so-long gone. And, perhaps, in things previously passed over.

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BOOK REVIEWS — from Mark Taha

As Time Goes By - *Michael Warner (Little, Brown 1998)*

We've all seen that all-time classic film "Casablanca" and must all have wondered about the mysteries it poses. On the one hand - what had Rick done before? Why had he left America? On the other - what did Rick, Ilsa, Laszlo and Renault do next?

Michael Warner does a good job of answering these questions. It's not as good as the film - but what could be? As someone who's often speculated on the subject, I'm glad to say that Mr. Warner's great mind and mine think alike - we both agreed that Rick was an ex-gangster who'd left America for - to put it delicately - health reasons and that Sam had come with him. The book confirms that the film tells us about Ilsa and Victor - she was a Norwegian (her father turns out to be a politician), he a Czech and totally dedicated to the Resistance. They'd met and married in Paris before the war and she'd thought he was dead when she met Rick. We also find out about Renault's past life - it turns out that he'd left France for reasons not dissimilar to Rick's!

As for what follows the end of the movie - as you'd expect, Rick, Renault, Ilsa and Laszlo wind up together in London and involved in intrigue and secret service-type work.

To wit, Laszlo's a Czech, Czechoslovakia ruled by perhaps the most dangerous of all Nazi leaders, Reinhard Heydrich. I'm not saying any more!

I highly recommend this book; its only 'break' with the film is that Rick takes Sam with him. Appearances by Heydrich and real-life French politician Edouard Daladier and Rick's ex-boss being based on real-life gangster Dutch Schultz certainly add something, as do the links with the film and 'in-jokes' (see the end of the book - you'll have recognised the quotes, if not the names!). Let's hope the inevitable film gets the cast as right as this book gets the characters!

The Ultimate Guide to Unusual Leisure - *Stephen Jarvis (Robson Books, 1998)*

This book, a follow-up to the author's "Bizarre Leisure Book" of 1993, is explained by its title. It gives details, in a well-written and humorous but informative style, of all kinds of unconventional ways of spending one's leisure time - from A (Alternate Worlds Enthusiasts - something which appeals to me) to Z (Zen Archery - not as Robin Hood did it!). There's something in it for everyone and I heartily recommend it - in fact, I'd like to list some British-based organisations that may appeal to CD readers.

Carry On Appreciation Society - deals with the films.
The Eagle Society - deals with the comic.
The George Formby Society - members include George Harrison!
Hattie Jacques Appreciation Society.
The Dracula Society - yes, they can go out during the day!
The Ephemera Society - deals with the memorabilia of everyday life; I remember our editor once addressing it.
The Fairy Appreciation Society - no, you don't have to believe in fairies to join!
Action Man Enthusiasts UK Club.
The Hellfire Club - fan club for 70s star Peter Wyngarde.
Higgs Appreciation Society - for a minor character in "The Archers".
The Irregular Special Railway Company - deals with the railway aspects of Sherlock Holmes.
Lewis Carroll Society
The Biggest Liar in the World Contest - "Members of the legal profession and politicians are barred from entry". And Bunters?
International Society of Meccanomen - for both users and collectors.
405 Alive - for enthusiasts for old black and white TV programmes.
Narrow Bandwidth Television Association - for enthusiasts for making Baird-style TVs.
Praed Street Irregulars/Solar Pons Society of London - for enthusiasts for a Holmes 'pastiche' character.
Worldwide Friends of Punch and Judy - has no time for politically correct bowdlerising!
Richard III Society - argues that Shakespeare was just a Tudor propagandist and that Richard III was innocent - OK?
The Saint Club - founded by Leslie Charteris himself in 1936.
British Titanic Society - you may have heard of the film!
British Westerners' Association - do more than watch movies!

They're all in here - and may I suggest to various clubs looking for speakers that they could be worth contacting?

STEVE HOLLAND WRITES:

Many thanks for the latest *Collectors Digest* - as fascinating as ever. Top marks for my money must go to Brian Mowbray for his *Champion Library* listing (CD 626). I hope you run more of these checklists: they're a vital step in exploring what is currently known about old storypapers and libraries - especially now the hobby no longer has bibliographers like Derek Adley and Bill Lofts. I'm sure that checklists of some description exist for titles like *Champion* and *Triumph*, but they need to be circulated so that information known to others can be added to fill in any gaps. To get the ball rolling, I have one or two slight additions for Brian's authors listing (p22): Donald Edward Charles Bobin was born in 1911; his father, John William Bobin, was born in 1889; Draycot (only one 't') M. Dell died 26 March 1940; Geoffrey Meredith (with an 'h') was presumably a typo; and Reginald George Thomas died January 1956.

Less certain, but I believe C. Eaton Fearn was established by Bill Lofts to be a form of name used by Cecil Isaac Fearn who died in 1963.

I hope these few additions help.

And in the interests of sharing information, enclosed is a *Western Library* listing for you. I've reworked it into the same format as Brian's list, although I've put in issue dates and slightly restructured the author listing at the end to make it a little clearer. I can also supply the whole list on disk (Microsoft Works or most other formats available).

WESTERN LIBRARY by Steve Holland

The *Western Library* was, in Amalgamated Press terms, rather short-lived, running to only 110 issues between 1950 and 1954. The 64-page stories appeared in the same pocket library format as the more famous *Sexton Blake Library*, sharing with the latter a number of authors (T.C.H. Jacobs, better known as Jacques Pendower, for instance), as well as its editor Leonard Pratt. Unlike the Blake series, a number of *Western Library* titles were reprints of American novels, by such famous authors as Ernest Haycox, Max Brand and Clarence E. Mulford (the creator of Hopalong Cassidy). The longest running series was the Larragan tales of John Hunter, which were translated into picture strips in a companion *Cowboy Library*. Shorter series included the Careless O'Connor series by Mike M'Cracken (Gordon Landsborough) and the Whip McCord series by Jacobs. Other series may exist.

The title was fully illustrated, with some stunning covers by D.C. Eyles and internal illustrations by the likes of James Holdaway.

This listing corrects a number of erroneous ascriptions in *Men Behind Boys' Fiction* (e.g. Hugh R. Oldham was a real person, not the pseudonym of Joan Whitford, Stone Cody was the pseudonym of an American author, not British author Gordon Landsborough), and adds a number of new pen-names revealed here for the first time. Also listed are the back-up stories that appeared in the final few issues.

1 "Whispering Range." Ernest Haycox. Apr 1950.
2 "Quick on the Trigger." John Hunter. Apr 1950.
3 "The Guns of Lannagan." John Hunter. May 1950.
4 "Trail Smoke." Ernest Haycox. May 1950.
5 "The Long Trail." George Owen Baxter. Jun 1950.
6 "Texas Stranger." T.C.H. Jacobs. Jun 1950.

7 "Starlight Rider." Ernest Haycox. Jul 1950.
8 "Wooden Guns." George Owen Baxter. Jul 1950.
9 "Rustlers on the Loose." Frank C. Robertson. Aug 1950.
10 "The Trai Leads to Lannagan." John Hunter. Aug 1950.
11 "Gun-Shy!" Barry Ford. Sep 1950.
12 "Deep West." Ernest Haycox. Sep 1950.
13 "Lannagan's Luck." John Hunter. Oct 1950.
14 "Danger Rides the Desert." Amos Moore. Oct 1950.
15 "Go for Your Guns, Lannagan!" John Hunter. Nov 1950.
16 "Smoky Pass." Ernest Haycox. Nov 1950.
17 "Coyote Hunter." Denver Bardwell. Dec 1950.
18 "Dangerous Gold." Stone Cody. Dec 1950.
19 "Rivers Westward." Denver Bardwell. Jan 1951.
20 "Crooked Horn." Max Brand. Jan 1951.
21 "The Border Kid." Norman A. Fox. Feb 1951.
22 "Look Behind You, Lannagan." John Hunter. Feb 1951.
23 "Riders of the Rim Rocks." William Macleod Raine. Mar 1951.
24 "Five Against the Law." Stone Cody. Mar 1951.
25 "Lannagan's Law." John Hunter. Apr 1951.
26 "The Riddle of Ramrod Ridge." William Macleod Raine. Apr 1951.
27 "Red Hawk." George Owen Baxter. May 1951.
28 "Storm Ranch." Denver Bardwell. May 1951.
29 "Lannagan Strikes It Rich." John Hunter. Jun 1951.
30 "Law Badge." Peter Field. Jun 1951.
31 "Call for Colt Carey." Frank Howe. Jul 1951.
32 "Square Shooter." William Macleod Raine. Jul 1951.
33 "Lannagan's Hunch." John Hunter. Aug 1951.
34 "Riders of Dry Gulch." William K. Reilly. Aug 1951.
35 "Gunman's Revenge." James Marshal. Sep 1951.
36 "Sundown Jim." Ernest Haycox. Sep 1951.
37 "Lannagan Gets Hired." John Hunter. Oct 1951.
38 "Desert Silver." Stone Cody. Oct 1951.
39 "Riders of Red Range." John Langley. Nov 1951.
40 "Sorreltop." William Macleod Raine. Nov 1951.
41 "Wildcat's Folly." Rex Quintin. Dec 1951.
42 "The Range Boss." Charles Alden Seltzer. Dec 1951.
43 "Lannagan Loads His Guns." John Hunter. Jan 1952.
44 "Rim of the Desert." Ernest Haycox. Jan 1952.
45 "Outlaw Posse." Stone Cody. Feb 1952.
46 "The Bounty Man." Mike M'Cracken. Feb 1952.
47 "Border Gold." James Marshal. Mar 1952.
48 "Bar 20 Days." Clarence E. Mulford. Mar 1952.
49 "Heir of Bar 60." John Langley. Apr 1952.
50 "Trail of the Blood-Mark." Claud Rister. Apr 1952.
51 "Lawless Guns." Buck Billings. May 1952.

