

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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The Editor's Chat



Again we have an attractive cover picture from Tony Glynn, who writes:

“Modern educational psychologists would certainly take a dim view of the old practice of crowning the slowest learner in the class with a conical paper cap and declaring him a dunce, but his place at the bottom of the class did not worry Dickie Duffer the Dunce in the slightest.

For many a year, he rollicked through the pages of that popular green-tinted penny comic, *The Joker*, outwitting his headmaster, Dr Doughnut and the bewhiskered school inspector and creating a state of surreal mayhem in the last panel. Some dunce! During the Second World War, he moved into *Chips* because *The Joker* merged with that title. Dickie's usual artist was the prolific A.T. (Charlie) Pease, whose work seemed to be published in the whole range of the Amalgamated Press's comics in the thirties. When it came to churning out vast amounts of comic art, Charlie was no dunce, either.”

Tony's reference to the approach of modern educational psychologists comes at a time when yet another of our childhood literary heroes (or anti-heroes) has been denounced as socio-politically 'incorrect'. It seems particularly ironic that William (or rather his publishers) should be told that the stories encourage cruelty to animals, and bullying! William, despite occasional mishaps concerning animals, was always well-intentioned towards them; indeed, he and the Outlaws often seemed to enjoy the company of pets and other animals more than that of many humans! And surely William was never a bully. He would retaliate when provoked (as he was so often by the sneaky-smarmy Hubert Lane and, at different times, by other spoiled "mothers' darlings") but all his fans know that he was far more likely to be the chivalrous knight protecting the weak than the vicious "baddy". Fortunately, in this current wave of politically correct criticism, William has had several wonderfully articulate defenders in the media, who, I gather, share the view of many C.D. readers that William is happily set for literary immortality.



This month's *Nelson Lee and ESB* feature includes a short article by Rueben Godsave, a stalwart of the hobby who died some years ago. The typescript of this piece suddenly turned up amongst my C.D. files: probably the article was published - but, if so, it was a long time ago and the point he makes remains a stimulating one.

From time to time our magazine mentions societies which are devoted to the work of various popular writers, and I feel that the William Tufnell Le Queux Society might be of interest to some of you. Le Queux's atmospheric books are still sought by collectors, and the society's magazine makes lively and interesting reading. Details about the society can be obtained from its current magazine editor (who is well-known as a C.D. contributor) Donald V. Campbell, Woodlawn Cottage, Apperley Lane, Apperley Bridge, West Yorkshire BD10 0PH.

Happy Reading!

MARY CADOGAN

“CHUBB”

We are sad to report the recent passing of “Chubb”, the widow of Terry Wakefield, whose illustrations have so often graced the C.D. We are grateful to Chubb and Terry’s son, John, for the details given here, and we are printing two of Terry’s *Laurel & Hardy* pictures as we know that Chubb would have liked Terry’s work to be included in this obituary tribute. (Chubb’s father-in-law, Bill Wakefield, was, of course, the original *Laurel & Hardy* artist for *Film Fun*, and for many years the main Rookwood illustrator.) (M.C.)



1. Dear old Ollly fancies himself as a motorist—hence the outfit and goggles. “You’ve been a good boy lately, Stan,” says he, “and done all the housework without even asking me to do the dusting. You may come for a ride in my new car.”

Alice Irene Phyllis Wakefield was born on 29th October 1905 at Herne Hill in London. Youngest of the three daughters of artist Louis Gunnis (1864-1940), Irene was only two months old when her mother Dorothy (1876-1905) died.

Louis, devastated by the death of his young wife, never remarried and his daughters were looked after by a succession of housekeepers in Manchester and London where he was working as an illustrator for publishers Hendersons and the Amalgamated Press. During those early years, Irene must have developed the qualities of stoicism and optimism which lasted into her old age.

She grew into a cheerful, plump teenager, earning the nickname ‘Chubby’, a name used by her family and friends for the rest of her life.

When she was 18 she went to Egypt to look after the young son of the British Consul in Cairo - a great adventure for her; while she was there, the tomb of Tutankhamun was opened and its treasures exhibited.

