

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL.53

No.629

MAY 1999



THE JAPE OF THE TERM!



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Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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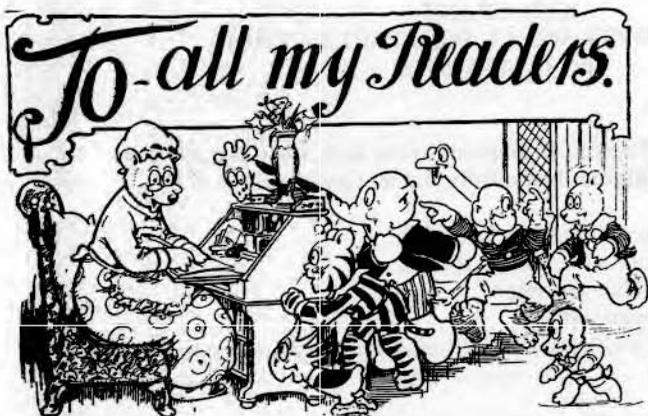
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BACK TO NORMAL

"Here we are again" as the 1930s song used so happily to say, with our normal format C.D. Several readers, however, have written to say how much they appreciated the March/April 64-page issue, and that they wished a similarly bumper-size

C.D. could appear every month!

Since our last issue Alex and I have really re-settled ourselves in our satisfyingly refurbished home. Some jobs remain to be done but we enjoyed a short break (at Bournemouth) and I have just returned from California where I was again invited to speak at a conference.

FAVOURITE RADIO DETECTIVES

Many of you will have enjoyed last year's BBC radio series on some of the popular sleuths of radio and TV. Professor Jeffrey Richards, who compiled and presented those programmes, has now completed a second series. This not only features several favourite detectives but includes among its participants

several contributors to the C.D., as you will see from the details shown overleaf.

These programmes are scheduled for transmission on Radio 4 at 11.00 am on Tuesdays from 18th May (but do check with the *Radio Times* nearer the dates in case the schedules are altered).

1. *As My Wimsey Takes Me*: a portrait of Lord Peter Wimsey with Jill Paton Walsh, Simon Brett, Ian Carmichael
 2. *The Little Grey Cells of Hercule Poirot* - Charles Osborne, Enyd Williams, John Moffatt, Michael Bakewell
 3. *The Wisdom of Miss Marple* - Mary Cadogan, Enyd Williams, June Whitfield, Michael Bakewell
 4. *A Case for Doctor Morelle* - Brian Doyle, Ernest Dudley
 5. *On the Beat with P.C. 49* - Norman Wright, Susan Stranks
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Anything I've not mentioned which has a Billy Bunter/Charles Hamilton interest.

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If you are not on my mailing list to receive a free copy, please write.

Jack Wilson

Part One

Frank Richards wrote so many stories, mentioned so many places, and created so many characters that we are constantly coming across names in newspapers, names of streets, roads or buildings, public houses etc., which remind us of those which Frank Richards used.

In Bradford we have Greyfriar Walk, Friar Court and Wharton Square, and in Leeds we have Cherry Place.

I have seen Grey Friars in Chester and the Greyfriars Cloisters in Great Yarmouth, also Greyfriars in Canterbury.

In Paignton we found Cliff House, which, rather disappointingly, is just a block of flats on the coast, and near Bradford Royal Infirmary I often passed a house called 'Rookwood'.

In the T.V. soap *Coronation Street* we had Miss Nugent, which reminds us of Frank of the Famous Five, and there are so many more reminders. I have seen vans on the motorway with the name Ponsonby in large letters, and one day I saw a car with the familiar registration of W.G.B., though the name of Bunter is not common, and I looked in vain through the London Directory in the hope of finding a 'Bunter Court'. Incidentally there is also a Jennings Place in Bradford to remind us of Anthony Buckeridge's hero.

On the road from Leeds to Harewood we pass a pub called 'The Lord D'Arcy' which immediately reminds us of the illustrious Arthur Augustus at St. Jim's, and we often see pubs called The Red Lion and The Cross Keys, names which Frank Richards used, although I have never come across The Three Fishers.

We have The Fisherman at Bingley and I have seen Fisher's Hotel in Scotland, but there seems to be no Three Fishers. I once came upon a paperback dictionary published by Wordsworths called *A Dictionary of Pub Names*. There were three of all sorts of things, but no mention of a Three Fishers, and I must conclude that it only existed in Frank Richards' imagination.

But I find when reading books by other authors, especially the older writers, that I quite often come across passages which remind me of the writings of Frank Richards, and indeed in some cases may have given him inspiration in his own stories, and I would like to refer to some of these.

The first that I would like to mention is a chapter from a short story by W. M. Thackeray called *The Fatal Boots*, which is the life story of Bob Stubbs who, throughout his life, is always trying to make money, and each time ending up worse off than before. Each chapter is called after a month of the year, and the second chapter, called 'February - Cutting Weather', describes his misfortunes at school.

Stubbs describes how, at ten years of age, he was sent to Dr. Swishtail's Academy with three shillings, mostly in copper, in his pocket. Eighteen pence from his mother and the rest accumulated by rather dubious means over the past year. "At school they called me the Copper Merchant, I had such lots of it."

He goes on to describe how, after the first few days, when the other boys had spent all their money, and had treated him to cakes and barley-sugar so that he had no need to spend his own money, he would lend them three-halfpence for the repayment of three pence the

next Saturday, and if they could not repay more than three-halfpence on that Saturday, they must then repay a further threepence on the following Saturday, and so on.

'I'll tell you what I did for a whole half-year: I lent a chap by the name of Dick Bunting three-halfpence the first Saturday for threepence the next; he could not pay me more than half when Saturday came, and I'm blest if I did not make him pay me three-halfpence for three and twenty weeks running, making two shillings and tenpence-halfpenny.'

But after the holidays when Bunting should have paid sixteen shillings he would only pay three-halfpence.

'However, I was even with him, I can tell you. He spent all his money in a fortnight, and **then** I screwed him down! I made him, besides giving me a penny for a penny, pay me a quarter of his bread-and-butter at breakfast and a quarter of his cheese at supper; and before the half-year was out, I got from him a silver fruit-knife, a box of compasses, and a very pretty silver-laced waistcoat, in which I went home as proud as a king; and what's more, I had no less than three golden guineas in the pocket of it, besides fifteen shillings, and a brass bottle-screw, which I'd got from another chap. It wasn't bad interest for twelve shillings was it?'

Stubbs goes home in his new waistcoat and gives the bottle-screw to his father as a present, who gives him a crown piece in gratitude. On being asked where he obtained the waistcoat he replies that it was a present from one of the boys for his kindness to him.

Unfortunately for Stubbs, on his return to the school his mother writes to Dr. Swishtail thanking him for his attention to her dear son, and sending a shilling to the good and grateful boy who had given him the waistcoat.

"'What waistcoat is it', says the Doctor to me, 'And who gave it to you?'"

"Bunting gave it me, sir," says I.

"Call Bunting!" And up the little ungrateful chap came. Would you believe it, he burst into tears, told that the waistcoat had been given him by his mother, and that he had been forced to give it for a debt to Copper-merchant, as the nasty little blackguard called me! He then said how for three-halfpence, he had been compelled to give me three shillings - how all the other boys had been swindled by me in like manner - and how, with only twelve shillings, I had managed to scrape together four guineas.'

Stubbs' account book is dragged out of his cupboard and he is made to repay every penny he has extracted from the other boys. The money he has received from his parents is put into the church poor-box, and the waistcoat restored to Bunting, and Stubbs is flogged for his misdeeds.

This little story, of course, reminds us immediately of Fisher T. Fish of Greyfriars, and may even be a source of one of his characteristics.

Also in Thackeray, in *Pendennis*, the eponymous hero, Arthur Pendennis, is sent to his father John Pendennis's old school which is called Grey Friars, and which is Thackeray's old school Charterhouse in London in disguise, as Colonel Wharton sent Harry to Greyfriars in *The Magnet*. Thackeray's Grey Friars is very different from Frank Richards' version, though there are some similarities.

'Arthur Pendennis's schoolfellows at the Grey Friars school state that, as a boy, he was in no way remarkable either as a dunce or a scholar. He never read to improve

himself out of school hours . . . He was never flogged, but it was a wonder how he escaped the whipping post. When he had money he spent it royally in tarts for himself and his friends; he had been known to disburse nine-and-sixpence out of ten shillings awarded to him in a single day. When he had no funds he went on tick. When he could get no credit he went without, and was almost as happy.