52. "Lannagan Versus Trouble." John Hunter. May 1952.
53 "Black Gold." Jackson Cole. Jun 1952.
54 "Marked Bullets." Rex Quintin. Jun 1952.
55 "Cheyenne Joe." Mike M'Cracken. Jul 1952.
56 "One-Way Trail." Max Patrick. Jul 1952.
57 "Odds Against Lannagan." John Hunter. Aug 1952.
58 "Black Rider." James Marshal. Aug 1952.
59 "Guns For Hire." T.C.H. Jacobs. Sep 1952.
60 "Kit of Slash-K." John Langley. Sep 1952.
61 "Gun Smoke Cure." Stone Cody. Oct 1952.
62 "Lannagan Horns In." John Hunter. Oct 1952.
63 "Garson's Girl." Hugh R. Oldham. Nov 1952.
64 "The Dog Men." Mike M'Cracken. Nov 1952.
65 "Round-Up." Rex Quintin. Dec 1952.
66 "Hold-Up Guy." Max Patrick. Dec 1952.
67 "Outlaw Buttes." James Marshal. Jan 1953.
68 "Stampede!" Walter Tyrer. Jan 1953.
69 "The Lucky Chance." J. Vincent Nolan. Feb 1953.
70 "One Star Legion." Jackson Cole. Feb 1953.
71 "Careless O'Connor." Mike M'Cracken. Mar 1953. Careless O'Connor.
72 "Boss of Circle-C." Geo E. Rochestr. Mar 1953.
73 "Rimfire Vengeance." Hugh R. Oldham. Apr 1953.
74 "Fear Rides the Range." Rex Quintin. Apr 1953.
75 "Lone Adventure." T.C.H. Jacobs. May 1953. Whip McCord.
76 "Colorado Trail." John Langley. May 1953.
77 "The Lost Coach." James Marshal. Jun 1953.
78 "Trouble-Buster." Rex Quintin. Jun 1953.
79 "Kiowa Man." Mike M'Cracken. Jul 1953. Careless O'Connor.
80 "The Guy from Kansas." Geo E. Rochester. Jul 1953.
81 "Feud Valley." Hugh R. Oldham. Aug 1953.
82 "Outlaw's Pal." Gordon Sowman. Aug 1953.
83 "Last Drive." Max Patrick. Sep 1953.
84 "Range Rider." J. Vincent Nolan. Sep 1953.
85 "Lannagan's Loot." John Hunter. Oct 1953.
86 "Lone Cherokee." Mike M'Cracken. Oct 1953.
87 "The Cheat." Stan Kenny. Nov 1953.
88 "Lannagan Hits Trouble." John Hunter. Nov 1953.
89 "Vengeance Trail." Charles Wrexe. Dec 1953.
90 "Perilous Quest." T.C.H. Jacobs. Dec 1953.
91 "Pronto Pete." Val Masterson. Jan 1954.
92 "Danger Riders." T.C.H. Jacobs. Jan 1954. Whip McCord.
93 "Gunsmoke Valley." James Marsal. Feb 1954.
94 "Six-Gun Dude." Hugh R. Oldham. Feb 1954.
95 "O'Connor Rides In." Mike M'Cracken. Mar 1954. Careless O'Connor.
96 "Feud Fighter." Rex Quintin. Mar 1954.

97 "The War Trail." Mike M'Cracken. Apr 1954.
98 "Gunsmoke at Sundown." J. Vincent Nolan. Apr 1954.
99 "Say It With Guns!" Rex Quintin. May 1954.
100 "Indian Creek." James Hart. May 1954.
101 "Lannagan Fights Through." John Hunter. Jun 1954.
102 "Lynch Law." Max Patrick. Jun 1954.
103 "The Peacemaker." Stan Kenny. Jul 1954.
104 "War Dust in Dakota." Mike M'Cracken. Jul 1954. Careless O'Connor.
105 "The Fourth Man." T.C.H. Jacobs. Aug 1954.
106 "Indian Attack." Max Patrick. Aug 1954.
107 "Ranger Law." James Marshal. Sep 1954.
"Son of a Horse Thief." Tex Rivers.
108 "Outlaw Breed." James Hart. Sep 1954.
"Broken Spur!" Jack Borg.
109 "Gun Law in Wyoming." Stan Kenny. Oct 1954.
"The Crooked Sheriff". C.F. Thomas.
110 "Land Grabbers." Mike M'Cracken. Oct 1954.
"Rustler's Retreat." J.A. Storrie.

AUTHORS

Pseudonyms are in "quotation marks", real names in CAPITALS; uncertain ascriptions are in neither. A house name is one used by more than one author.

"Denver Bardwell" is the pseudonym of James Denson Sayers.
"George Owen Baxter" is the pseudonym of Frederick Faust.
"Buck Billings" is the pseudonym of Claude Rister.
Jack Borg.
SYDNEY J(AMES) BOUNDS (1920-). See James Marshal.
"Max Brand" is the pseudonym of Frederick Faust.
"Stone Cody" is the pseudonym of Thomas Ernest Mount.
"Jackson Code" is a house name, used here by Oscar Schisgall.
JOHN CREASEY (1908-1973). See William K. Reilly.
HARRY SINCLAIR DRAGO (1888-1979). See Peter Field.
FREDERICK (SCHILLER) FAUST (1892-1944). See George Owen Baxter, Max Brand.
"Peter Field" is a house name, used here by Harry Sinclair Drago.
"Barry Ford" is the pseudonym of Joan Whitford.
NORMAN A(RNOLD) FOX (1910-1960).
KENNETH GIGGAL (1927-). See Stan Kenny.
(CHARLES W)REX(E) HARDINGE (1904-?). See Rex Quintin, Charles Wrexe.
"James Hart" is the pseudonym of James Hart Higgins.
ERNEST HAYCOX (1899-1950).
FRANK HOWE (?-).
(ALFRED) JOHN HUNTER (1891-1961).
T(HOMAS) C(URTIS) H(ICKS) JACOBS (1899-1976).
"Stan Kenny" is the pseudonym of Kenneth Giggal.

GORDON H(OLMES) LANDSBOROUGH (1913-1983). See Mike M'Cracken.
John Langley.
CHARLES M. LEWINS (?-). See Tex Rivers.
JAMES McCORMICK (1906-1963). See Max Patrick.
"Mike M'Cracken" is the pseudonym of Gordon H. Landsborough.
"James Marsal" is the pseudonym of Sydney J. Bounds.
"Val Masterson" is the pseudonym of W. George Wright.
Amos Moore.
THOMAS ERNEST MOUNT. See Stone Cody.
CLARENCE E(DWARD) MULFORD (1883-1927).
J(AMES) VINCENT NOLAN (?-).
HUGH R(OBERT) OLDHAM (1918-1963).
"Max Patrick" is the pseudonym of James McCormick.
"Rex Quintin" is the pseudonym of Rex Hardinge.
WILLIAM MACLEOD RAINE (1871-1954).
"William K. Reilly" is the pseudonym of John Creasey.
CLAUDE RISTER (?-). See Buck Billings.
"Tex Rivers" is the pseudonym of Charles M. Lewins.
FRANK C(HESTER) ROBERTSON (1890-1969).
GEO(RGE) E(RNEST) ROCHESTER (1898-1966).
JAMES DENSON SAYERS (?-). See Denver Bardwell.
OSCAR SCHISGALL (1901-1984). See Jackson Cole.
CHARLES ALDEN SELTZER (1874-1942).
GORDON (WILLIAM) SOWMAN (1918-1982).
J(AMES) A. STORRIE (?-).
C(OLIN) F. THOMAS (?-?).
WALTER TYRER (1900-1978).
JOAN WHITFORD (1922-). See Barry Ford.
"Charles Wrexe" is the pseudonym of Rex Hardinge.
W. GEORGE WRIGHT (?-). See Val Masterson.

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SALE: Annuals: original GHA's - 1941 (VG), 1921, 1922, 1923, 1927, 1930; Tom Merry's Annual 1949 (VG); British Boys (4), Howard Baker's (8), H. Strang etc. Libraries: 30 Sexton Blakes (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th Series), 20+ Schoolboy's Own and others, Modern Boy (1928/29) Nos: 27-52, 20+ hardback school stories by well known authors. 20+ Greyfriars Press volumes. SAE for full list. Reg Andrews, 80 Greenwood Avenue, Laverstock, Salisbury SP1 1PE.

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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.

MUSINGS ON THE EARLY LEE

by Robert Blythe

One friendly criticism that has been directed at the St. Frank's stories is that there were too many new boys, most of them with unusual characteristics. I agree with this to some extent, but the stories were of a public school, and it would have been strange had the new boys been few and far between. If they had had no unusual gifts there would have been no point in introducing them.

Before St. Frank's came into the picture, two characters, whose names spelt adventure, made their appearance. Lord Dorriemore and Umlosi were introduced to us as old friends of Nelson Lee in No. 105, "The Ivory Seekers". Every year after this, when the summer holidays came round, we were sure to find Lord Dorriemore inviting a number of Removites to share some exciting adventures with him.

The story of how Nelson Lee and Nipper decided to go to St. Frank's is well known, but for the benefit of any who are not familiar with the story, this, briefly, is what happened:

During a visit to America on the track of a criminal, Lee was forced to join a Chinese secret society, the Fu Chow Tong. One of the rules of the Tong was that, should he attempt

to escape, he would be branded as a traitor. However, after several narrow escapes from death, Lee managed to return to England, where neither he nor Nipper was safe. The pair buried themselves at St. Frank's College under the guise of Mr. Alvington, Housemaster of the Ancient House, and Dick Bennett of the Remove.

In that story, No. 112, we met a number of characters, nearly all of whom became famous and remained in the narrative until the end. These were Handforth and his chums, Church and McClure; Tregellis-West, Watson, Fullwood, Bell, Gulliver, Christine, York, Talmadge and Teddy Long, all of the Remove. Morrow was the only senior featured, though a brief mention was made of Fenton, the school captain.

When Nipper arrived, the College House was top dog, the Ancient House being in a poor state. Fullwood, then a complete rascal, was captain of the Ancient House Remove, while Bob Christian was form captain. After numerous stirring adventures, Nipper became captain of the Ancient House juniors and of the Remove.

The first new boy after Nipper was an American, Justin B. Farman (no. 114) who played his part in some entertaining stories, and then in no. 132, we were introduced to Cecil De Valerie, at first a complete scamp, possessed of an ungovernable temper.

Sessue Yakama, the Japanese boy, arrived in the next issue. He was a likeable character, but never played a prominent part in the stories after his initial appearance.

A few weeks later we met that original creation Tom Burton, otherwise known as "The Bo'sun", whose nautical mode of speech made him the butt of such fellows as Fullwood and Co.

No. 143 marked the introduction of the boys of the River House School, who appeared in the stories frequently until the end. On once occasion they had a story all to themselves, in an early Schoolboy's Own.