On her return to England she went to live in Ottery St. Mary, Devon, where she helped to run a small cinema owned by her sister and brother-in-law. It was there she met Terry Wakefield when Terry drove his fellow Amalgamated Press artist Louis Gunnis down for a visit one weekend in 1934.

She and Terry married in 1935 and the next few years were a golden time for her. Even World War II did not dent her spirit of optimism despite Terry’s six years overseas in the army and the death of both her father in 1940 in the Blitz, and her father-in-law Bill Wakefield in 1942.

‘Chubby’ had a great ability to make and keep friends, from those she had known since childhood to the ones she met with Terry. For her, family and friends were

everything. She died on 14th March at Twickenham, Middlesex where she and Terry had lived for several years. JW

REMINDERS OF FRANK RICHARDS

by Keith Atkinson

Part Two

The next author that I would like to mention is Charles Dickens.

Frank Richards has often been compared to Dickens, especially for his scenes of Christmas gatherings and feasts, and many of his characters have a Dickensian touch, particularly his school menial staff and villagers. Characters like William Gosling, the school porter, could almost have stepped straight from the pages of Dickens.

Frank Richards loved Dickens' works, and I am sure we have all read "Bunter's Christmas Carol" in which Bunter is given a copy of Dickens' *Christmas Carol* by his uncle, which he begins to read, at first from boredom in a French detention class. However, he becomes more and more interested and affected by the story until, under its influence, he becomes benevolent, shares his umbrella with a shabby old man whom he meets in the lane, and goes out of his way to see him to the railway station.

This man turns out to be an eccentric millionaire, who invites Bunter to his mansion in London and persuades him to join him in giving to the poor, and even to give away his overcoat and shoes in the process, until Bunter is finally disillusioned.

On reading Dickens, it is not unusual to come across a paragraph which reminds us of Frank Richards, although amongst such a wealth of writing it is difficult to find them afterwards for reference. But a few do stand out, such as the character of Harold Skimpole in *Bleak House*, who is tall and thin, verbose and impecunious, and very childlike. In the same book is Mrs Jellerby who spends all her time and money in writing letters to get people to contribute to abstruse charitable cases such as educating the natives of Boriboola-gha on the left bank of the Niger, and it is almost as if Frank Richards has combined many of the characteristics of these two in the person of Herbert Skimpole of St. Jim's, who, especially in some of the early stories, is always soliciting funds for such odd causes as supplying trousers to the Walla-walla Islanders and similar freakish projects.

In *The Old Curiosity Shop* there is a scene where Little Nell, who is staying temporarily with a travelling waxwork company, is given some advertising leaflets to take to a school for young ladies. She is brought to tears by the sarcasm of the Principal, Miss Montflathers, and drops her handkerchief. Miss Edwards, a poor girl who is apprenticed to the school and is taught and boarded for nothing, steps forward and picks it up for her, and is promptly dressed down by Miss Montflathers for not preserving the decorum of a young lady. She disliked and looked down on Miss Edwards for being poor, and took pride in the fact that in her school was the daughter of a real life Baronet. This scene immediately put me in mind of Mr Mobbs at Highcliffe School, who sucks up to Ponsonby for being a real live Lord, and looks down on Frank Courtenay for being a scholarship boy.

Then there is the scene in *Pickwick Papers* where Mr Pickwick and his friends are on the way to Dingley Dell:-

Such was the progress of Mr Pickwick and his friends by the Muggleton Telegraph, on their way to Dingley Dell; and at three o'clock that afternoon they all stood, high and dry, safe and sound, hale and hearty, upon the steps of the Blue Lion, having taken on the road quite enough of ale and brandy to enable them to bid defiance to the frost that was binding up the earth in its iron fetters, and weaving its beautiful network upon the trees and hedges. Mr Pickwick was busily engaged in counting the barrels of oysters and superintending the disinterment of the codfish, when he felt himself gently pulled by the skirts of the coat. Looking round, he discovered that the individual who resorted to this mode of catching his attention was no other than Mr Wardle's favourite page, better known to the readers of this unvarnished history, by the distinguishing appellation of the fat boy.

"Aha!" said Mr Pickwick.

"Aha!" said the fat boy.