'There were many of the upper boys who assumed the privileges of men long before they quitted that Seminary. Many of them, for example, smoked cigars - and some had already begun the practice of inebriation. Another actually kept a buggy and horse at a livery stable in Covent Garden, and might be seen driving any Sunday in Hyde Park with a groom . . .'

Shades of Vernon-Smith and his posh cars!

Pendennis is being subjected to a tirade from the Doctor for a misconstrue in Greek when the class is interrupted by the arrival of his uncle, also an old boy of the school, bearing the news that his father is seriously ill, and he must go home immediately.

Pendennis's stay at Grey Friars ends with the death of his father, but there are many references back to his schooldays and the characters he met there, throughout the book..

A character and a place in the book are called Clavering, a name which Frank Richards used on several occasions, such as an assumed name for Tom Redwing when he first came to Greyfriars.

There is also one little paragraph which reads, 'As for John Pendennis, as father of the family, and that sort of thing, everybody had the greatest respect for him: and his orders were obeyed like those of the Medes and Persians.' - which is a favourite quoted simile of Frank Richards also.

In another of Thackeray's works, *The Newcomes*, which is supposed to be related by Arthur Pendennis, one of the main characters, Colonel Newcome, is also an old boy of Grey Friars, and there is a memorable scene towards the end of the book called 'Founder's Day', in which Arthur Pendennis attends as an old boy and finds that Colonel Newcome, who has by misfortune lost all his money, has become one of the pensioners of the school, living on its charity in what is called a hospital attached to the school.

'There is an old hall . . . old staircases, old chambers decorated with old portraits, walking in the midst of which, we walk as it were in the early seventeenth century . . . The pupils educated there love to revisit it, and the oldest of us grow young again for an hour or two as we come back into those scenes of childhood.

. . . the chapel is lighted, and Founder's Tomb, with its grotesque carvings, shines with the most wonderful shadows and lights. We oldsters, be we ever so old, become boys again as we look at the familiar old tomb, and think how the seats are altered since we were here, and the Doctor - not the present Doctor, the Doctor of our time - used to sit yonder, and his awful eye used to frighten us shuddering boys on whom it lighted ... Yonder sit forty cherry-checked boys, thinking about home and holidays tomorrow.'

Colonel Newcome later dies in his room at the school in a very moving scene.

To Be Continued.

GEORGE BEAL WRITES:

These *Beano* playing-cards, of course, are designed to be played with, but I doubt whether many people would. There are 52 cards, plus two Jokers, and a title card. All are in colour, and depict various characters from *The Beano*. I wasn't a *Beano* reader myself, since, by the time it first appeared, I had outgrown comics as such, but I suppose I must have gone on reading all the other boys' papers. The pack is available now. I bought mine from a playing-card specialist dealer, who has stocks. He charges £4.50 per pack.

If anyone wants a pack, he can supply (I suppose £5.00 would cover it, including postage). He is Roderick Somerville, 82 Canongate, Edinburgh, EH8 8BZ. Phone 0131 556 5225, or Fax 0131 557 9305.





SEXTON BLAKE - EDUCATOR!

by J.E.M.

Though of course we read our old story-papers in the first place for fun, we can see, looking back, just how much we learned - or at least **could** have learned - from them. The saga of Sexton Blake nicely makes this point. Starting with the man himself, we find not only a detective without peer but a qualified medic, an expert on the law, and master of heaven knows how many other fields of activity. Sexton Blake was surely Renaissance Man reborn: a man for all seasons - and all readers. And because he was always up to the minute, he became an unrivalled repository of real history.

I personally discovered Blake at the beginning of the Thirties when I was about thirteen years old but the rapid acquisition of earlier issues of the *Union Jack* led me back to an era I then knew little about. It was the case-book of Sexton Blake, not books of social history, which first introduced me to the life and times of this century's opening years.

In 1909 Britain took the first tentative step towards the Welfare State with the introduction of pensions for the elderly. That very year - indeed within weeks of the Pensions Act - Blake was involved in *The Old Age Pensions Mystery* (UJ 287). It was undoubtedly a turbulent time, for he quickly found further problems to deal with *Among the Unemployed* (UJ 288). Trade union matters surfaced in UJ 385 with *The Father of the Chapel* (for the uninitiated an FOC is - or was! - a sort of shop steward or workers' representative in any of the printing trades unions, including journalism). Six months later saw *Sexton Blake, Strike Settler* (UJ 413). And so we could go on, with Blake's investigations into slum landlordism and sweat-shops, shady politics and even shadier economics of a kind not studied (at least in my experience) at any academic institutions; but which are, of course, now a daily diet in our newspapers. Sexton Blake would not have been in the least surprised at present-day sleaze.

Scientific and technological developments also swiftly entered the case-book and you can trace the rise of the motor car, the aeroplane, the discovery of radium and numerous other mixed blessings from reading early copies of the *UJ*. Just take a look at the titles in your Sexton Blake Catalogue and you will see what I mean.

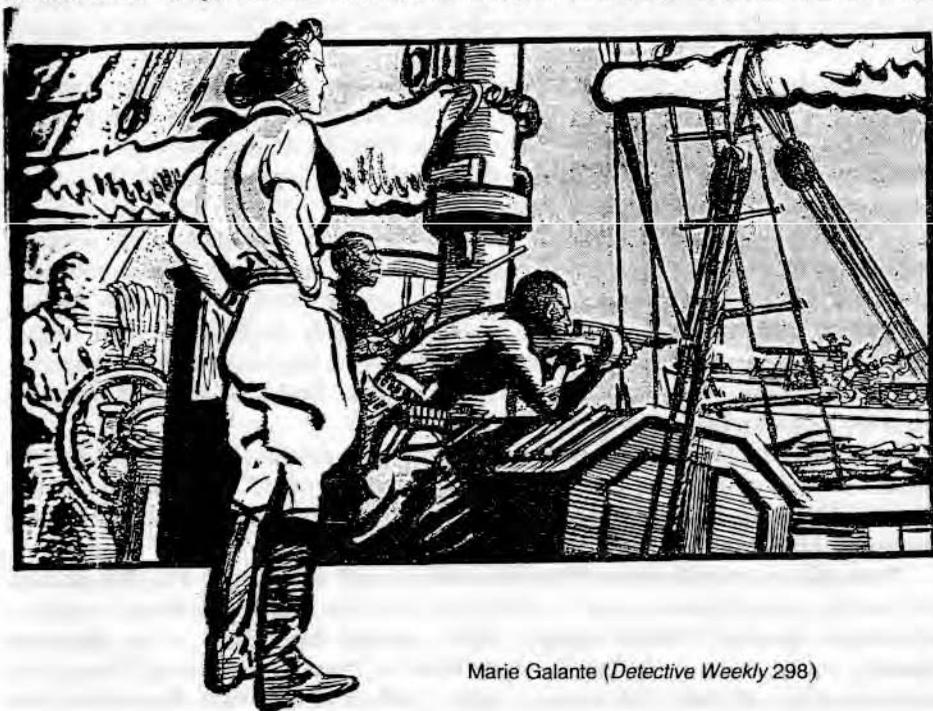
Through Eric Parker's brilliant illustrations to so much of the Saga, it is also possible to follow changes in fashion over much of the first half of the century - fashions in vehicles and, perhaps above all, fashions in dress. Even - perhaps especially! - as an adolescent schoolboy, I noticed changes in feminine styles from the Twenties to the early Thirties with hem-lines rising and falling (before rising again). In front of me I have illustrations from



Yvonne Cartier
(Union Jack 529)

some 1928 issues of the *UJ* showing Blakian glamour girls like June Severance and Olga Nasmyth with dresses barely covering their knees, while only three or four years later Mille Roxane and other *femmes fatales* are depicted wearing ankle-length garments (see for example *UJ* 1305 and *UJ* 1474). By contrast, men's fashions seemed hardly to have changed at all - at least up to the Second World War.

What other unconsidered trifles could one have picked up from the adventures of Sexton Blake? Well, do you know what barratry is? I certainly didn't until I read *Doomed Ships* by G.H. Teed (*UJ* 1465). Admittedly, I was still only a schoolboy but I rather suspect that the first ten adults picked at random in the street would not have known either. Then there was the Samoiloff Effect, that brilliantly clever use of theatrical lighting, which was explained by Donald Stuart in his superb story, *The Crimson Smile* (*UJ* 1523). Reading *The Crime Zone* by Anthony Skene (*Detective Weekly* 26), I was highly scornful of the use by Zenith the Albino of a steam-powered car as opposed to the usual petrol-powered vehicle - until my father told me he recalled such cars from his own youth! Nor did I know until I read that exciting Criminals' Confederation story, *Volcano Island* (*UK* 1500), that small volcanic islands in the Pacific



Marie Galante (*Detective Weekly* 298)

Ocean actually can and do explode and disappear beneath the waves.