His Grace, the Duke of Somerton, came along in No. 166, and he surely must have been the most untidy and the most original duke in fiction.

Reggie Pitt, one of the most popular characters of all, made his debut in No. 170. The "Serpent" was the unsavoury nickname which he earned for himself very soon, and the stories of his reformation were told in unforgettable style. Jack Grey, who came to St. Frank's as Jack Mason in No. 178, did much to bring about the change of heart in the "Serpent", and at the end of a very satisfying series we learned that Mason was really the son of Sir Crawford Grey.

Those terrible twins, Nicodemus and Cornelius Trotwood, appeared in No. 187. Nicodemus, with his remarkable memory and his ventriloquism, played a larger part than the deaf Cornelius, but neither was ever very prominent.

Fatty Little arrived nearly a year later, just in time to join the juniors in their barring-out against Mr. Martin. Unlike his famous contemporary, Billy Bunter, he was at once a great favourite with his schoolfellows, although his appetite was something they could never understand. A good cook, and a decent fellow in every way, he soon took a prominent part in the form's activities. Later, he gained renown as the goalkeeper for the West House Eleven.

And so they came, standing the test of time, and winning their places in the warmest spots of our memories. How pleasant it is to live again, with them, their exciting adventures, their hopes and disappointments, their ups and down, in the halcyon corridors of yesteryear.

FORUM

From Darrell Swift:

With reference to Colin Partis' letter in the January C.D., my latest information is that the proposed Bunter series on T.V. has been abandoned or certainly curtailed, for as far as I am aware, neither the B.B.C. nor I.T.V. network was willing to take on the project. This is a pity, but I **do** fear it would not have been the Greyfriars we know so well.

As for Bunter restaurants, there have been quite a number of such names over the years. One large hotel in Leeds opened a Bunter Restaurant in its complex; a brave attempt as it did have Bunter pictures and copies of *The Magnet* framed on the wall, but it was short-lived. A café in the resort of Filey was named "Bunter's Last Fling" - but that is now closed. A Bunter theme restaurant opened in Thames Ditton, but that too is now closed. I visited this restaurant and with its pictures of Greyfriars, menus and bills/receipts and some Howard Baker books for sale, it was a very good attempt at "authenticity". I considered the food good too! I was surprised that this was only a short-lived venture because it had the makings of being successful.

From Martin Waters:

I was very interested in the article on the magazine *The Captain* which appeared in a recent C.D. I well remember elderly relatives speaking of a boys' story paper of this name during the 1920s. However this paper was a straight-forward 'adventure' weekly containing 'Wild West' epics and 'British Empire' stories featuring Canadian Mounties, etc. It bore no resemblance to the magazine described in the article. Could there have been two different papers named *The Captain*, or did the original paper change its flavour in the post WW1 period?

One further comment on the C.D. Captain feature. The Head Boys of the public schools look stern and serious, because this was the usual style of portrait photography in those days. The staff and pupils of 'Mill Lane Board School' would look just as sombre in a school photo.

From Norman Wright:

I'd like to say that I thought Brian Mowbray's list of Champion Library an excellent piece of research and the sort of thing that we can always do with. Having done similar lists myself I know the amount of time and effort that goes into the research. Well done.

From Brian Doyle:

In the January C.D., Horace Dilley recalls the frequent use of the exhortation "Go and eat coke!" in the *Magnet* and *Gem* stories and says the expression was hardly ever heard in real life. In fact, it was heard regularly in my own household during my youth. My mother had been a keen *Magnet* reader for many years and, in moments of exasperation or annoyance (especially with me!) would often advise me to "Go and eat coke!". She even said it to my father too at times of stress. I picked it up, both from her and from reading the stories myself, and used it among friends both at school and in my neighbourhood.

Over the years I have read of two possible derivations of the phrase. It may have started out as "Go and **heat** coke." This was apparently a particularly unpleasant task in the coal and coke industry and only to be wished on those you disliked. Another theory was that it concerned a 17th century lawyer named Edward Coke, who was famous for being so expert and accomplished in his profession that law students and fellow-lawyers and barristers were said to advise colleagues who fancied themselves in the field: "If you're so brilliant, just go and beat Coke!", meaning that only a really outstanding lawyer could ever triumph over Mr. Coke in a lawsuit. Of course, the simple meaning is the obvious and literal one. It wouldn't have been very pleasant to eat coke anyway . . . !

Also in the same issue of the 'S.P.C.D.', Derek Hinrich states that "every actor who has played Sherlock Holmes in any major (film) production, with the possible exception of John Neville, has, in fact, been too old for the part."

I had the pleasure of working on two Sherlock Holmes films: *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* and *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution.* In the first, Robert Stephens, who played the great sleuth, was 38, and in the second, Nicol Williamson, as Holmes, was aged 38 too. Since Sherlock, it is generally agreed, was born in or around 1854, and was a famous and established consulting detective by the mid-1880s, this makes him around the mid-30s age-group. So Stephens and Williamson weren't far out! And John Neville, whom Derek mentions, was aged 40 when he played Holmes in *A Study in Terror.* "Practically over the hill, my dear Watson" as Sherlock may well have remarked as he tuned his trusty fiddle . . .

In the recent annual, Donald Campbell wrote about Masefield's *The Box of Delights* and I share his opinion that it, and its pre-sequel *The Midnight Folk,* is a wonderful book, and also made a marvellous BBC radio Children's Hour serial, backed by Victor Hely-Hutchinson's evocative 'Carol Symphony' (which would certainly be included in my own 'Desert Island Discs'). But I must correct Donald when he states: "only in the 1970s was it recorded and offered for sale to the general public". I first bought it as a 10-inch LP record in the mid-1960s (played by the Metropole Symphony Orchestra conducted by Dolf Van Der Linden, and issued by Paxton and Co. Ltd. of Dean Street, Soho, London). The record or its cover are not dated, but I recall that I purchased it when I was working as Press Officer for Columbia Pictures, in London, and that was between 1963-67. Hely-Hutchinson was Director of Music for the BBC from 1944 to 1947, when he died at the early age of 46.

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It helps the C.D. if you advertise your "For Sales" and Wants in it. The rates are: 4p per word, £5 for a quarter page, £10 for a half page and £20 for a whole page.

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TRIBUTES TO LEN HAWKEY

From Donald V. Campbell:

I have just learned of the recent death of Len Hawkey. What can I say about that dear man who is no longer with us? A wonderful, educated and congenial man. A friend of only a few years yet we related as though we had been at school with each other. Brought together through SPCD we met only once but we talked and corresponded constantly with great pleasure.

He was mild mannered and warm, with a twinkle in his eye and a pleasant voice that welcomed you into his world. We related particularly well because of our mutual interest in the art of book illustration. This hobby - along with book collecting - he had developed over most of his eighty-five years. But what particularly marked him out was his total generosity of spirit. He had an admirable willingness to share his knowledge and understanding. He opened up the world of illustrators to me in such a gentle and encouraging way. He would illuminate their work with piquancy; just a few words would brilliantly light up both the pictures and their artists. I don't believe that he ever lost his excitement over a picture newly-found or an artist discovered.

He was involved in advising the authors of the classic work on British illustrators - *The Dictionary of British Book Illustrators* (Brigid Peppin and Lucy Micklethwaite), and was, in his final years, collaborating on a book about female illustrators. He contributed over a long period to SPCD and *CD Annual*. His contributions were always engagingly informed with his cordial concern that the art of the illustrator should not be forgotten.

He was a much valued friend and, along with many other readers, I will remember and miss him. My remembrance will always be with grateful appreciation for the time that we knew each other. Thank you, Len, and God bless you.

From J.E.M.

You will have heard the sad news of Len Hawkey's passing and I would like to add my own small eulogy. We corresponded for almost two decades and he was instrumental in tracking down for me a number of childhood books I had so fondly remembered, as well as a whole series of *Strand* Mags containing some of the Sherlock Holmes stories.

His enthusiasm for the hobby was enormous and he was well informed, especially on the subject of illustration. He could identify the artists from a great range of story-papers and comics and knew a great deal about their lives and backgrounds. I don't know if he has left any systematised study of this field but, if he has, it would certainly be valuable and well worth reading.

A warm, kindly man, Len will be much missed beyond his own immediate family and friends.

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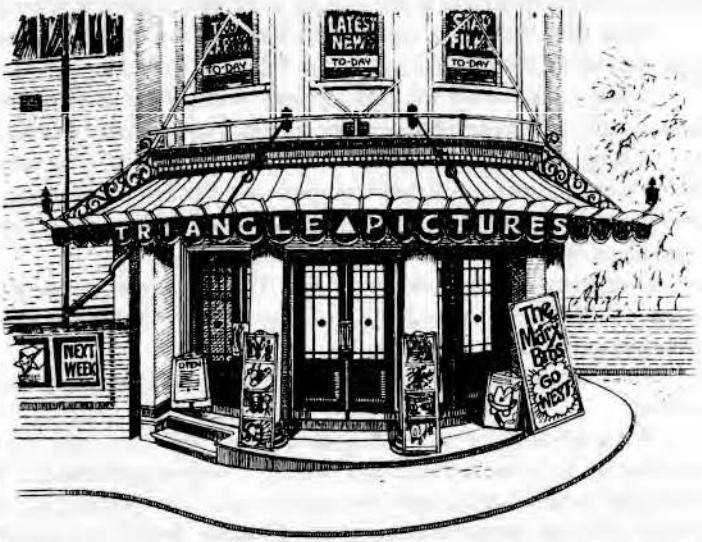
CINEMA-GOING AND OTHER TWENTIETH CENTURY DELIGHTS

by Ted Baldock



I enjoyed the amusing article 'Cinema Days of Long Ago' by Terry Jones.

I suppose every town in the early days of the century had its plethora of cinemas, each with its own particular characteristics.

Cambridge 'sported' no less than seven cinemas, all of which were, with the exception of one, considered 'decent' houses of entertainment. The 'black sheep', although most people thought it a jolly good little place, was known as the 'Kinema', specialising in Westerns - Tom Mix, W.S. Hart and Co. and certain other 'blood-and-thunder' type films together with thrilling serials. Suffice to say that it more than held its own with its more selective fellows.

This type of film attracted a mainly juvenile audience. And at times the programmes offered very thrilling moments. Much advice was levelled at the characters in the film from the audience. At times the noise would be quite deafening (happily the films were 'silent').