As he said it, he glanced from the codfish to the oyster-barrels, and chuckled joyously. He was fatter than ever.

"Well, you look rosy enough, my young friend," said Mr Pickwick.

"I've been asleep, right in front of the tap-room fire," replied the fat boy, who had heated himself to the colour of a new chimney-pot, in the course of an hour's nap. "Master sent me over with the shay-cart, to carry your luggage up to the house. He'd ha' sent some saddle-horses, but he thought you'd rather walk, being a cold day."

"Yes, yes," said Mr Pickwick, hastily, for he remembered how they had travelled over nearly the same ground on a previous occasion. "Yes, we would rather walk. Here, Sam!"

"Sir," said Mr Weller.

"Help Mr Wardle's servant to put the packages into the cart, and then ride on with him. We will walk forward at once."

Being given this direction, and settled with the coachman, Mr Pickwick and his three friends struck into the footpath across the fields, and walked briskly away, leaving Mr Weller and the fat boy confronted together for the first time. Sam looked at the fat boy with great astonishment, but without saying a word; and began to stow the luggage rapidly away in the cart, while the fat boy stood quietly by, and seemed to think it a very interesting sort of thing to see Mr Weller working by himself.

"There," said Sam, throwing in the last carpet-bag. "There they are!"

"Yes," said the fat boy, in a very satisfied tone, "there they are".

"Vell, young twenty stun," said Sam, "you're a nice specimen of a prize boy, you are!"

"Thank 'ee," said the fat boy.

"You ain't got nothin' on your mind as makes you fret yourself, have you?" inquired Sam.

"Not as I knows on," replied the fat boy.

"I should rayther ha' thought to look at you, that you was a labourin' under an unrequited attachment to some young 'ooman," said Sam.

The fat boy shook his head.

"Vell," said Sam. "I'm glad to hear it. Do you ever drink anythin'?"

"I likes eating better," replied the boy.

"Ah," said Sam, "I should ha' supposed that; but what I mean is, should you like a drop of anythin' as'd warm you? but I s'pose you never was cold, with all them elastic fixtures, was you?"

"Sometimes," replied the boy; "and I likes a drop of something, when it's good."

"Oh, you do, do you?" said Sam, "come this way then!"

The Blue Lion tap was soon gained, and the fat boy swallowed a glass of liquor without so much as winking; a feat which considerably advanced him in Mr Weller's good opinion. Mr Weller having transacted a similar piece of business on his own account, they got into the cart.

"Can you drive?" said the fat boy.

"I should rayther think so," replied Sam.

"There, then," said the fat boy, putting the reins in his hand, and pointing up the lane, "it's as straight as you can go; you can't miss it."

With these words, the fat boy laid himself affectionately down by the side of the codfish: and placing an oyster-barrel under his head for a pillow, fell asleep instantaneously.

"Well," said Sam, "of all the cool boys ever I set my eyes on, this here young gen'lm'n is the coolest. Come, wake up, young dropsy!"

But as young dropsy evinced no symptoms of returning animation, Sam Weller sat himself down in front of the cart, and starting the old horse with a jerk of the rein, jogged steadily on, towards Manor Farm.

Here, Joe, the fat boy, reminds us very strongly of Billy Bunter, showing many of his traits - his love of eating, his love of sleeping, and his standing by and watching someone else do all the work.

And talking of Billy Bunter, I was recently reading a book called *The English Country House Party* which, as its title suggests, is about the gatherings of the rich and famous at English country houses, especially in Victorian times, as a part of social life, including hunting and shooting and elaborate and expensive dinner parties.

The Prince of Wales was a frequent visitor at some of these affairs - that is the Prince of Wales who later became King Edward VII. He was known to be very fond of the ladies and he was also very fond of his stomach.

And I quote:-

By the 1890s, the Prince of Wales measured 48 inches round both waist and hips, and it is a tribute to the skill of his tailor, Mr Poole, that his figure retains a kind of portly distinction, even in later portraits.