I have barely touched on all the things that were so memorably taught me by the chroniclers - and illustrators - of Sexton Blake. And all good Blakians will be quick to note that I have not even hinted at the later decades of our favourite detective and the pleasure - and knowledge - that they brought. Meanwhile, I can only say my years with Sexton Blake were informative, enlightening - and **fun!**

(Footnote: Just in case you didn't know, and to save you reaching for your dictionaries and legal textbooks, barratry is defined as "fraud or gross negligence of master or crew to the prejudice of a ship's owners". Skulduggery on the high seas in other words.)



THE MAN WHO MET HIMSELF

by Mark Caldicott

Part Two: Eustace Returns

Not long after their first encounter Honourable Eustace Cavendish meets with Sexton Blake again quite by chance, and the latter agrees to look into the mysterious happenings in the village of Stoke Henney as reported to Eustace's father, Lord Halstead, by the Rev. Mr Pendlebury of that parish. This adventure is recounted in *Terror By Night (Union Jack 1357, 19-Oct-29)*.

Eustace has spent many boyhood holidays in the vicarage at Stoke Henney. And Blake is willing enough to renew the acquaintance of Cavendish and takes him along on the investigation. Calling at the village inn for a spot of whisky, Blake and Cavendish are surprised to find that hostelry silent, and in total darkness, as is the rest of the village, though the hour is only just after nine.

Eustace hammers on the door of the inn, and his persistence is rewarded by the sound of bolts being withdrawn and door-chains rattling. Unfortunately, a gust of wind causes Cavendish's cloak to balloon around him. This has a startling effect on the landlord.

"The Bat!" screamed the man behind the door.

His voice was charged with terror, and, following that frightened scream of his, there came to the ears of Blake and Eustace a slithering kind of noise, immediately followed by a thud. Then silence.

"Good Gad!" said Eustace. "I believe the funny old fellow's fainted."

The landlord recovers sufficiently to recount how the village of Stoke Henney is terrified by the apparition of a 'Man-Bat', able to fly, with wings like a bat, and seemingly

bigger than a man. Villagers are frightened to leave their houses after dark, thus explaining the present state of desertedness. Eye witnesses have described a large black shape with wings and human legs. Moreover, a young motor-cyclist has been found dead in the road, apparently scared to death after encountering the Man-Bat after dark.

The scene is set for a typically intriguing Brooks yarn. Arriving at the vicarage they are met by a worried Mrs Pendlebury. The vicar, visiting a sick parishioner, has not returned. A few minutes later the cleric in question is delivered to the door by a lorry driver who has found him in a dazed condition, and muttering that he has seen the devil.

In the face of the climate of terror, Eustace maintains his steadiness and reliability, and moreover keeps up his 'cheery chatter'. In this second adventure, Blake is even more impressed by Eustace; their partnership is cemented:

. . . with Eustace by his side [Blake] felt that any peril could be faced with equanimity.

Eustace had that quality. His personality was remarkable. Blake, of course, was always ready to face any peril; and it was nice to know that his companion was equally steadfast. This young fellow had made a deep impression on the detective.

Eustace was so keen on criminology, that he would have tacked himself on to Sexton Blake as a permanency at the slightest hint, for, if Eustace had impressed Blake, so had Blake impressed Eustace. He had taken an instant liking to the famous criminologist. They were, in fact, ideal companions. Blake, cool, steady and taciturn. Eustace just as cool, just as steady, but cheerily voluble.

It is not long before Blake and Cavendish see the man-bat for themselves, having climbed the church tower for a better view. They also note that the figure disappears over the high wall surrounding the house and grounds of Four Elms, home of the reclusive Mr Lewis Dagenham Quilter. At the same time another mystery presents itself. Why does the field belonging to the farming landowner Mr Bannister glow in the dark?

There is obviously some nefarious business, since when Blake and Eustace begin to investigate these mysteries, they are ambushed and thrown down a well. The astonishing thing, however, is that they are rescued by the casting down of a rope - by the man-bat himself. The evil being which is responsible for terror and death cheerily rescues Blake and Eustace from certain death - what can this all mean? You'd better read it and find out.

During the adventure at Stoke Henney Eustace first encounters Waldo the Wonder Man, although as it happens no conversation between the two is recorded. It is at the time in Waldo's career when he has turned his back on his crooked past and become the law-abiding Peril Expert.

(I have said this was Eustace's first encounter with Waldo. Those of you who are not only proud owners of the latest version of Bob Blythe's Edwy Searles Brooks bibliography, but also have keen eyes, will be saying "Hang on a minute!". The entry for *Union Jack* number 1354 *The Three Black Cats*, which was Eustace's first meeting with Blake, and which we looked at last time, confidently asserts that in addition to introducing Eustace Cavendish, it also features Waldo. This is, of course, an inaccurate thing to assert since Waldo is nowhere in sight during that earlier adventure, and I apologise for introducing this error into Mr Blythe's work. It is not until Eustace assists Blake in *Terror By Night* that he

encounters Waldo. You will also need to amend your copy of Duncan Harper's *The Sexton Blake Index* which also includes this error.)

Eustace is certainly a young man who encounters mysteries. In *The Frozen Man Mystery* (*Union Jack* 1364., 7-Dec-29) he is driving home in a blizzard and has almost reached Halstead Towers when the snow gets the better of his driving. Cavendish's car plunges into a ditch, injuring Eustace's ankle. Once again he shows his mettle. He sets off walking with his suitcase and with a cheery determination to shrug off his misfortunes. When he encounters a signpost bearing the words: 'To Chadwick Manor', strangely enough this does not please him as much as may be expected. Only because his plight is so desperate does he decide to seek shelter there.

The reason is soon revealed. Roddy Chadwick, the nephew of the house's owner, Sir Henry Chadwick, is an acquaintance of Eustace, but by no means a friend, since

Roddy had been at Oxford with Eustace, and a more complete specimen of the human toad Eustace had never met. He was a rake, a sponger, a cad. He had frequently traded upon the fact that his father and Eustace's father were more or less neighbours to come to Eustace's rooms for the thinly-disguised purpose of borrowing money.'

Sir Henry is in bed, and Eustace is forced to explain his circumstances to a drunken Roddy, who urges him to stay overnight rather than call for a car. However, the stay is cut short by Eustace's ejection from the manor house by Sir Henry, who mistakenly considers him to be one of Roddy's disreputable friends. Fortunately, the family doctor is on hand to provide Eustace with a lift, and Eustace is able to return home to Halstead Towers.

A few days later, back in his chambers in Half Moon Street, Eustace reads of the shocking death of Sir Henry, stabbed in his bed. Before he can even finish reading the account, a panic-stricken Roddy bursts in on him claiming his innocence, and pleading with Eustace to hide him from the police. When Roddy is arrested, Eustace requests the assistance of Sexton Blake.

The mysterious circumstances of Sir Henry's death are rather given away by the title of the story. This time it is Blake who gets to the bottom of the mystery, and Eustace plays a more conventional puzzled assistant role:

"Dash it, don't we meet with snags?"

"Perhaps this snag is not as difficult as it looks, Eustace."

"How do you mean?", inquired the young man, adjusting his monocle, and regarding Blake with a straight eye. "If these footprints weren't made by any of the chappies we have mentioned, then who did make them? There isn't anybody else."

Sexton Blake nodded.

"Exactly," he said. "That's just the point."

Eustace stared.

"I confess," he said, "that I don't get you."

"Think it over, old man," smiled Blake. "And you might go indoors and see what arrangements are being made with regard to food. I dare say you're getting hungry."

Eustace went in a very thoughtful mood, and when he looked for Blake again, Blake had gone.

Indeed, Blake has gone to solve the mystery without taking Eustace into his confidence, another sign that Eustace is, in this particular yarn, taking the more conventional role of a detective's 'straight man', rather than the 'equal partner' status of the previous stories. Had he but known it, this role anticipates a future phase of Cavendish's career, but all that is to come later . . .

OTHER FAVOURITE DETECTIVES: INSPECTOR HORNLEIGH

by Derek Hinrich

Who now remembers - no, not 'Fair Cremorne' - but Inspector Hornleigh? In his day he was very popular and became a phenomenon: the subject of multiple spin offs, before spin offs were invented.

In 1938 the BBC started to broadcast a weekly magazine programme of light entertainment called *Monday Night At Seven*. The programme proved very popular and ran for several years. With the advent of the Second World War it was transmitted an hour later and the title was changed - to *Monday Night At Eight*.