The Kinema was fortunate to have on its staff someone named Smith, a gentleman of considerable character, and a noted local pugilist. Mr Smith's job was to see that 'law and order' were maintained. He performed his duty attired in a bizarre uniform several sizes too large for his person; he was not particularly tall, but had a reputation for quelling any untoward conduct during the performances.

Very little escaped his eagle eye. Should excessive noise or a battle develop (as sometimes happened) among the younger and rowdier elements Mr Smith would quietly stroll down the centre gangway and station himself where he judged the centre of the conflict to be. He just stood and gazed into the 'eye of the storm' as it were, quite silent.

It was enough. So soon as his presence was observed, as though by magic the pandemonium ceased. It was as though he had cast a spell - as indeed he had. One look from Mr Smith was enough; peace and quiet were immediately restored.

Alas, he has now been long gone. The young 'rebels' constituting the audience have grown up and departed their several ways. The old Kinema is no more, it disappeared in a heap of rubble and dust some years ago. In its place there now stands a handsome block of

students' rooms. In the memory of a few 'old timers' though, it will never entirely fade away.

The approaching end of this tumultuous century occasions, I feel, a certain sadness. This is perhaps applicable to the passing of all things; there is a sense of loss.

It has been with all its faults - which no-one can deny have been legion - our century. And with all its disasters and upheavals, I think we loved it.

It was a time when we grew up and were getting our first impressions of life. We learned early that it consisted of shadowy times and periods of brilliant sunshine.

Among the many 'highspots' were the Wednesday *Gem* and the Saturday *Magnet* which were recurring milestones on our way through schooldays. Saturday, the 'plum', epitomized a general feeling of freedom and relaxation. A slackening of the rules and regulations of the working week.

Everything appeared more relaxed. The sun seemed to shine more brightly and cast sharper shadows. It seemed never to rain. And there was the *Magnet* to be perused and absorbed immediately after breakfast.

We must have absorbed many positive ideas from these readings of our favourite papers.

We laughed at the antics of Horace Coker while sympathizing with the tribulations of his doughty henchmen, Potter and Greene. Vernon-Smith was a 'mixed bag' with many admirable qualities and several less happy ones. The Famous Five could do no wrong, and William George Bunter was a general favourite despite his countless backslidings. Mr Henry Samuel Quelch, he of the 'Gimlet Eye' and 'Acid Countenance', held a firm place in our regard. The 'sixes' he so liberally administered we thought to be not undeserved - while being relieved that we were not on the receiving end of such castigations.

Paul Pontifex Prout, a fruity yet loveable old bore, was no less popular. It is possible, however, that we may have held him in somewhat different regard had he been our form-master. These characters who were constant companions week by week made a considerable impact on our youthful imaginations. I am sure that they determined in no small way many of our future modes of conduct and were a source for good.

It was a wholesome and very real world in which we were very much involved. Friardale Lane and the Courtfield Road were as familiar to us as the lanes and roads in our own vicinity. What a debt to owe to the originator of this wonder world.

The question arises. How is it that the latter part of the twentieth century has failed to produce a similar boys' paper, another set of characters to carry forward the traditions so splendidly established by Charles Hamilton, to fill in some measure the void left by the demise of the *Magnet*?

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BOB CHERRY
Part III

by Peter Mahony

A major feature of Bob's youthful career was his 'crush' on Marjorie Hazeldene. Despite his abundance of vigour - or, perhaps, because of it - Bob became diffident, self-conscious and tongue-tied in the presence of the fair charmer. The rest of the Co. liked Marjorie, but none of them succumbed so completely as Bob did. Consequently, he suffered a good deal more than his friends when they were drawn into the machinations of the Hazeldene tribe.

In the early stories, Harry Wharton was 'teamed' with Marjorie when occasion demanded. Poor Bob had to hover on the fringe of the circle - and he did not enjoy it. Wharton, harder-headed - and more self-centred - than Bob, rallied round nobly when Marjorie needed rescuing from gipsies or help with sorting out the murky doings of brother Peter. Nevertheless, Bob was always around, hoping to be called on by the damsel in distress.

Marjorie, a pleasant young lady, treated her Greyfriars chums with kindness and tact. But there was a shrewd streak in her. She realised that Wharton had an independent turn of mind which might, at some time, bring them into conflict. For example, though Harry, quite frequently, bailed Peter Hazeldene out of trouble to save Marjorie from distressing herself he was not blind to Peter's innate shortcomings. Marjorie sensed that a time would come when Hazeldene would so overdo things that Harry would not be charmed into covering up for him. Also, some of Harry's excesses - like his revolts against authority - probably made Marjorie wary of a deeper relationship with him. (Cliff House was rarely involved when Wharton was at his worst, but Hazeldene could be relied upon to retail Greyfriars gossip to his sister.)

The other members of the Co. were not to Marjorie's taste. Frank Nugent, mainly meek and mild, was not a rock on which she could lean. Johnny Bull was - but he was also a 'rough diamond'. Of the Famous Five he was the one who had least patience with Hazeldene - and said so in plain terms. That did not endear him to Marjorie, whose 'blind' spot was her scapegrace brother. There was an element of "love me, love my dog" about Marjorie. Criticism of Peter was sure to rouse her disapproval.

Hurree Singh, who, at least once, redeemed a 'loan' raised by Hazeldene, was tolerated, but little regarded, by Marjorie. As the daughter of an English clergyman, she was hardly likely to 'get in deep' with a Hindu - even if he was a prince and ruler in his native land. Consequently the only real rival to Wharton for Marjorie's affection was Bob Cherry. (Vernon-Smith tried his luck once or twice, but the Bounder's occasional outbreaks of 'leading Peter astray' told against him.) Honest Bob, innocent and uncomplicated, was much more attractive to the young girl.

There is no doubt that Marjorie had a soft spot for Bob. His friends, even Wharton, realised this and they tactfully made matters easy for Bob when 'courting' opportunities arose. Wharton, quite early on, was surprised and faintly amused to realise that Bob was 'hooked' on Marjorie. Harry's own friendship with her was, from his point of view, that of school chums - he liked Marjorie, felt protective towards her on occasion, but he was not badly 'smitten'. When a hesitant Cherry made it evident that he wanted to be Marjorie's

'special', Harry tactfully distanced himself from her. Marjorie seemed happy with the new arrangement - it survived through more than 1,000 *Magnets*!

Bob's problems with the fair sex were mainly of a comic nature. Naturally untidy, he could never comb his hair nor tie a tie tidily enough for romantic effect. Booting a football, slogging at cricket, punching noses, and rowing boats were Bob's chief talents. Sophisticated behaviour, squiring elegant young women, was a bit beyond him. Clara Trevlyn (whose taunts and teases really merited a vigorous 'ragging') never failed to embarrass Bob by pointing out his 'faux pas'. Marjorie would murmur reproaches to Clara - water off a duck's back! Poor old Bob, ever-ready with a robust riposte to his male friends, could never cope with female 'funning'.

Marjorie's soft spot had its other side. When ticklish problems beset her, she presumed on Bob's infatuation to lumber him with them. Bob would turn up at a Cliff House 'soirée', eager but apprehensive to dance with Marjorie, only to be sweetly requested to "give Bessie a dance". Thus, a happy evening would become a temporary nightmare. Miss Elizabeth Bunter was unwieldy and lacking in grace. Pushing her round a dance floor would have tested the skills of Fred Astaire. Poor old Bob, with two 'left feet' of his own, didn't stand a chance. Collisions and embarrassment would follow - and Bessie would peevishly blame Bob. Black mark, Marjorie!

This kind of unkind manipulation was a regular feature of Marjorie's attitude towards Bob. As late as 1939 (*Magnet* 1617), Bob was 'requested' to help Bessie at ice-skating. The usual Bunter farce ensued, with Bob struggling vainly to keep them both upright on the ice, while Marjorie skated happily away with Harry Wharton. Why didn't she ask Harry to help Bessie? Did she fear a dusty answer? Bob's dogged devotion was ruthlessly exploited by the fair Miss Hazeldene on such occasions. Such episodes added to the fun of the stories - but they tell you quite a bit about Marjorie. Peter wasn't the only member of the Hazeldene family to make unfair use of other people.

Bob's 'crush' always survived such treatment. The sun shone out of Marjorie; her wish was his command. She, on her side, was not quite so devoted. When Ponsonby of Highcliffe engineered a rift between Greyfriars and Cliff House (*Magnets* 1528-30), Marjorie was not as certain of Bob's inability to do a rotten deed as he was of hers a little later (*Magnets* 1533-35). Their mutual esteem was not quite equal - Bob was convinced about her; she was not quite so sure about him. Both assessments were flawed; the dispassionate observer would have reversed them.

The Ponsonby-inspired feud was fuelled by Clara Trevlyn, Dolly Jobling and Bessie Bunter. Pon stole the Cliff House boat, stranding the girls on Popper's Island. He left Bob's straw hat (which Pon had 'bagged' in an earlier 'rag') at the landing spot as 'evidence' of the culprit. Clara and Bessie jumped to the obvious conclusion; Marjorie was not convinced of Bob's guilt.

Later, the Famous Five came across Ponsonby in the purloined boat. It was a 'hire' boat from Friardale boatyard and they naturally assumed that Pon had hired it. They took it from Ponsonby (Bob actually dropped into the boat from a branch overhanging the river) as retribution for the earlier clash. When the Friardale boatman discovered the boat at the Greyfriars boat-house, everyone assumed that the Famous Five had stranded the girls.

Marjorie & Co., who had been rescued from the island by Coker, Potter and Greene, had already believed the worst. The locating of the boat confirmed their suspicions. Clara,

Bessie and Dolly Jobling needed little convincing of Bob's guilt: Marjorie, sadly, came to the same conclusion. So much for a nice girl's faith in her devoted boyfriend!

Clara got her own back by stranding an unsuspicious Bob on Popper's Island a week later. Marjorie was shocked when she was told about it - Clara and Bessie had been out on their own - and she telephoned the boatyard to arrange Bob's rescue. The Famous Five, mystified by the girls' behaviour, made a special effort to contact Marjorie & Co. at the weekend. They were given the 'marble eye' for their pains - and Marjorie was as aloof as Clara & Co. Wharton and Bull, in particular, were sorely offended and they said emphatically that they would not "put up with that again".

Bob was more distressed than offended, but he jibbed at being labelled a 'cad' by the frosty females!