Dinners at Sandringham consisted usually of at least 12 courses. The Prince enjoyed simple food almost as much as rich fare and, says Christopher Hibbert, would tuck into Scotch broth, Irish stew and plum pudding with as much zest as into caviar, plovers' eggs and ortolans. He was once noticed to frown upon a bowl of boiled ham and beans, but this, he hastened to explain, was not because he despised such fare, but "because it should have been bacon".

He would enjoy several dozen oysters in a matter of minutes, setting the fashion for swallowing them between mouthfuls of bread and butter; and then would go on to more solid fare, to sole poached in chablis and garnished with oysters and prawns, or to chicken and turkey in aspic, quails and pigeon pie, grouse and partridge; and the thicker the dressing, the richer the stuffing, the creamier the sauce, the more deeply did he seem to enjoy each mouthful. He liked his pheasant stuffed with truffles and smothered in oleaginous sauce; he delighted in quails packed with foie gras and served with oysters, truffles, mushrooms, prawns, tomatoes and croquettes. He never grew tired of boned snipe, filled with forcemeat as well as foie gras and covered with truffles and Madeira sauce. And after eating all this food for dinner, he would advise his guests to have a good

supper before going to bed, strongly recommending grilled oysters which were his own favourite refreshment at that time of night. On his bedside table was placed a cold chicken in case he became hungry during the night.

It makes Bunter's appetite seem quite normal, doesn't it?

To Be Continued.



A SUBTLE DIFFERENCE

by Rueben Godsave

A constant reader of the Nelson Lee Library could hardly be unaware of a subtle difference in the character of the Handforth of the old series, and the Handforth of the new.

Whereas Bunter mellowed with the passing years in the *Magnet*, so the reverse happened to Handforth in the *Nelson Lee*.

The loveable, reckless and obstinate junior developed a streak of arrogance when he came to dominate the *Nelson Lee*, which was not one of his characteristics in the old series.

The relationship between Handforth and his chums was not so closely knit as in the past. With Handforth being brought to the forefront, so Church and McClure receded into the background. Although they appeared with Handforth in the new series stories they were shadows of their former selves.

This streak of arrogance overrode the sterling qualities of Handforth's nature which were allowed to emerge as they did in the Death of Walter Church series.

If Handforth could not see anything with his own eyes, it did not exist. This explains his loyalty and blind faith in the innocence of his friends who were unfortunate to fall into disgrace through the machinations of others.

With Handforth becoming more and more a dominant character in the new series of the *Nelson Lee*, it was, perhaps, inevitable that such a change must follow.

GEMS OF HAMILTONIA

The selection of the team that was to play Rookwood gave Wingate much anxious thought, and caused many consultations with the games master, for whose judgement the Greyfriars captain had the deepest respect. And Coker was not only the worst cricketer at Greyfriars; he was the worst cricketer that ever was. When Coker played the winter game fellows wondered whether he could look a bigger idiot than he did on the football field. When the summer came they knew he could. His football was a scream. But his cricket was a shriek.

Magnet 1267

THE MAN WHO MET HIMSELF

by Mark Caldicott

Part Three: Eustace and Sexton Blake

The *Union Jack* stories written in the period when Eustace Cavendish had begun to feature were, at least for me, some of Brooks' better efforts. The atmospheric settings of the tales, with their intriguingly plotted openings, make for a most enjoyable read. In contrast, the *Nelson Lee Library*, where ESB has directed the majority of his efforts for the last fifteen years or so, was entering a less satisfying period as far as both readers and author were concerned. Perhaps this led Brooks to invest his main creative energy into his detective stories. Whatever the reason, these *Union Jack* stories are excellent, and "Quivering Steel" (*Union Jack*, 1384, 19-Oct-30) the next of the Eustace Cavendish stories, is no exception.

When Sir James Charteris arrives home to Wilnslow Chase he expects to give his son and daughter a surprise. Instead the surprise is to himself, for he finds the place in darkness, and apparently deserted. In the dark of the evening he is alarmed by a premonition of something evil. He hears noises in the grounds and surprises a group of unknown men digging what appears to be a grave. Sir James challenges them - with fatal consequences.

We discover Eustace in a disreputable night-club, improving his detective skills by rubbing shoulders with, and making the acquaintance of, some of London's shadier characters. This is yet another insight into his character.