FIND THE CLUES WITH— **INSPECTOR HORNLEIGH**

● Fascinating five-minute mysteries with the B.B.C.'s star detective! All the clues that give Inspector Hornleigh his solution are in the story and the pictures. See if you can spot them!

The Poultry Farm Crime.



S. J. Warrington, the Inspector Hornleigh of stage and radio.

One of the most popular items in the programme from the outset was a five minute puzzle sketch or playlet in which Inspector Hornleigh with his assistant, Sergeant Bingham, was called upon to solve a crime. The sketch ended with the arrest of a suspect and the audience was invited to guess the solution which

was given later in the programme. It was all based on the premise of Hornleigh's belief that the guilty party always made a mistake and gave himself away during interrogation.

Later seasons of *Monday Night At Eight* included other similar sketches with other detectives after *Inspector Hornleigh* ceased, notably those featuring Doctor Morelle by Ernest Dudley; but Inspector Hornleigh was the first and he was taken up by the public with enthusiasm.

Detective Weekly published for a season or so a weekly puzzle based on the character which included in its heading a photograph of the actor, S J Warmington, who played him on the radio (or, as it was 1938, should I say the wireless?) and years later I remember seeing a school textbook which included a Hornleigh sketch in French as a translation exercise.

Hornleigh's creator, Hans Wolfgang Priwin, wrote at least one Hornleigh novel, *Inspector Hornleigh Investigates*, published by Hodder and Stoughton in October 1939. I have a copy of its second edition of March 1940. It is a thriller of the school of Edgar Wallace with a touch of science fiction in its McGuffin and in which the master criminal establishes a second identity with the aid of a change of clothes, a wig, a false beard and moustache, and a foreign accent. (How long would this actually fool the best brains of the Yard?)

Hornleigh is described in the novel as 'tall, with greying hair, and a military moustache' which, as may be seen, fits in well with the picture of S J Warmington (who also appeared as one of the detectives in Hitchcock's film *Sabotage*, based on *The Secret Agent* by Joseph Conrad, now available on video). Sergeant Bingham is also said to be 'bluff and red-faced'.

Neither of these descriptions, however, suited the actors who starred as Hornleigh and Bingham in three lively comedy-thriller films of 1939 and 1940, Gordon Harker and Alistair Sim. Harker's jutting-lipped, belligerent Cockney *persona* could hardly be farther removed from the Hornleigh of radio and novel. These films, *Inspector Hornleigh*, *Inspector Hornleigh on Holiday*, and *Inspector Hornleigh Goes To It*, were shown on Channel 4 a few years ago and stood up well. One was concerned with the theft of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's budget despatch box, another with a series of insurance frauds (in which the - male - master-criminal lives in permanent disguise as a hospital matron!), and the third with rounding up a German spy-ring. The latter two were directed by Wallace Forde who was second only to Hitchcock as a director of thrillers in Britain before the Second World War.

They are all most enjoyable and fast-moving and preserve a very popular character, if not quite in the original form his creator, perhaps, intended.

WHOSE PAL? FRIENDSHIP AND ISOLATION AT GREYFRIARS

by Andrew Miles

Part One

Friendship is a key theme of the Greyfriars plots but an examination of friendships reveals that many Greyfriars boys are in fact lonely characters or members of unequal friendships - popular because of wealth or 'hangers-on' for crumbs from the rich man's table. Some friendships are also alliances forged for mutual benefit or protection to face the rigours of the 'rough and tumble' of Greyfriars life. Others are alliances between characters sharing similar, questionable tastes. The hierarchical nature of many of these friendships is akin to the concept of friendship (or *amicitia*) in the Roman World, which Charles Hamilton loved so much. There, while friendship between equals flourished, society was so formally and hierarchically structured that friendship existed on a number of different levels. Friendships could stem from mutual dependence, but it was widely

accepted that different types of friendships between people of different strata served different purposes. So it is with Greyfriars which is also a highly structured, hierarchical community. Friendships across the Forms, for example, are barred. Nevertheless, there are also some relationships revealing unlimited loyalty and deep commitment.

This article examines each of the Greyfriars Forms in turn and seeks to show the isolated, superficial or egocentric nature of many of the Greyfriars relationships. I also briefly examine those Highcliffe and Cliff House relationships which impinge directly upon those of Greyfriars. Frank Richards did not isolate large number of Greyfriars men because of lack of development of friendships in his plots. He deliberately isolated many characters in order to expose various aspects of inter-personal relationships. This theme of isolation runs deep in the Greyfriars yarns and is an important part of their attraction and charm. The depth and complexity of friendships are a tribute to the excellent character development by their writer. Issues of loyalty, estrangement, isolation and rapprochement are splendidly examined.

The Sixth Form is well represented in Greyfriars yarns, but we only meet certain prefects, and - with the exception of Reggie Coker (the swot who has no friends but his books) and the occasional temporarily relegated prefect - rarely meet common or garden Sixth Formers at all. Wingate stands aloof from his peers, aware of the responsibilities of his position as School Captain and prepared to endure the inevitable isolation which accompanies all positions of leadership. Gwynne is his usual confidant, but always plays the rôle of faithful deputy. He is unfailingly loyal, but seldom shows any view of his own. An Irish sense of humour is sometimes revealed. North, and occasionally Sykes, are seen as satellites who will back up Wingate in matters of discipline and in games, but their subordinate rank is always clear. In the Loder as Captain series (923 ff) it is Gwynne who most clearly feels for Wingate and his humiliation - particularly in the prefects' beating scene. Other prefects feel for their fallen leader, but Gwynne feels for Wingate his chum.

We read repeatedly of the popularity of Wingate. He is open, honest, just, laconic, a fine leader and sportsman and has a sense of humour. His academic mediocrity would only add to his popularity. His integrity is unquestioned - except in 923 ff (Loder for Captain). He is a true leader and is enthusiastically supported by his own 'party' but has - apart from Gwynne - no real chum. He is often forced to face the scheming enmity of Loder and Co. and can count on strong support because he is a decent chap. Loder, in his quests to overthrow Wingate, is supported only while he can deliver promises.

Loder, Walker and Carne enjoy a close friendship, largely because of their shared 'bad hat' interests. As well as breaking bounds, drinking and smoking together, they frequently display bullying proclivities and abuse the trust placed in them by the Head. Carne is usually rather a shadowy figure, while Walker regularly features in yarns relating his lack of courage. The McCall's Greyfriars Guide describes them, quite correctly, as 'fair weather friends'. When Loder is blackmailed by Bunter (*Magnet* 649) and by the Bounder (the *Magnet* story where he knocks Tozer on the head) and is demoted in the Wharton Rebel series (*Magnet* 1285-1296), he is all but deserted by Carne and Walker. Loder, the unquestioned leader, at least supports them. In the affair of the green satchel (*Magnet* 1275), it is Loder who dissuades Carne from solving his debts with stolen money. He also backs up Walker in the affair of the missing cigarette packet (*Magnet* 1318). His leadership is sometimes questioned; Walker's actions in stopping his brutal thrashing of

Dupont are more through fear than decency; when Loder burns Wharton's lines for Quelch (*Magnet* 1286), Walker shows unaccustomed moral and physical grit by forcing him to act to prevent Wharton's expulsion.

Three former Sixth Formers - Courtenay, Carberry and Ionides - made the pattern of friendships more intriguing. Ionides - thoroughly evil and unlikeable - was clearly popular with those prepared to lick up crumbs carelessly brushed from the wealthy man's table. Carberry could be both a toady and a bully in a rather more pronounced way than Loder. His largely unnamed followers were sycophants for him as prefect. Courtenay was clearly a closer chum to Wingate than Gwynne. More turned to for advice, he was clearly also on more equal terms. The death of Courtenay - itself an act of selfless friendship - appears to have left Wingate a lonely figure. He was not even prepared to confide in Gwynne when he resigned over the misconduct of his Minor (923 ff).

Fifth Form 'men' are aloof, dignified and strictly aware of the need to retain the gulf between them and the Lower School. The yarns feature few of their friendships, but nevertheless show the same trends as other Forms. Blundell is very similar to Wingate - decent, not too intelligent and a 'Blood'. His closest chum is Bland who, as his name suggests, is apparently colourless. Yet he can boast impressive credentials - he is in the 1st XI for both soccer and cricket. His closeness to Blundell from 1908 suggests that he shares his good qualities. He and Blundell played very poorly against the Remove (da Costa series), but the circumstances were unusual. When the Famous Five suspect Blundell of blagging and he confronts them before Wingate, Bland does not feature. This tends to suggest his position as a subordinate rather than as an equal.