After a couple of useless attempts, via Bunter and Hazeldene, to close the breach, Lord Mauleverer took a hand. He laid on a picnic at Sark Abbey, inviting Hazeldene and the girls. By pre-arrangement, the Famous Five collared Ponsonby, frogmarched him to the Abbey ruins and wormed the whole story out of him. The girls overheard and realised that they had jumped to conclusions. Peter Hazeldene went for Pon and thrashed him; the Col and the girls were friends again. Marjorie, rather sheepishly, apologised to Bob, who was 'over the moon'. Clara, however, loftily blamed the boys for the whole mess, saying they "lacked gumption". That young lady really needed a 'come-uppance'!

One suspects, though, that Clara was trying to save face over this earlier episode.

While Bob was stranded on Popper's Island a Greyfriars boy was spotted at the Three Fishers. Actually, it was Peter Hazeldene, but he managed to bamboozle the authorities by establishing an alibi. Clara and Bessie, having dumped Bob, gave Hazel a lift in their boat so that he was back at Greyfriars before the prefects could apprehend the culprit. Bob was the only junior late for roll call that day - and he was assumed to be the offender. Rather than involve the girls - Cherry had a highly developed Quixotic streak - he refused to state where he had been.

Mr. Quelch found Bob guilty. He was reported for a Head's flogging. Before the sentence was carried out, Clara got wind of the affair. The estimable Hazeldene had tried to persuade her to vouch for his presence in her boat at least half an hour before she gave him the lift! Clara refused to "tell lies" - good for her! - but, realising Bob's predicament, she post-hasted to Greyfriars just in time to save his bacon. Dr. Locke exonerated Bob and sportingly decided not to report Clara to Miss Primrose. The whole sorry business could have been resolved there and then - but Clara, her duty done, mounted the high horse again and snubbed Bob. (Charles Hamilton knew his females as well as his males. The Clara Trevlyns of this world make too many waves!)

I sometimes wonder whether Clara fancied Bob herself. Both of them were robust characters, inclined to be boisterous and over-active. Bob's keenness on Marjorie may have 'miffed' her best friend, who took it out of him by catty taunts. The Wharton - Marjorie - Cherry triangle was fairly obvious, particularly in the early *Magnets*. A Marjorie - Bob - Clara triangle had infinitely greater possibilities, which Hamilton hinted at, but never exploited.

(A brief analysis of this theme throws up some interesting ideas. Clara, more aware than anyone of the depth of Marjorie's concern for her wastrel brother, may well have jibbed at Marjorie's cool assumption that Bob, Harry - or almost anyone - could be

inveigled into helping Peter - just to please her. Girls are usually much more alive to their friends' wiles than boys are. Clara, despite her bossy attitude, was a good deal of a tomboy. She probably felt that it wasn't 'sporting' to wheedle boys into doing the 'dirty work' of shielding an unworthy brother. Rather than clash with her best friend, Clara made herself unpleasant to Hazeldene and teased the Co. - particularly Bob - about doing the 'knight errant' stunt. She may have hoped to open his eyes to Marjorie's manipulations - and catch him on the rebound. I think, at least, that a yarn on that theme could have had a great deal of passion (in the intellectual sense) in it. Marjorie's reaction to a determined rival could have been quite revealing!)

Bob's last 'starring' role also involved Marjorie. In *Magnets* 1533-35, Peter Hazeldene set off the most unsavoury chain of events of his entire reprehensible career. Having backed his fancy with Bill Lodgey - on tick, of course - he let Greyfriars down in a cricket match. (The result of the horse-race came to Hazel during the cricket match. The 'gee' lost and the dear boy went to pieces.) There had been opposition to the inclusion of 'Marjorie's brother' in the Greyfriars team - the Famous Five kept asking for trouble in this respect. Skinner's jibes, though sneering and provocative, had enough foundation for more decent fellows to endorse them. Marjorie was embarrassed by Peter's puerile performance; Wharton was annoyed; so were the Co. Vernon-Smith, who knew the real reason for Hazel's flop, was greatly incensed. The Bounder despised 'blades' who couldn't 'stand the racket' of their peccadilloes - and told Hazel so in the tersest of terms.

This unhappy episode was followed by a downright wicked one. Lord Mauleverer had carelessly left a 'tenner' in a Holiday Annual. Quelch confiscated the book without knowing that it contained a bank-note. Bunter tried to retrieve the 'tenner', hoping to borrow a few bob from Mauly for 'services rendered'. Quelch caught him and the ensuing hullabaloo made the Remove aware of the banknote's whereabouts.

Hazeldene, faced with Lodgey's bill, crept down in the night and stole the £10. He took it to Lodgey, who had the nous to realise it was stolen. The bookie tersely refused it and told Hazeldene to "put it back". Hazeldene, with his debt 'on hold', was only too pleased to do so.

Unfortunately, Quelch, fed up with the attempts on the Holiday Annual, had passed the book to Dr. Locke for 'safe-keeping'. Hazeldene, with his yellow streak well in evidence, was at his wits' end on how to dispose of the tenner. Enter his unsuspecting sister.

Marjorie came to Greyfriars with a message for the Head from his sister (a teacher at Cliff House). She was intercepted by her shifty brother, who promptly saw a way out of his difficulty. Marjorie was going to the Head's study - she could put the 'tenner' back!

For once, Marjorie was placed in the 'fall guy' position. Though Bob was hovering in the quadrangle, hoping to chat with her, he was not going to be of help in this crisis. The whining Peter, having shocked his sister to the core, was not the lad to let her off the hook. The whole world existed purely for the purpose of shielding him from the consequences of crime and folly. It never mattered to Hazeldene who carried the can as long as he didn't. This time the task fell to Marjorie (not a bad idea on Hamilton's part - for once the sweet girl had to do the dirty work!). Being a Hazeldene, she made a mess of it!

In most of the stories, Marjorie comes over as cool, sensible and quietly courageous. This time, worried about being an accessory after the event, she bungled. Waiting in Dr. Locke's study, with the stolen £10 in her pocket, she took too long in finding the Holiday

Annual. She had just located it when the Head arrived. Unable to insert the bank-note into the book, she hid it behind her. Then, as Dr. Locke inquired her business, she panicked and dropped the note through the open study window.

Bob, mooching in the quadrangle, saw her do it. He picked up the tenner, realised whose it was, and was appalled. Fighting down dire suspicions about his girlfriend, he withdraw to a secluded spot. There, he loyally decided that, whatever it looked like, Marjorie was 'straight' and it was up to him to keep the matter dark. Then, he saw Peter Hazeldene rooting about under the Head's window. To anyone else it would have seemed that Marjorie had purloined the tenner so that her brother (whose debt was fairly common knowledge in the Remove) could have it. Cherry, unlike Marjorie in the earlier boat-stealing episode, had no use for evidence - even that of his own eyes. He decided, pretty accurately, that Hazeldene was responsible and had somehow 'conned' his sister into obtaining the tenner for him. Bob decided to 'keep mum' about the whole murky business.

Complications soon set in. Bob intended to return the £10 to Mauleverer - least said, soonest mended. Mauly, however, had leave to visit his uncle, so Bob was stuck with the tenner over the weekend. Before he left, Mauly had asked Wharton to tell Quelch about the tenner in the Holiday Annual - Mauly preferred to be absent when Henry found the note! Quelch looked for the note - and didn't find it! It was generally assumed in the Remove that Bunter had pinched it.

During the weekend, Bob had asked Harry not to give the information to Mr. Quelch. He gave no reason - Marjorie's name was not to be dragged into it - and Harry was mystified. When the theft was discovered, Wharton was sorely troubled - was Bob involved? Vernon-Smith, who had suspected Hazeldene, began to investigate. He deduced that Bob had the tenner and gave him friendly advice to get it back to Mauleverer before Quelch started enquiries. Bob did so and Mauly, a beautifully trusting soul, refrained from asking awkward questions.

The Co. - particularly Johnny Bull - didn't. Wharton had told the others, in confidence, of Bob's clumsy attempt to keep Quelch uninformed. Bull wanted an explanation of how Bob had come into possession of "someone else's bank-note". Bob refused to explain - Bull refused to associate with someone "who wouldn't explain". A rift in the lute occurred, with Wharton, Nugent and Hurree Singh striving nobly to "believe in Bob".

It was Smithy who sorted it out - but not before he had come to blows with Bob about it. Smithy thought Bob had 'pinched' the £10 - and said so. They fought in view of the Cliff House girls. When Bob realised that Marjorie was watching - from a boat on the river - he broke off the scrap and plunged into the woods. It was as near a snubbing of Marjorie as makes no matter - the sharp Clara noted it and asked: "Have you been rowing with Bob?" Marjorie's reply - a terse "Nonsense!" - was far removed from her normal pleasant manner.

Smithy, determined to expose Bob, went to see Bill Lodgey - and found that Hazeldene had tried to pay Bill with a stolen tenner! Unknown to the Bounder, Messrs. Quelch and Prout were waiting outside the Three Fishers to snaffle him. Bob, cycling on the towpath, was reprimanded by Quelch. He guessed that Smithy was inside the 'Fishers', so he broke through a hole in the fence and warned the Bounder.

Grateful for his narrow escape, Smithy called a meeting of the Co., Bob and Hazeldene. Despite some confusion caused by Bob's frantic attempts to keep Marjorie's name "out of it", the facts were established. Hazeldene admitted his crime and undertook to tell the whole story to Marjorie. Bull apologised to Bob; the Co. were reconciled; Smithy was congratulated. Later, at a picnic with the girls, Marjorie and Bob had some precious moments together when she thanked him for his loyalty and he assured her that he had known she was "all right". This came closest of all Hamilton's accounts of boy/girl relationships to a "love scene". They had got to holding hands and who knows what would have come next? - when Bunter barged in. End of romantic interlude!

After this, Bob reverted to being the cheerful, extrovert sportsman. Of all the Greyfriars characters, he was the most straightforward. Like Tom Merry, Bob stuck to what was right - whatever the cost. He was incorruptible, loyal, tolerant and highly moral. Though lacking scholastic ability, he had solid common-sense and an innate integrity which carried him above his peers. Wharton's pride, Nugent's diffidence, Bull's priggish streak, and Inky's vein of Eastern cunning placed them lower in the angelic order than Bob. And - dare one say it - Marjorie Hazeldene's tendency to exploit her boyfriend's goodwill placed her below Bob too. He was one of 'nature's gentlemen' - a **fine** character in the best sense of the word.