Eustace had the detective instinct in a highly-developed degree, and he was ever out for knowledge - with a thrill attached to it, if possible. His general air of harmless imbecility usually rendered him safe wherever he went.

In actual fact many of these habitués of the night clubs would have been startled could they have known the extent of Eustace's knowledge . . . Naturally they regarded him as a simpleton.

Eustace's visit pays dividends in terms of providing his detective instincts with a mystery when Larry Manners, acquaintance of underworld king Stanley "Red" Coulson, dashes panic-stricken from the club after reading the tape machine message that Sir James Charteris has been murdered.

Sexton Blake has already been asked by Grace Charteris, Sir James' daughter, to investigate his murder when Cavendish arrives to add his news. Blake asks Eustace to look into the Larry Manners mystery while he, Blake, travels to Wilnslow Chase to investigate the murder itself. Eustace has already discovered that when Larry Manners left the club he took a taxi to the London flat of Jim Charteris, Sir Henry's son and Grace's brother. Eustace is attacked by Manners and a reluctant Jim Charteris, but through his own skills at escaping his bonds, and assisted by Tinker, he escapes. Eustace's honourable action in keeping quiet about Charteris's part in the attack helps persuade Jim Charteris to own up to the truth, explaining the mystery and allowing Blake to bring the evil Coulson to justice.

The next appearance of Eustace Cavendish coincides with a remarkable period in the career of Sexton Blake. In "The Red-Hot Racketeers", (*Union Jack*, 1425, 07-Feb-31), we find Eustace in the more salubrious Green Canary Night Club, at the invitation of Sexton



Blake. The place is raided by the police. Cavendish notes that Blake does not seem too surprised at this, nor by the fact that the "police" turn out to be disguised members of the Chicago-styled Seventy-Seven Gang. Blake and Eustace are foiled in their attempt to hold the raiders by a well-meaning club member, and the gang escape. In the ensuing chase Sir Hilton Chambers, the Chief Commissioner, is killed. As a result of this tragedy, and in an attempt to tackle London's great gang war, Sexton Blake is appointed Chief Commissioner of Scotland Yard. Even more astonishing is the fact that Rupert Waldo, former arch-criminal, is, at Blake's insistence, appointed Deputy Commissioner.

Unlike Blake and Waldo, Eustace has been given no official position. When Cavendish pays a visit to Blake at the Yard, Blake reveals the gravity of his new responsibility by becoming rather pompous.

Eustace sailed in with supreme confidence and cheer - and a rather pretty girl.

"So here we are, all moved in and settled down," he said brightly. "Didn't I tell you, Blake, old trout, that the thing would be worked? Chief Commissioner at Scotland Yard, what? I feel most frightfully important, drifting in like this, and hobnobbing with the elite."

"I'm afraid you won't hobnob long, Eustace," replied Blake. "In fact, unless you have some very definite reason for calling upon me, I shall have to ask you to retire at once. This office is not a club-room."

Power has obviously gone to Blake's head! Blake also gives short shrift to the girl, Enid Travers, who is a reporter looking for an inside story. Blake obviously feels Eustace has been used. Enid does not take her failure well:

She was flushed, and threw an angry glance at Eustace. That unfortunate young man looked hot about the collar, and there was little doubt that he would be in for a warm minute when she got him alone. Eustace had evidently imagined that he could stroll about Scotland Yard as though he owned the place.

Revealed here for the first time is evidence that Cavendish's previously impeccable judgement can be flawed. He has allowed himself to be manipulated by a pretty girl, and has taken too lightly the seriousness of Blake's new position. Indeed Eustace's detective instincts take a back seat in this story - it is Blake who is on the ball, and saves the lives of Eustace and Enid when a bomb is attached to the silencer of the Grey Panther.

Feeling excluded by Blake, Eustace goes back to the Green Canary. He finds Enid dancing with "some pernicious and poisonous stranger". Eustace is jealous and intervenes, escorting Enid back to his table. Knowing that the Green Canary is a dangerous place, Eustace wants to get her away, but his attempts to do so have just the opposite of the desired effect. She stays, and dances with Weiss the manager, leading Weiss on so that she can get information for her story. An old man asks for a light, and reveals himself to be a disguised Blake urging Cavendish to get Enid away from the club. Eustace drags Enid protestingly from the club but fails to reach a taxi before the pair are set upon. Eustace happily takes on his four assailants, but is glad of Waldo's appearance when the men pull out knives.