Aeneas, the hero of Frank Richards' much loved and quoted *Aeneid* of Vergil, had a staunch but unassuming comrade - Achates. Like Gwynne and Bland, he is apparently colourless, but his close association reveals great warrior credentials and moral strength. His quiet and constant support of Aeneas aids him often in the loneliness of his position. Bland and Gwynne serve a similar function for Blundell and Wingate respectively. Yet when Aeneas must make certain crucial decisions, Achates does not feature. So it is with Gwynne and Bland.

The friendship of Potter and Greene seems rock solid. The two are inseparable and are never in dispute. They are always in agreement - sometimes unspoken - on when to flatter Coker and when to shun him. Their spontaneous thumping after the dramatic cliff rescue in the Easter trip series (1312 ff) is a good example. They are both capped players in the 1st XI cricket and soccer and have a good rapport with the rest of the Form. Fitzgerald, Smith Major and Tomlinson are among those who occasionally feature but no details are given of who chums with whom. Coker, of course, has no friends, but no enemies either. He is happy to accept the flattery of most of the Form when he has a hamper to share. Blundell and Bland seem to be the only Fifth Formers who will not stoop to this. Coker is usually very forgiving, only occasionally getting on his high horse. Plenty of soft sawder usually gets him down quite quickly.

The best developed Fifth Form friendship is that of Hilton and Price. They are, however, very different characters. Hilton, slack, wealthy and lackadaisical, displays laziness, tolerance and occasional longing for excitement, which make him a natural companion for Price. Yet he shares none of Price's vicious and vindictive qualities. Hilton has plenty of cash, whereas Price has little. His stony state is regularly exacerbated by the

lure of gambling. Hilton displays a casual attitude to gambling - as to most things - and gambles what he can afford to lose. Each holds a secret and generally suppressed contempt for the other: Price loathes Hilton for his easy-going nature and his lack of commitment to blagging; Hilton despises Price for his obsession with 'dead certs', his weediness and cowardice and his embittered outlook. Their bad qualities isolate them from Blundell and Co. and drive them to each other. Price has no other pal or source of cash; Hilton, although able to play in the 1st XI when he tries, has only Price to encourage him in shady escapades. The two periodically fall out, either when Price does something beyond the limit (e.g. punching Wingate and leaving it on Wharton in Cassell's *Billy Bunter Butts In*), or when Hilton commits himself more seriously to games. In the Warren series (*Magnet* 1440 ff) Price's hostility to Jim Warren isolates him from Hilton, but there develops a cordial friendship between the trio when Jim saves Price from James Warren; Price then displays his longest and most unusual period of decent conduct, although maintaining his smoking and gambling! In the second Wharton Rebel series (1285 ff), the two are estranged in an unusual and inverted way when Price funks blagging because of official suspicion while Hilton continues in a reckless and uncharacteristic manner. His isolation is created to give the isolated Wharton some needed if unwholesome company. Mauleverer's actions with the Co. to rag Hilton to stop him leading Wharton astray result in the loss of Wharton's last friend in the Remove.

We are told very little of the Shell. Hobson features regularly, along with his pal Hoskins. Strong at games but academically weak, he is a typical Greyfriars Form Captain. He shows great loyalty to and tolerance of the eccentric Hoskins, listening to his music and manfully restraining his true feelings. Hoskins, on the other hand, has no regard for the feelings of Hobson - whom he considers a philistine. He seems to feel that Hobson - who would never offend him - has no better rôle in life than to be his audience. When he can take his mind off himself he is a loyal pal. Unlike others in the Shell, he does not usually stoop to flattering Hobson when he has received a remittance from his baronet father.

Stewart is an interesting character who is never developed. Strong at games, a fine scholar and clearly a good chap generally, he seldom features. We can assume that he supports Hobson in a Form which is rather colourless - perhaps because of the suppressive nature of Mr Hacker! Stewart is also a swot and an occasional prize-hunter. Such pastimes are guaranteed to produce much loneliness.

The Upper Fourth are collectively portrayed as a bunch of footling asses, more concerned with form than with substance. Temple, Dabney and Fry are inseparable from the earliest days, but their friendship is hardly one of equality. Temple is the humorist who makes witticisms, Dabney supports him with the invariable "oh rather" and Fry just makes up the crowd. The two followers never seem to have the strength to challenge Temple's leadership or ideas or to suggest ideas of their own. They are rather like the courtiers to a monarch or a Greek chorus. All three share immaculate clobber, a supercilious manner to lower Forms and - despite many humiliations at the hands of the Remove - an unshaken belief in their superiority.

The friendship between the 'bad hats' of the Fourth - Angel and Kenney - appears rather nebulous. Angel has the money and the taste for blagging, while Kenney is the impecunious toady who sponges and occasionally involves himself in Angel's less salubrious activities. In one of Angel's best documented 'breaking out after Lights Out'

adventures - Squidge the Blackmailer (1613/1614) - Angel is shown returning alone. He is more than once ragged by Temple and Co. for smoking and gambling - without Kenney. He seems to enjoy a brief relationship with titled 'de Vere' (749 ff), who is really the humble Perkins. The friendship is, however, based on Perkins' apparent nobility and actual wealth. The two strut in the quad together, but they do not appear to blag together. Perkins was apparently attracted by Angel's base snobbery rather than by his extra-curricular activities. No doubt Angel hoped to lure Perkins into them later on!

Wilkinson - who has a study to himself - appears to have no special chum. Another isolated swot, he has some company when playing for the Fourth - a rather weak bunch at games - and is happy to chum with Bob Cherry in the 'Swot' series (975 ff). He clearly has little influence and cannot intervene when Temple and Co. eject Cherry from the Fourth Form passage.

(To Be Continued)

WILL HAY REMEMBERED

On the Fiftieth Anniversary of Will Hay's death, Brian Doyle takes a brief look back at his career . . .

Let's devote a passing and grateful thought this month to one of the great screen laughter-makers of them all: Will Hay, who died fifty years ago this Easter.

He took his laughter with him to the great classroom in the sky on April 18th (Easter Monday) 1949, and one can imagine him hitching up his scholastic gown impatiently and sniffing suspiciously as he entered the Pearly Gates and snorting: "This won't do, you know - it's a terrible mistake and someone's going to pay for it. I'm not used to this kind of treatment, you know . . . it's really not good enough . . ."

We all remember him for such classic British comedies as *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Good Morning Boys*, *Ask a Policeman*, *Where's That Fire?*, *Convict 99* and (perhaps most sublimely) *Oh, Mr. Porter*. He had been a music-hall comedy star (doing his St. Michael's schoolmaster act) for ten years before becoming famous to a much wider audience with *Boys Will Be Boys* in 1935. He made his screen bow in a 'short' called *Know Your Apples* in 1933, then co-starred with a young John Mills in *Those Were The Days* (based on Pinero's famous stage farce *The Magistrate*) in 1934. He made 18 films in 10 years (his last was *My Learned Friend* in 1944), then died after a long period of ill-health ended his screen career (though he did BBC radio work) in 1949 at the age of 61.

He served in the Royal Navy in 1942 (as an instructor in the RNVR to be more precise) and, indeed, his only 'serious' film role was as a British merchant ship skipper in *The Big Blockade*, a propaganda picture made in 1941.

But, as I've said, it was *Boys Will Be Boys* that made Hay a movie star and one of the most popular in Britain during the late 1930s. It was set at 'Beachcomber's' hilarious Narkover School and featured more than one of Hay's classic classroom scenes (remember the one that begins when a pupil asks "Sir, how high is a Chinaman?"). Hay could convey more with a single contemptuous sniff and an icy glance down his nose and through his ramshackle spectacles than most actors could hope for in ten pages of script. He was a

master of blustering; no one could bluster like Will Hay. Incidentally, he co-wrote the screenplay for this picture too.

In the same year as *Boys Will Be Boys* was released (1935), the boys' paper *The Pilot* began publication and included the humorous *Adventures of Will Hay at Bendover College* (written by Charles Hamilton, W L Catchpole and Edwy Searles Brooks). There was also a strip-cartoon on the same lines in this paper. The following year Hay 'starred' on the front cover of *Jolly Comic*, drawn by Bertie Brown, and the strip later moved to *Comic Cuts*.

Will Hay once said that he had a special fondness for the *Magnet* and *Gem* stories of Frank Richards and Martin Clifford (though he apparently loved reading Western yarns even more!), since he had played a comic schoolmaster for much of his career, on stage, film and radio. In the mid-1940s, he starred as 'Dr. Muffin' of St. Michael's in a successful BBC radio series called simply *The Will Hay Programme*; he also co-wrote the scripts. The comic *Radio Fun* then ran stories of this. In 1942 he had been in another BBC radio series, *A Slight Delay*, with his old friends Moore Marriott and Graham Moffatt.