A Final Speculation

If Bob and Marjorie had married later in life, would true love have run smoothly? Or would brother Peter have made irregular demands on a probably tight family income?

Until the last series described here (the stolen tenner), I would have expected Marjorie to 'persuade' Bob to keep helping Peter. After that unsavoury episode, I feel certain that Bob would have shown the dear lad the door in later life. How would Marjorie have reacted to not getting her own way with her adoring husband? Not too well, I should imagine. As a result the Cherry/Hazeldene marriage would have had its ups and downs. What do readers think?

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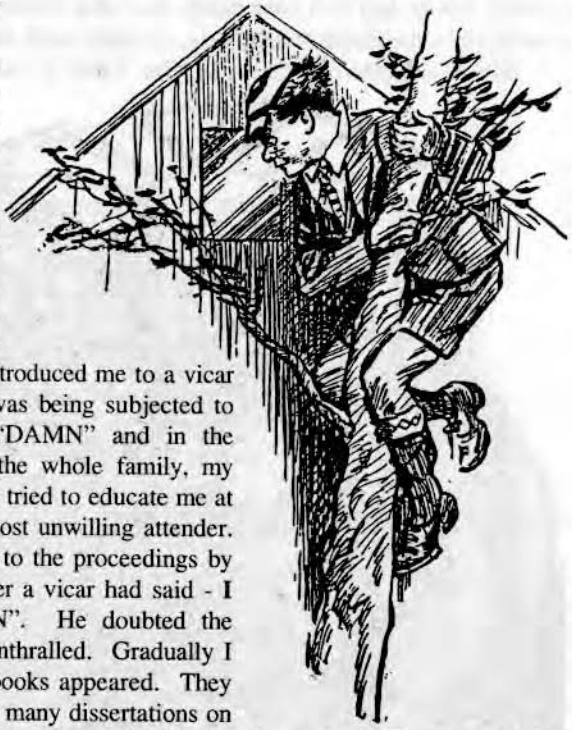
PLEASE REMEMBER MARY CADOGAN'S NEW ADDRESS:
46 OVERBURY AVENUE
BECKENHAM
KENT
BR3 6PY

FOREVER WILLIAM

by Dennis Hilliard

I remember well my first meeting with William Brown - that in itself is a remarkable feat because I have arrived at an age when I leave myself reminders to perform ordinary tasks. My neighbours also have copies of my house and car keys because I have been known to regularly lock myself out.

However, William Brown entered my life in August 1936.



I was ten years old and to mark that birthday an older brother, whose presents always showed real imagination, gave me *Still - William* - so much more interesting that Dad's gift of *The Gorilla Hunters* (Ballantyne). The first story in *Still - William* made me a friend of the hero for ever. "The Bishop's Handkerchief" is never quoted as one of Richmal Crompton's best but to me it was a revelation. It introduced me to a vicar who said "DAMN". The cleric was being subjected to much annoyance - but to say "DAMN" and in the presence of the Bishop! I told the whole family, my teachers, my friends and those who tried to educate me at Sunday School - where I was a most unwilling attender. At the end my father called a halt to the proceedings by informing me forcibly that whatever a vicar had said - I was not allowed to say "DAMN". He doubted the suitability of the book but I was enthralled. Gradually I won him over and more *William* books appeared. They are still very precious. I have read many dissertations on their peculiar merits but somehow they have all failed to hit the mark. William was (and is) **real.** He didn't like Sunday School, he had warfare with all manner of pompous adults. Most of all he endeared himself to me as someone who had got the Vicar to say "DAMN" - and who got away with it!

My older brother died long before my collection of juvenilia had flourished. He is always remembered for his special presents. In 1939, he prevailed upon Dad to allow me to keep a dog. With only eight days' absence, dogs have been part of my life for almost fifty years. Two basset hounds snore on the couch whilst William and Bunter and all the rest look on. I forget the pains and the specialist appointments, disregard the tablets and just for a minute I am ten years old.

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THE WEB IS EVEN MORE TANGLED THAN I THOUGHT

by Derek Hinrich

When I set out to draw together as best I could the story of Sexton Blake and his brothers I knew that the tale was a complex one, but little did I realise how difficult and contradictory it would prove.

The trouble is that *The Detective Weekly* section is the thinnest part of my collection of Blake stories and so I have fallen into what Sherlock Holmes considered the gravest possible error, theorising without data, or, rather, with incomplete data.

When I examined the career of Nigel Blake, I read my copies of those first issues of the *DW* where his battle with his brother is related by Lewis Jackson; but I had not seen a copy of *DW*/13, *The Monster of Paris.* This is concerned with Sexton Blake's struggle to recover the text of his *Manual of Crime* and to wrest his invention, the (electro) Magnetic Picklock, from the clutches of Leon Kestrel, the Master Mummer, who had seized it from Nigel Blake's flat at the end of *DW*/4, *Sexton Blake's Triumph.*

"Friend of yours, sir," exclaimed the taxi-driver. "Told me to drive 'ere, urgent. Ill, I think, sir. Mortal bad!"

While I knew that the Mummer had taken a hand in the game from these last paragraphs, I was not aware until I was kindly lent a copy of *DW*/13 by Bill Bradford that in the course of this adventure Nigel

Blake, now recovered from his mental affliction, is mortally wounded by an associate of the Mummer and dies in hospital with his brother, his wife, and his son at his bedside.

What turmoil this makes of the family history! If Nigel died in 1933 who then was it who was burnt alive as Nigel Blake on Friday 13th March 1942 in *SBL* 3/451, *The Angry Night*? Eustace Craille, spy-master extraordinary, was sure whom he had been employing. Sexton Blake was thunderstruck to hear that his brother had redeemed himself (and in the circumstances he might well be!) but not a word breathed he. He did not say, "That is not my brother. My brother was murdered in London nine years ago."

Could it be that in 1933 Nigel Blake had already been recruited for secret service in the Far and Middle East and that the part of the *DW* story dealing with his death was just that, a story - a cover story? Or did Mr Baker not do his homework thoroughly?

These are deep waters, Watson.

Incidentally, Sexton Blake, while successfully recovering the text of his *Manual,* failed to regain or destroy the picklock or its blueprints He was left grimly anticipating another round with the Mummer but that did not occur for over a year, until *DW*/73, *The Panic Liner Plot,* and I haven't got that far yet.

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ROUND THE YEAR WITH CLIFF HOUSE (2) by Margery Woods

April . . . Sunshine and Showers, Tears and Smiles.

Strangely, for a school which made much of its holidays, Easter scarcely features in the Cliff House saga. The girls apparently work (and romp) through the spring break. One has to go back to the Castaways series in *The Schoolfriend* issues of 97, 98, 99, to find the chums enjoying an Easter cruise to become castaways on an Atlantic coral island complete with lagoon, coconut palms, an old hut, a mysterious elixir and a wondrous ceremonial cloak for a queen; all the trappings for the traditional desert island. This was the series that introduced Grace Kelwyn, the castaway girl with a quest, and certainly made a memorable Easter vacation for the Cliff House chums.

Another early Easter series was set at Delma Castle, the home of Jemima Carstairs. Sadly this is not available for my research. However, April was never without its adventure and drama and brought several circus stories. "Their Circus Chum" (1925); another circus background in 1928 featuring Vivienne Leigh; and a mysterious circus rider in 1929. Meanwhile, in 1924 April held a major series with the great Augusta Anstruther-Browne, and in 1927 there was April humour and some excitement with Dolly Jobling, she of the great burnt cookery fame.

April also holds a certain very famous day for juveniles of all ages; the First.

Freda Foote played the joker in "Freda's April Fools" in *School Friend* new series, April 4th, 1925. An atmosphere of spring with sunshine and daffodils set the scene for a host of birthday offerings, mostly of the kind suitable for the next jumble sale, set before Connie Jackson at breakfast. Only - it was not Connie's birthday! She was a furious April Fool, and so were the Fourth formers who had all been assured by Freda that April the First was indeed the unpopular prefect's birthday. Bessie was the next victim, looking for a

mythical half-crown, followed by a soap apple, and Freda also arranged to have a telegram sent to herself saying that her father was coming to Courtfield that day and wanted her to meet him. This supposed April Fool trick on her means she receives permission to have a lovely day on the river and miss lessons. Then another idea is born when she learns that Connie's grandmother is coming to see her granddaughter but cancels the visit by telegram, which falls into Freda's hands. So Freda disguises herself as Granny, unaware that Mabs is also busy disguising herself as Connie's rich grandmother. Great hilarity ensues - though not from Connie - until it is necessary for the chums to rescue Mabs and haul Granny 2 to safety. Unfortunately Granny 2 objects strongly, especially to attempts to pull off her grey wig which isn't a wig at all; Granny 2 is actually the real one. So three Grannies circulating at Cliff House make great fun of this classic situation.

But an April Fool fate is saving Freda until last! For she has missed the arrival of a message - a genuine one - from her father, who **had** come to Courtfield and wasted his day. He was not at all pleased. Bags of jolly coincidences in this Cliff House version of April the First but lots of fun too.

1932 brought the beginning of the new Cliff House weekly stories in *The Schoolgirl.* The series kicked off with "Bessie Bunter's Spectre".

Of course the chums should never have settled down to a session of ghost stories in the dorm, by candlelight, with the plump duffer in the circle of listeners agog round Barbara Redfern's bed as she recounted the tale of the monk Benedict who had tragically loved the daughter of a knight and returned down the years to haunt the crypt of Cliff House at full moon.

It was easy for Bessie to be frightfully brave in lots of company and scoff at the very idea of ghosts. Soon she realises she is hungry and decides to sneak down to Clara's study where a plateful of jam tarts reposes in Clara's cupboard. But the school is creepy at the witching hour and Bessie's bravado soon vanishes. Her screams when she encounters a tall, glittering figure in Clara's study raise the school. Miss Bullivant is not amused and refuses to accept Bessie's plea of sleepwalking, or credit that Bessie had come down to write an essay, or the encounter with the phantom flashing fiery eyes and snarling elephant tusks. Bessie is running out of excuses and falls back weakly on guarding Clara's tarts. The Bull dishes out lines all round. Hilarious stuff, and the 'ghost' proved to by Janet Jordan's sister, hiding out at Cliff House until their father returned from abroad and the girls could give him the deed they had saved from his crooked partner.