Mention of whom June 29th, 1946

RADIO FUN

brings back more happy memories of that toothless, bearded old schemer, Jerry Harbottle (Marriott) and the fat, cheeky, know-it-all boy Albert (Moffatt), who both supported Will Hay in several of his most successful pictures.

'Old' Moore Marriott (1885-1949) was, in real life, only three years older than Hay! He had made over 70 British films before joining Hay in *Dandy Dick* (1935), eventually appearing in more than 300 films (a record) and was quite a good-looking, dapper gentleman off-screen, and a fine actor to boot. Ironically, he died in the same year as Hay.

Graham Moffatt (1919-1965) was a plump 15-year-old call-boy at film studios in London and got to know Tom Walls, the well-known British actor and director of the 1930s and 1940s. Walls saw potential in the chatty, confident young lad and cast him in a small role in *A Cup of Kindness*, the film of the Ben Travers farce, which Walls was directing and starring in at the time (1934). Other pictures followed and he joined up with Hay in *Where There's A Will* in 1936, when he was only 17. He played a cheeky, lazy office-boy to Hay's seedy lawyer. "Haven't I told you to say 'Sir' when you speak to me?" bellows Hay. "What a hope!" answers Moffatt, his head deep in a *Wild West* magazine. "What a hope, sir!" corrects Hay helplessly.

Moffatt went on to run a pub in later years, but continued to put on weight and died early at the age of 46. I met him briefly once, at a season of special screenings of Hay films at London's National Film Theatre. "How's the world treating you these days, Mr Moffatt?" I asked the amiable, portly publican. "The world's treating me very well, thank you, sir," he grinned, smacking his prominent stomach, encased in fancy waistcoat and watchchain. "Very well, indeed . . . !"



I never had the pleasure of meeting Will Hay himself, but I once enjoyed a long chat with Charles Hawtrey, who had appeared, usually as an obstreperous schoolboy, in several Hay films. "He was known as 'Bill'," Hawtrey told me, "and every morning before we started work on the set, he would barge into my dressing-room, throw down the script and say 'Right, Charlie, let's start re-writing this load of rubbish, shall we?' - and we did - or rather he did! No, he wasn't as mean as some people liked to say he was - at least, not with me. But he was an awful hypochondriac and always felt there was something wrong with him - coughs and colds, aches and pains, you name it! But he was very bright, very intelligent, and a very nice man. We got along very well - although he was a great perfectionist in his work."

1949. Orwell's *1984* was published. So was Blyton's first *Noddy* book! Tommy Handley, another great comic, died. So did Victor Fleming, who directed *Gone With The Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz*. *The Third Man* was the top box-office hit film in Britain, with *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* and *Scott of the Antarctic* not far behind. And two days after Will Hay died, I was called up for my two years' National Service in the RAF. An eventful year then! But, more important, Britain lost one of its shining stars: Will Hay. But he, and all the laughter, is remembered . . .

DONALD V. CAMPBELL WRITES:

How right Vic Pratt is (see January C.D.) It has been, it seems to me, 'fashionable' to denigrate American comic strips and American comics in general. But can 300 million people be wrong? (rough population of the United States).

My own exposure to the delights of the American comic strip came from the surreptitious and slightly furtive purchases from Lax's Newspaper Stall in Darlington Market Hall of (if memory serves) the *Toronto Star*. This weekly paper arrived in County Durham about a fortnight or so after the cover date. In its tabloid-size pages there was a 'funnies' section culled straight from American sources. It was a delight to have such a colourful antidote to those drab days of post-war austerity.

The joys of *Little Orphan Annie*, *Mandrake the Magician*, *Dick Tracy* and the classic Alex Raymond strip of *Flash Gordon* always overcame the sneaking feeling that I was being less than British in buying such material. Above all there was the impact of 'Steve Canyon' - drawn by Milton Caniff - which was immeasurable. The cinematic and dramatic approach used by this artist/storywriter was a notable improvement on the British way with strips as concocted in the pages of the British press - wherein the likes of Garth, Ruggles, Rip Kirby (another Alex Raymond strip that was poorly received in the US), and others were served up. The impact of all this helped to further develop my interest in the art of illustration.

For those even mildly interested in the field I can recommend a number of books as a good read: *100 Years of American Newspaper Comics* / Maurice Horn/Gramercy; *The Celebrated Cases of Dick Tracy 1931-1951* / Galewitz/Wellfleet; *The Dick Tracy Casebook 1931-1990* / Collins & Locher/Penguin; *Steve Canyon* reprints from Kitchen

Sink Comix, San Diego CA; these latter sometimes include background historical and biographical information.

So thanks Vic for suggesting another collecting/reading theme that can give "Mighty great pleasure, pardner!"



FORUM

From Jenny Hammerton of British Pathé:

I would like to ask for some help from the readers of *Collectors' Digest*. I am researching the life of an eccentric film-maker called F. Percy Smith who made some of the famous *Secrets of Nature* films that were shown in cinemas in the 1920s, 30s and 40s. Apparently, Percy also wrote detective stories and it is on this matter I would like to ask the assistance of your readers.

Percy Smith wrote a series of magazine stories called *The Adventures of Percival Browne* under the pseudonym of Maxwell Pyx. I'm afraid that I don't know in which magazine these stories appeared but perhaps one of your readers might? I think that they were probably written in the late 1900s or possibly early 1910s. Any pointers would be wonderful.

From Donald V. Campbell:

The March/April C.D. was a bumper edition indeed with lots of goodies. I particularly enjoyed Brian Doyle on Peter Cheyney and Alan Pratt on his little black books!

Brian is absolutely right. Paxton did publish the Victor Hely-Hutchinson *Carol Symphony* but - and unlike in the purlieu of London - it was unavailable in the North of England - or at least, unobtainable at the "finest Music Store in the North" - Tubwell row, Darlington. I tried, and I tried, but despite the fact that the store had listening booths reminiscent of Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* and sold pianos, radios and what passed for hi-fi then, as well as instruments, sheet music and records, there was "nothing doing". The episode got corrupted (by me) to a simplified and inaccurate "the music was not published until the 70s". Sorry!

I too had a simple system of recording books but it got lost in one of my many house moves and, in any case, did not match up to Alan's in dates and the possibility of sociological/historical links.

The Peter Cheyney article (Brian Doyle - again) was a winner and gave me much pleasure. I suppose that Cheyney's was a style that you loved or hated. Often short-breathed with punchy sentences his writing managed an urgency that was lacking in many another writer. If the Toff or Blackshirt or Norman Conquest were in your armoury of books in those days they appeared somewhat anaemic by comparison with Cheyney's heroes. Thanks for the memory, Brian. By the way - as with many other writers - Brian mentions Yates and Sapper - Cheyney is virtually impossible to read today so his books must remain naught but a happy memory for me. The corollary to this is the magical way in which Frank Richards manages to remain readable. Just making the point but I do not know quite what it means!

From Des O'Leary:

The 'super-duper' Double Number of C.D. 627 and 28 arrived and my only complaint is how we retired people can get time to read and think about the number of outstanding articles it contains!

Denis Hilliard's memories of 'William' are especially apposite this week with the peerless Martin Jarvis's BBC readings of a new (to me) selection of the immortal stories. The double, triple even, 'helpings' of Sexton Blake by Mark Caldicott and Derek Hinrich were great and the bibliographical data provided by Ray Hopkins and Steve Holland will, I'm sure, prove valuable to a number of us in the future.

I laughed at Donald Campbell's final part of his 'Wonderful Gardens' series. I think I've almost certainly seen the Greek island of 'Domestos' somewhere! The whole series has been a fine one and I hope Donald will discover a few more gardens to share with us in the future.

I noted approvingly Martin Waters' comment on the *Captain* magazine for Public Schools. In our informal day the old posed photos seem very stiff and over-formal, but that was the style in those days and the people were just the same underneath.

The 'jewel' of this C.D. was, for me, Brian Doyle's feature on Peter Cheyney. I have been hoping that he would write on this very popular, but now I would think almost forgotten, author.

Apart from the biographical information contained in it and Brian's always fluent and interesting style (I loved his comment on the cigarette-ridden atmosphere of one play "... They weren't so much actors in it as Players ..."). It brings back memories. I read one or two Lemmy Caution and Slim Callaghan books in my teens. Frankly, I thought Lemmy

Caution appalling. However, one aspect of Callaghan (or maybe another of his heroes) has stayed in my mind. Said hero cornered a crook and said he was going to teach him what judo was, only to find himself flattened by the much more expert crook! Hero, seething for revenge, goes to his judo master to learn special holds not normally available to him as an amateur. He goes back all ready to 'spifflicate' said crook only to find him murdered. I was disappointed! So long before Bond and 'Goldfinger' Cheyney brought judo to fiction.