The month continued with single stories. A picnic on Belwin Island that went wrong; a venture into film-making - which would not be the last - and a two-story feature with Clara Trevlyn at loggerheads with Sarah Harrigan which drives the rebellious Tomboy to run away. But Clara has staunch allies and Sarah ends the month in disgrace, all privileges withdrawn and her prefectship suspended.

Schoolgirl 196 of April 1933 marked the beginning of Bessie's rise to film stardom, which culminated in the major Hollywood series of the chums' adventures there later that same year.

April seemed to be Mabel Lynn's month in the mid thirties. In 1935 the month was taken up by the dramatic series which told of the arrest of her parents in Canada and serious charges made against them. Babs makes a valiant effort to keep this shock from her chum and waylays Austin Lynn, Mabs' detective cousin, when he arrives at Cliff House. She

enters into his plan to trap the real culprits, the appalling Knox family who have just landed in the Friardale district. This leads to trouble for Babs, until she confides in Jemima, and finally at the end of four well plotted stories the Knox family and their confederate are proved guilty of the Canadian gold robbery for which Mabs' parents have been blamed.

Again in April the following year she is starring in the White Goddess series. The previous year had brought grief because of the arrest in Canada of her parents; now it is her Uncle Lionel, a noted antiquarian, and his daughter Mary who need help and are hiding out in Friardale Keep. The background to the story is the broken image believed to be of the Egyptian goddess, Isis, which Lionel has brought back to England after purchasing it in good faith from a curio dealer in Luxor. But now a group of fanatics who worship Isis, and presumably Osiris, are in pursuit, determined on revenge and the reclamation of the idol. John Wheway always gave depth to his background plots and was thoroughly at home in the realm of Egyptology. His stories give the impression that he was very serious about his writing and did his homework, never writing down to juveniles and never simply conjuring names or themes out of fantasy. His themes borrowed from mysticism or the adult world of criminal activities always had a basis in fact, all of which gave conviction, and, who knows, inspired some young readers to explore Egyptology, archaeology and some of the other fascinating backgrounds from which sprang his schoolgirls' adventures.

In 1936 author honours were shared that April by Cecil Graveley with his three-parter starring Avril Raynor, much plotted against, and yet another Cliff House pageant; and John Wheway's series featuring Marjorie Hazeldene, her cousin Ralph Lawrence in trouble again as usual while he masquerades under an assumed name while working as a tennis coach, and Clara Trevlyn, who was never far away when adversity threatened her closest chum, Marjorie.

Just Like JEMIMA!

April 37 introduced a different leading character in "A Schoolgirl's Secret Feud", that of Jane Mills, a young housemaid at Cliff House whose dearest wish was for education and who was striving to win a scholarship to the school. Babs and the chums were determined to do everything they could to help her and were equally determined that Freda Ferrier should not succeed in stealing what rightly belonged to Jane's future; her true

identity.

Ever popular Jemima Carstairs featured in the next story. "Just Like Jemima" displayed all that enigmatic girl's detective skills as she unmasked yet another plotting impostor in a holiday mystery about Celeste Margesson's yacht, a mystery that brought danger to Marjorie Hazeldene.

Issue 403 brought a great favourite back into the limelight. "Not The Firebrand's Fault" portrays Diana Royston-Clarke in a different light as she clashes with Beatrice Beverley when a party of Cliff House girls are invited to a big party in London to help entertain a hundred poor children from a convalescent hospital. Babs organises a draw to choose two names from the Fourth and Beverley is caught cheating, by Diana. But no-one believes the Firebrand and Clara immediately gets involved in the conflict. With three such strong characters the sparks fly in this lively story. The Hon. Beatrice, who seemed as though she might fit in and become a pleasant member of the Fourth when she first arrived at Cliff House, has now become a thoroughly unpleasant and treacherous character in this later story, particularly when she humiliates her father, who, although a baron, is working very hard in service after a financial crash so that Beatrice can remain at school. This story is moving in its characterisation, especially that of Diana as she defeats Beatrice, by unorthodox means which do not please Miss Primrose, and sacrifices her own desires so that the form might benefit, even though she risks expulsion. She ends the story on a bitter-sweet note, having achieved her objective but being sent back to Cliff House in disgrace. Being Diana she shrugs this off as carelessly as ever, considering it all worthwhile. At least she is the heroine of the Fourth - for a change.

April 1939 begins in dramatic style with Jemima once more keeping her counsel far too closely and being suspected of causing trouble for Babs. Of course it is dear Lydia Crossendale up to her old tricks again in the shocking affair of the missing exam books. Bessie provides the light relief, following hopefully in the steps of her latest detective heroine, Poppy Pringle, and is convinced that the mystery would never have been solved by Jemima without her brilliant input. To be fair, Bessie did provide a clue, quite unwittingly, that put Jemima on the right track, but Bessie's belief in her own detective powers was almost as great as her appetite.

Next we find Diana bound on good deeds again, for orphans this time, but soon in headstrong conflict with both authority and the chums. There is yet another concert vital to the plot and a dramatic about-turn by Diana for the finale. A familiar plot often used in these stories yet Wheway somehow makes it all come fresh again each time.

1940 was the last April for the girls of Cliff House and brought a first. Bessie became Form Captain! But not of the Fourth.

Bessie was demoted to the Third!

(Fans of Bessie will be glad to know that it wasn't for long!)

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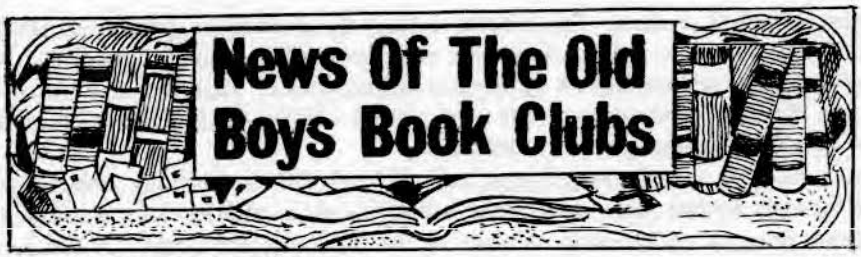

London OBBC, February 1999

There was plenty of fun to be had at the February meeting in Perivale.

Members were entertained by a video compilation of 'fifties variety performers which evoked many nostalgic members; and members were intrigued by a sequence of enigmatic personal column messages relayed by Derek Hinrich.

Bill Bradford took us on an excursion down memory lane, and Mark Taha presented one of his fiendish quizzes, which had a Valentine's Day theme.

All in all, a diverse and entertaining meeting. **Vic Pratt**

Cambridge Club, February 1999

For our February 1999 meeting we met at the home of Adrian Perkins.

Our afternoon gathering began with the usual short business session. We then had a real treat. Using the video projection technique, Keith Hodkinson showed a dozen or so film extracts - sourced from the 'twenties to the present day and from both American and British films - all having but a single theme: railway locomotives in amazing circumstances. The excerpts selected covered films from the silent *The General* up until 1995's *Speed* (with all its expensive special effects) via 1952's *The Greatest Show on Earth.*

Keith provided a running commentary giving movie background details on each scene that we saw. During the 'Intermission' Keith told us about a neglected turn-of-the-century Jules Verne tale that had been serialized by the *Boy's Own Paper.* "The Will of an Eccentric" was seen to be an interesting observation on train travel in the United States - with an unusual sting in its tail . . . **Adrian Perkins**

Northern OBBC, February 1999

Fifteen members were present at our February meeting. We were saddened to hear of the death of Norman Smith at the age of 93. Norman had been a founder member of our Club and a regular attender up to a number of years ago, when he found it more difficult to travel from Harrogate where he had lived for many years after being in Leeds and Liverpool. Norman had always supported the Club in his younger days and only recently had donated his splendid collection of Harold Avery books to one of our members - a fitting reminder and memento of a man of high principles who loved his music and the world of Greyfriars.

An update was given on the Jennings Meeting to take place on 19th June. The invitations had been sent out and it was hoped to have a good attendance. Already, ideas were being formed for various presentations to take place.

Timothy Campbell then spoke of The Broons and Oor Wullie. He first came across one of the annuals when he was on holiday in Scotland in 1973 as a young boy and became

immediately hooked on them. This led him to study the work of the great artist, Dudley Watkins. The characters still continue to be published weekly in the Scottish paper *The Sunday Post*. The original artwork by Watkins had captions in 'English' which were then made into 'Scottish' by the editors! We were regaled with lots of examples of the stories and the style of art to keep us all very interested.

Now, the early annuals can exchange hands at £100s and Timothy only wishes he had bought the early annuals years ago when he had seen some at what he then considered the outrageous price of £1.50 each! A case of the ones that got away! A wonderful presentation by Timothy.

Donald Campbell then brought us back to wonderful reminiscences of *Children's Hour* supported by some recorded excerpts of years ago - including Toytown, Jennings, Wind in the Willows, Uncle Mac, Auntie Vi, David Davies and many others. Uncle Mac had always said, never talk down to children, which probably made *Children's Hour* so successful in its time, until the powers-that-be decided in their so-called wisdom to kill it off. How good to hear Norman and Henry Bones again and some of the stirring music that had been used to introduce various dramatisations of books. Toytown ran for 30 years and David Davies was reading stories and producing and presenting programmes from 1938 until the very last programme. We were reminded of many other *Children's Hour* features including Nursery Sing-Song, Wandering with Nomad and regional programmes. Request Week had always been popular with "The Box of Delights" and "Jennings at School" as firm favourites.

A wonderful presentation from Donald. The meeting had been a truly family affair and a great pleasure to all who attended. **Johnny Bull Minor**

Northern OBBC, March 1999

Before the main programme a discussion took place about past meetings of the Northern Club. One which came to mind was in the crypt at Leeds Parish Church. During the meeting one of our members felt a ghostly presence in the room. We all agreed that the March meeting's attendance could have benefited from a similar occurrence, as it was a little below average.

The centre stage belonged to Keith Atkinson and his learned talk "Reminders of Frank Richards". Richards' influence can be seen in different aspects of our life and culture. Who hasn't seen houses named Greyfriars, Cliff House, or Rookwood? and cafés with 'Bunter' in their title?