A BOW STREET RUNNER

by Reg Hardinge

Night watchmen, the forerunners of policemen, were first appointed in London in the 18th century. Order was also maintained by the army and militia, who used spies or informers to enforce the law. Parliamentary reward was an added inducement in combating crime, which led to the rise of private detectives or thieftakers. Henry Fielding, who became Magistrate at London's Bow Street Court in 1748, formed in 1749 an elite corps of six plainclothes detectives (there were never more than eight) called the Bow Street Runners. At first neither official status was granted nor pay given to this body of men. They were only entitled to the normal reward paid to thieftakers. There were always two Runners on duty at Bow Street, day and night, ready to set off to any part of the kingdom to detect and arrest criminals. Their duties were also to protect travellers from highwaymen and footpads. Henry Fielding was, of course, the famous novelist whose masterpiece *Tom Jones* appeared in 1749.

The Loring Mystery by Jeffery Farnol deals with the solving of a murder by a Bow Street Runner named Jasper Shrig. Shrig was a shortish, thick-set man with a square, rosy face, innocent of whiskers. The wide-brimmed hat beneath which he beamed and blinked, was steel-lined for protection against bludgeons and brickbats. He wore a long brass-buttoned coat, and carried a stout, knotted stick. He pronounced words beginning with W with a V, and those beginning with V with a W. He was partial to lemon peel with his toddy, and smoked a clay pipe. He specialised in murder cases and had an uncanny knack of being able to determine whether a person was capable of taking the life of another. He maintained a note book containing the names of people so inclined. Often he would whistle a lilting jig punctuated with subtle trills and soft flute-like notes. Sometimes snatches of popular songs would emanate from him.



Swift justice: A Bow Street Runner

The story opens in 1819. David Loring is on his way from Virginia to England to claim the title and estate of Loring Chase in Sussex, near Lewes. Sir Nevil Loring, who is holding Loring Chase in trust for his nephew David, is anxious to retain the estate for himself. He sends his gamekeeper Yaxley to the ship bringing David to London with orders to kill his nephew. But Yaxley strangles the wrong man and makes off. Bow Street Runner

The Loring Mystery



CARRYING THE LANTHORN ACROSS TO THE NARROW STAIRWAY, SHRIG SHOWED DAVID THE LENGTH OF COTTON STRETCHED ACROSS IT.



THEN HE CARRIED THE LANTHORN ACROSS TO THE OPEN CUPBOARD DOOR UNDER THE STAIRS.



Jasper Shrig is put in charge of the case and his investigations lead him down to Sussex. David Loring, now installed in Loring Chase and still unaware of his evil uncle's intention, has met and fallen in love with Sir Nevil's adopted daughter, the attractive redhead Anticlea. But Sir Nevil has designs on Anticlea himself, and when his wife Belinda finds out she stabs her husband to death with a dagger. When Yaxley fires at David, Belinda, who is shielding him, is hit and dies. Finally the case is concluded when Shrig kills Yaxley with a shot from his pistol.

The accompanying strip features an incident from the tale with David assisting Shrig in the tracking down of the inhabitant of the 'haunted' cottage. The illustrator, Henry Matthew Brock, was the younger brother of Charles Edmund Brock.

Atmospheric penwork by the incomparable H.M.Brock.

"The Loring Mystery" - Thriller Picture Library No. 25

Both were highly talented artists whose work embellished books, magazines and juvenile papers in the latter part of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century.

Birmingham-born Jeffery Farnol (1878-1952) specialised in country romances and adventure stories laid in England's historical past. He was in America when he completed his first novel, *The Broad Highway*. The manuscript was submitted to several American

publishers, but rejected because it was considered to be 'too English'. Eventually it was published in England in 1910, and sub-titled 'A story of Kent', the county which provided the background for many of his tales. Farnol's books were on the best-seller list for almost forty years. Some of the best were *The Amateur Gentleman*, *Beltane the Smith* and *Black Bartlemey's Treasure*. *Epics of the Fancy*, quite out of character, were accounts of famous bare-knuckle fights of days gone by, as well as the eagerly-awaited heavyweight contest between the American Jack Dempsey and Georges Carpentier, the Frenchman.

Round The Year With Cliff House



by Margery Woods

MERRIMENT IN MAY!

On the sporting scene one May (1921) Cliff House had a boat race with the girls of Danesford Hall. It was sparked off by a mean prank played on Cliff House by Nancy Bell and her equally mean pal at Danesford. Not content with that the treacherous pair caused Cliff House to lose the race by sabotaging their boat. Despite this setback Cliff House went on to win the second stage of their challenge fixtures, this time on the cricket pitch, and then the relay race that was the third leg of that sporting trilogy.

The three stories of that series also featured the new young sports coach called Cyril Hartley, who was on a quest of his own in the district to track down a man who had stolen securities from Cyril's firm. Because Cyril had seen the two mean pranksters hanging around the boathouse on the day of cliff House's boating disaster, the guilty pair tried to make trouble for the young coach.

This series provided another little piece in the vast jigsaw of Cliff House history, for Cyril and Miss Bellew, popular young mistress of the Fourth, fell in love. This provided quite a bit of emotional conflict as the second thread of the story when the girls were taken in by the scheming of Nancy Bell, which resulted in Cyril being arrested and caused heartbreak for Miss Bellew. But thanks to the chums it all came right. Cyril was released, he caught the crook and retrieved the missing securities, and there was a joyous wedding to round off the series. Nancy Bell was pardoned (the villainesses always did manage to get off virtually scot free) and the only sour note as far as the Fourth was concerned was that they needed a temporary mistress until the replacement for Miss Bellew arrived.

Yes, the Fourth was doomed: their temporary mistress was to be Miss Bullivant. Oh dear . . .

May '38 brought another romance to Cliff House, this time for the youngest mistress at Cliff House, the one nicknamed The Frump because although she was quite pretty and charming her dress sense appeared to be nil. It did not seem to occur to the girls that Wanda Belling might have been conscious of her extreme youth and donned plain or dowdy outfits in order to assume an older authority. So when a Fifth form girl called Jessie Naylor, who was the sister of Lance who planned to marry Miss Belling, decided to break up the romance, Babs and Co. decided to take a hand. By the time of the very grand occasion when Lance intended to introduce his bride-to-be to his family Babs had completed a transformation of Wanda Belling into a beautiful young woman - and all because Jessie Naylor had been determined to get into the school's top swimming team at whatever cost to the happiness of others. Why do silly vain girls make boasts they can't fulfil? Still, out of evil . . .

Also during that May a little gipsy girl came to Cliff House, and Diana Royston-Clarke had a spat with Faith Ashton. When a conflict of vanities sparks between a couple of strong characters like Diana and Faith their formmates - and the readers - can be assured of an exciting time. Sympathy was mostly for Diana, who in spite of her faults had a great deal that was good and generous in her nature, whereas Faith possessed neither quality; she was mean, treacherous and conniving all the way through behind her mask of sweet prettiness. But to quote the last line of the story: A girl who matched her wits in vain against the Firebrand of the Fourth.

For this Diana story ended in the bittersweet way of the best Diana stories, with her conscience taking precedence over her selfish desires, so that those who deserved recognition and reward received them in abundance. But Diana always made sure that her enemies receive their come-uppance in equal abundance too!

THE SCHOOLGIRL

Every Saturday 2/6

No. 249. Vol. 10.

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED "SCHOOLGIRL"

Week Ending May 5th, 1934.



"LOOK!
THE GHOST SHIP!"

A thrilling incident from the grand tale of the Cliff House chums - by Hilda Richards - inside.

Going back to 1933 we find the month of May taken up by school politics, and Connie Jackson yet again asserting her tyrannical will. She made sure that chums of the Fourth had no time for mischief, but went too far in introducing fagging - and regretted it when Babs and Co. decided to be obedient little fags and clean Connie's study as ordered. Bessie especially was extremely thorough in cleaning out the study cupboard. She polished off every edible within it. Blacklead, or stove polish, was the favoured cleaning medium; it polished windows and furniture up a treat . . . Of course there was a price to pay, but it was worth it for the fun they had. During this month-long series Connie's aunt, Miss Harper, was deputising in Miss Primrose's absence, with the secondary plotline of Miss Matthews, the Fourth's mistress at the time, in danger of going blind.