Which books and authors, if any, influenced Frank Richards in his writing? A case was put forward for Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, Rudyard Kipling *(Stalky and Co.")*, J.K. Jerome (*Uncle Podger Hanes, A Picture* which is similar to an incident in *Magnet* 1248). An excellent evening enjoyed by all, in body and spirit! **P. Galvin**

London OBBC, March 1999

The Chingford Horticultural Society Hall was packed to capacity for the meeting on March 14th. Chairman Roger Jenkins delivered a fascinating and insightful paper on the esteemed crime-writer Dorothy L. Sayers, which prompted colourful discussion.

Bill Bradford taxed members brains with a tricky story paper quiz; Ray Hopkins charmed us with a cheery and evocative boating sequence from a 1934 *Gem*.

Finally, Roger presented one of his Greyfriars word-puzzles. Combine these treats with one of Audrey Potts' fine teas, and you come up with a winner! **Vic Pratt**

"A SINGULAR TRIO" by Anthony Cook

The 1950s saw a harvest time for children's books. The major years of austerity having passed, authors were writing regularly and steadily for young readers eager to pursue the adventures of their favourite characters flowing from the pens of their equally favourite authors. Enid Blyton was producing her Noddy books, the Famous Five and Secret Seven, while Malcolm Saville was in full flow with his Lone Pine and Buckingham series. At the same time Elinor Brent-Dyer and Captain W.E. Johns were in what can be termed their middle period with, respectively, the Chalet School and Biggles. There was indeed a wide choice for both boys and girls of all ages. In addition, the *Eagle* and *Girl* comics appeared, with their attendant annuals, and one must not forget Anthony Buckeridge and his Jennings books. There was then a wide range of adventures to be sampled, reaching from the skies of Biggles and his friends, and the ever-popular school stories, to the down-to-earth adventures of the Famous Five and the Lone Piners. What more could the readers want at this point in time? It would have been a brave author who tried to introduce a new and untried format into the market - and that is just what happened.

William Mayne, an already well-established author, decided to draw upon his own childhood and wrote a series of four books taking his readers into the cloistered world of the Cathedral Choir School. These were, to say the least, a striking and ambitious departure from the usual school story. Very surprisingly the books made a considerable impact, with one critic describing the first, *A Swarm in May*, as a minor masterpiece and one of the century's outstanding children's novels.

This set of books comprises four volumes but in a purely unprofessional way I am only concerned with three of them. *A Swarm in May, Choristers Cake* and *Cathedral Wednesday* were all published by OUP in excellent wrappers with accompanying illustrations by C. Walter Hodges. I consider these three books to be some of the most expressive text and illustrations in combination that I have encountered. Both narrative and pictures in their own right evoke the true spirit of the setting, and the life which Mayne's characters live and breathe. In all fairness I must add that this does not detract from the fourth book, *Words and Music*, illustrated by Lyton Lamb and published by Hamish Hamilton.

Mayne himself was a pupil of Canterbury Choir School and thus he knew only too well how these boys lived and felt, although he says that the books are not autobiographical. To whom, then, would such a series of books appeal? Certainly to the type of boy who already lived in the choir school environment: it would also have had a good following among thousands of boys (and adults) who sang in the many church and cathedral choirs of the time. What other readers would have made of them is anybody's guess. The boys portrayed in the books were really no different from any other children, except that they were hand-chosen for their calling and exhibited a very special talent. However, they, like their counterparts today, had to work far harder than the average schoolboy. Besides their ordinary academic work and sports activities they would have had one or two choir practices each day, in some cases the first one before breakfast, as well as two services each day. Their holidays would have been slightly shorter than most, as they sang the services for Easter and Christmas Day. But they would no doubt have had the current number of their favourite comic stuck in their pockets and the latest adventure book

in their bedside lockers. Another interesting factor was that the relationship between masters and pupils was quite different from those in the Greyfriars stories, for this was an entirely different world and boys of widely varying ages would have been thrown together as a team.

I would like to suggest that Mayne drew some of the characters from life, though I am sure I could be taken to task on this point. From my own experiences, however, and with particular regard to Canterbury, I can see some hints that dear old Turle, verger extraordinary, Dr Sunderland the Organist and Master of the Choristers as well as the Pargales (stonemasons) do match up with some characters I would dearly love to name!

A Swarm in May (1955) introduces us to John Owen who returns late to the choir school and has to knock up Turle at the cathedral gate. I will quote from this incident, which really set the tone and scene for the series:-

> Turle's footsteps sounded inside the gate. The key turned and the lock jumped back: a bold sound in an empty street.
> "What do you want?" said Turle when he saw only a boy standing outside.
> "Choir School" said John Owen.
> "What's your name?" said Turle.
> "Owen."
> "Bit late" said Turle. "The others were in by half-past six. I saw them walking on the grass, which you must not."
> "All the trains were late."
> "Hmn" said Turle, through his nose, in the proper and famous Turle way: the next remark after Hmn was always a verse from the day's Psalms. 'In the evening they will return: grin like dogs and run about the city' said Turle. "Come on Owen, I'm not holding the door open all night."

The story deals with the mystery of the missing beehives which surrounds the 'Beekeeper' (the youngest boy in the school) who has to produce enough beeswax to present a candle, which is presented to the Bishop at the end of term. A strange yet fascinating world, a bold experiment, and in the end an amazing success.

Two years later came the second book *Choristers Cake*. This time the story line conforms to the old theme of the boy who rebels against tradition and authority and gets sent to Coventry. Many of us no doubt recall such themes from the *Gem* and *Magnet*! There is then a four-year gap before we are presented with *Cathedral Wednesday*. This time we are introduced to Andrew Young, a day boy. The story centres on the fact that the choir is due to sing a broadcast service and suddenly the boys start to go down with a strange 'flu-like virus. Also a revolt of some of the pupils gives credence to the fact that they are indeed just ordinary boys with normal feelings, who, of course, in the end, despite heavy odds come up trumps.

If my short resumé of these books seems a little 'bland' then that is how they might appear to many. But apparently both public and critics think otherwise. Certainly William Mayne wrote just as he wished to, and met with great success. It is unfortunate that the books are out of print, although Jade Publications did publish *A Swarm in May* and *Choristers Cake* in paperback in 1997, which leads one to hope that there is still a demand. At the moment first editions, at least in fine condition with dust wrappers, are costly,

possibly between £20 and £30. The popularity of the series shows that to digress from the normal does sometimes pay dividends.

In conclusion I quote the following publishing history, courtesy of The Oxford University Press:-

OUP ARCHIVE DEPARTMENT

A Swarm in May	1955	Quantity not available
	1957	Reprinted
	1962	Oxford Children's Library Edition
Choristers Cake	1956	7,500
	1959	5,000
Cathedral Wednesday	1960	10,000

It must be remembered that the above books were published during the 1950s, as hardback editions, so the figures tell their own tale.

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GEMS OF HAMILTONIA

from Pete Hanger

. . . Bob Cherry cheerily chanted "Rolling Down to Rio", undeterred by the fact that he did not remember a lot of the words and had forgotten a lot of the tune. That did not matter much, for when Bob remembered a tune he seldom kept very near it when he sang, having a way of inadvertently putting in little things of his own and wandering about in all sorts of keys. And if his friends did not exactly enjoy his singing, they were always glad, at least, to hear him leave off. *Magnet* 1463

Wibley found great advantage in writing his comedies himself. Not only could he beat Shakespeare at that game, so far as making them snappy went; but he could make sure that the best actor in the Remove had plenty of "fat" - the best actor being William Wibley!

So, though the juniors did not know what the play was about they could guess that the central character would be played by W. Wibley, and that Wib would come in every scene, the rest of the cast being merely also rans.

However, that was quite as usual; and Wib, after all, was a wonderful actor - almost a hundredth part as good as he thought he was. *Magnet* 1652

. . . . Truth to tell, Coker would not have trusted to his own guidance but for the circumstance that he had been shorn of his wealth and either had to walk or confess to Potter and Greene that he had had his pocket picked - which, of course, was impossible. A clever fellow who knew his way about could not confess that he had had his pocket picked to a couple of silly duffers who hadn't had their pockets picked. *Magnet* 1094

The announcer on the radio was telling the world that the Honourable Member for Muggleton had put a question in the House to the Under-Secretary for the Red Tape and Sealing-Wax Department. That was not the sort of news that added to the gaiety of Tom Merry & Co. They were yawning fearfully.

The Honourable Member for Muggleton desired to be told, and desired that the House be told, whether the whole supply of sealing-wax was to be mobilised for National Service, or whether the whole supply of sealing was was not to be mobilised for National Service!

He desired a plain answer to relieve the anxiety of the House, and of the public. He desired to point out that, if war actually came, it might be too late to mobilise the essential supply of sealing-wax. In these troubled times, "Be prepared" should be the motto of the Government; and of sealing-wax, at least, there need be no shortage if only the matter was taken in hand in time. The Dictators took such matters in time. Could not the Democracies? *Gem* 630

The juniors followed the footpath towards the river, under the shady branches of old oaks and beeches. There were birds innumerable in the wood, and Sir Hilton Popper, of Popper Court, was very particular about his birds. That was not because he was fond of birds, his ultimate object being to find entertainment in shooting them! But until the time came for Sir Hilton to slaughter them with his own lofty hand he was very particular indeed about them, and anyone who disturbed Sir Hilton's birds was sure of Sir Hilton's wrath.
Magnet 1480

But these little troubles did not, after all, matter very much. Bunter, in fact, was already thinking of leaving Greyfriars at the end of term.

His father could scarcely raise any reasonable objection when Bunter pointed out to him that he could make more money spotting winners than the older Bunter could make on the Stock Exchange. *Magnet* 1068

"You should occupy your mind, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch severely. "I have already offered to give you instruction to while away these weary hours. I have set you a Latin exercise. You have not touched it!"

Billy Bunter looked at him. It was fearfully weary in that beastly vault! The minutes seemed to crawl by. But if Mr. Quelch fancied that a Latin exercise would improve matters, it only showed, in Bunter's opinion, what idiots schoolmasters were!

"If you were acquainted with the Greek language, Bunter, I would lend you this volume, which I so fortunately had in my pocket when I fell into the hands of those rascals!" said Mr. Quelch.

Again Bunter was glad for a moment! Luckily, he did not know a word of Greek, so Quelch couldn't bung that putrid book at him!

"Perhaps it would ease the monotony a little, Bunter, if I told you something about this great Greek poet!" suggested Mr. Quelch kindly. Bunter doubted it! *Magnet* 1664

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