Despite the month's long association with May Day frolics, various rites and ceremonies, May Queen crowning and heavy-footed dancers prancing around the Maypole with beribboned sticks and jingling bells, Cliff House invariably managed to find dark mystery with hauntings and strange legends. Two classic haunting series occurred in sunny, merry May.

One came in May '34 with the visitations of a ghost ship. A luminous ship with ghostly sails which appeared and disappeared in Pegg Bay with eerie suddenness, bound on what course no-one knew, and the locals stayed at a healthy distance.

This was the series that introduced Celeste Margesson, always a favourite 'guest' character in the Cliff House tales. Her grandfather owned a luxury yacht the *Gloriana*, which in later holiday stories would take the chums to adventures across sunny seas. But neither Celeste nor her chums knew that the *Gloriana* had had a thief of a skipper, Rufus, who had stashed proceeds of robberies away in the yacht and been sacked by Captain Margesson before he could retrieve them. And so with his accomplices, who included a frightful old crone called Sal, he had set up the hauntings to try and scare everyone off so that he could get aboard to rescue his loot. He did not bargain for Celeste and her new chums from Cliff House! They soon tracked down the cave where the ghost ship was hidden, covered in phosphorescent paint, and managed to lock up Rufus and the venomous old crone in their own ghost ship, then sailed it triumphantly into Pegg Bay to deliver their furious captives into the hands of the law.

Great boys' own stuff for girls - and boys too!

The next May haunting came in 1936 when Cliff House had trouble with its foundations and needed major structural repairs, which necessitated moving the Fourth out into temporary accommodation. Drere Manor was chosen for this, an ancient Tudor manor in Friardale Lane, gloomy with neglect, which the owners, crippled Mr Hunter and his daughter Eileen, who lived in a cottage in the village, were too poor to maintain.

At least fifty percent of the stories of this period and earlier are based on the basic plot of villains with an interest in keeping the property empty (this is usually well equipped with secret passages and dungeons) while the long-suffering real owners or heirs are living in penury and being robbed of their rights.

Drere Manor had all the familiar framework aimed at fulfilling the wishful fantasies of youngsters - and adults too for that matter - who would love to explore mysterious old mansions that promise creeps and chills and even the discovery of hidden treasure.

Somehow, though, this series lacked suspense. The villains were known right from the start. One was the uncle of Freda Ferrier, who was in the scares up to her neck, as was the

unpopular prefect, Sarah Harrigan, who was anyone's for a tanner and agreed to put all exploration out of bounds to the chums. But, of course, Babs and Co. managed to put everything right for Eileen and her father in the end!

May of 1935 starred Rosa Rodworth, in search of film fame, and 1937 was occupied by elections for school captain, during which popular Dulcia Fairbrother was sadly traduced by the baddies before Babs and Co. cleared it all up.

May '39 ran singles which featured Janet Jordan, Rosa Rodworth, Faith Ashton up to her tricks again, and Rona Fox making mischief for Dulcia but being well outfoxed by Clara Trevlyn.

May 1940 marked the sad demise of *The Schoolgirl*, a victim of the wartime paper shortage. Besides Babs and Co. the honours of these three final issues belonged to Bessie and her parrot; Clara Trevlyn and her sagacious pet alsatian, Pluto; Miss Valerie Charmant and her young sister Joan; and Bessie in the last story.

If the word honours can be applied to villains and villainesses they would have to be shared by Connie Jackson, Lydia Crossendale, Frances Frost, and prefect Rona Fox. But doubtless to the satisfaction of the readers all their sins were found out, and thus fair play and right was the reward of our favourite school chums. Exactly as it should be in the best of all stories.

NEWS OF THE OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUBS

Northern O.B.B.C.

There was a treat in store for the 15 members gathered for our April meeting. Mr Geoffrey Chaplin our guest speaker was making a return visit to speak about "Travel Books of My Youth". Innocent as we are in Northern Club, we assumed Mr Chaplin was to speak about books on travelling to faraway places: we were wrong. The talk was about books informing us how to get to places, i.e. old railway timetables!

Those who think such a subject is boring and not relevant to the Old Boys' Book Club should have been with us for they would think again. Mr Chaplin spoke for 40 minutes during which time he held everyone's attention. He explained how he had always loved the railways and how he had studied timetables from the old companies. He spoke of very poetic type names in timetables, and of adventure, mystery, imagination and the pleasure of planning journeys and their connections. Mr Chaplin ended by playing Flanders and Swan singing "Slow Train" in their inimitable way. All very amusing and entertaining, and certainly one of the most novel items we have had. A superb presentation.

Chris Scholey was next on the scene with "In-Forming the Youthful Mind". Chris used excerpts from the genuine Frank Richards stories in *The Magnet* and *The Gem* and showed us how the author endeavoured to persuade the youthful reader of some of his own opinions, such as "the British spirit", politics and women in Parliament. For instance, Miss Locke tried to change the boys' views on suffragettes. When some boys and Cliff House girls were trapped in a cave, they did not concentrate on escaping, but had a discussion on evolution! Also, we came across a discussion on the nationalisation of coal mines.

Contrary to some parents' views that our favourite story papers were not "blood and thunder" papers, they were in some ways subversive. Chris's very enlightening talk certainly made us think. An excellent presentation, and a marvellous evening all round.

Our next gathering is on 8th May, with Gillian Baverstock, daughter of Enid Blyton, speaking to us about her mother. **Johnny Bull Minor**

Cambridge Club

We gathered at the Linton village home of Roy Whiskin for our March 1999 meeting.

The afternoon began with the usual short business session, then Roy talked about the writings of the German author, Erich Kästner (1899-1974) who, luckily for him, had a very sympathetic translator into the English language.

The journalist and poet is most associated with the 1930s story *Emil and the Detectives* - a story concerning a youngster being preyed upon by a thief whilst travelling alone, and then enlisting a Berlin street boys gang in a successful attempt to recover the stolen item. This tale was filmed as a Disney B picture in 1964.

The magical world of childhood was also captured by Kästner in five other books, and he wrote just as many books for adults. All were translated. One of his stories was filmed by Walt Disney in 1961, entitled *The Parent Trap*. This was a very successful vehicle for the child star Hayley Mills. It was re-filmed in 1998.

Some video extracts from the Disney films were then played, and many copies of Kästner's books were circulated.

Roy then played a taped excerpt from a 1998 BBC radio programme on *Annuals*. This survey of the seasonal publications loosely linked to juvenile titles provoked much discussion. **Adrian Perkins**

For our April 1999 meeting we gathered at the Willingham village home of Keith Hodkinson.

We were extremely pleased to welcome our President, Mary Cadogan, to the afternoon's events.

After our usual short business session, Mary gave a much appreciated continuation of her talk concerning her experiences in the immediate-postwar BBC. Wonderful nostalgic namedropping of programme titles and artists, mixed in with audio-taped vintage broadcast discussions, and more recent broadcast chats between Mary and Arthur Marshall.

Later, Keith showed excerpts from the three film versions of *The 39 Steps*. Made in 1935, 1959 and 1978, all the versions possessed a pace not entirely reflecting the qualities found in the John Buchan book. This is not altogether a bad thing as the latter is dating fast. **Adrian Perkins**

London O.B.B.C.

Various aspects of the hobby were highlighted at the April meeting of the London OBBC in Acton.

Our genial host, Duncan Harper, entertained members with a detailed talk that reflected his great enthusiasm for the works of the highly regarded thriller writer, Dick Francis. This prompted animated discussion.

Derek Hinrich spoke of a scheme to erect a statue of Sherlock Holmes outside Baker Street station, and Stephen Farrell read *Blundering Through the Minefield* by Titanic officer Charles Lightoller. Vic Pratt foxed members with a tricky trivia quiz.

Bill Bradford read an old newsletter from 1979 *Down Memory Lane*, which evoked nostalgic memories of that lost artefact, the British adventure comic, for it was in 1979 that the *Tornado* was launched, featuring a thinly-disguised Sexton Blake masquerading as Victor Drago. Sadly, now the British comic has pretty much gone the way of the story-paper.

Vic Pratt

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.
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21/4, 28/4, 23/6, 21/7, 28/7, 11/8,

25/8, 6/10, 13/10, 20/10, 27/10,

27/10, 3/11, 3/11, 10/11, 10/11,

17/11, 24/11, 8/12, 15/12, 22/12,

1952 issues: dates available: 5/1,

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10/5, 17/5, 24/5, 31/5, 7/6, 21/6,

28/6, 5/7, 12/7, 23/8, 30/8, 13/9,

18/10, 25/10, 1/11, 8/11, 15/11,

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

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