Meanwhile Enid has taken the opportunity to re-enter the club, and it is the final indignity for Eustace in the story that it is Waldo who rescues Eustace's lady while Eustace himself is merely dispatched to find a taxi.

By the end of this story we begin to wonder whether Eustace has lost his touch. He is portrayed as being somewhat immature and naïve in not realising the gravity of Blake's new position. Furthermore he is demonstrated to be gullible to the charms of a pretty girl who is using him to further her own ends. And he is prone to jealousy, a jealousy, moreover, which clouds his judgement and leads to impulsive action.

Above all, however, in this story he is excluded. Blake is quick to recruit his former antagonist Waldo to the ranks of Scotland Yard. Blake and Waldo take on the important job, and Cavendish is treated as the outsider. Why did Blake not take the opportunity to recruit Cavendish as well? Perhaps he thought Cavendish was unsuitable material for the police force. If so, however, considering what happened in the future, this was uncharacteristically bad judgement on Blake's behalf.

WANTED: Pre-War boys' comics/story papers, Xmas issues in particular. Can offer exchanges if preferred, e.g. Nelson Lee Lib. O/S, N/S, Champions, Penny Populars, S.B.L. 2nd, 3rd series, various other items. KEN TOWNSEND, 7 NORTH CLOSE, WILLINGTON, DERBY DE65 6EA. PHONE 01283-703305

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51 Sexton Blake Libraries, 1st & 2nd series, £3.50 each.

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LIBRARY CHAT

by D. Ford

Between July and December 1902, the only Sexton Blake case recorded in the *Union Jack* was "The Convict Hunt" in number 450, related by Paul Herring. Charles Hamilton, incidentally, contributed two stories in that period, neither of them school stories.

Blake had just returned from the Continent, when he had trapped an absconding bank cashier in Calais. On his arrival at Charing Cross he is just about to step inside his hansom when Caleb Griffin hails him.

(Those who have read 'The Adventure of the Freckled Hand' in the *Union Jack* will remember that Griffin was working for Scotland Yard in that case, and came to grief through disregard of Blake's advice and a big belief in his own smartness. He had more respect for the private investigator now.)

Griffin wants him to go to the Yard for an urgent interview. But first he has his written report to hand into the bank and receive his cheque for £2,000 and the congratulations of the directors.

He then drove to Scotland Yard, where he was at once admitted to the chief's private room. The chief wanted Blake on his staff and was prepared to pay a thousand a year for his services.

"Thanks! From a commercial point of view, the bargain is off. Why, sometimes I make a thousand a day!" . . . The chief gasped.

Then Blake goes into details of the case that has just brought him back from the Continent, to the admiration of the chief of Scotland Yard.

Sexton Blake returned to his rooms where an accumulation of correspondence waited him. He lunched, smoked a couple of Turkish cigarettes and set to work on the correspondence.

Then came the wire from the pit-owner Martin Kingsley, M.P., of Brackley Manor House, that £10,000 worth of diamonds had been stolen. Swinging a whangee cane, Blake arrives to find Caleb Griffin on the case.

Griffin is soon in trouble when he intercepts a letter addressed to Blake, telling him to come to the clump of sycamores near Wolverton Close. He has just found the beeches, he notes, when he is shot by the desperate criminal, John Crook. Crook then takes refuge in Brackley Pit, where Blake pursues him.

Blake muses:

"A murderer is the only man this place would suit. Well, we're back on 'the old trail, the long trail, the trail that is ever new', as Kipling says. How will it end? Who can tell? Sherlock Holmes met his match in Moriarty, and Crook is the only criminal so far who has

given Sexton Blake any reason to doubt the final issue. I wonder if they'd ever find me, if

...
"Pshaw! the damp and gloom of the place is getting into my bones! I must do as good old Sherlock did in the thieves' kitchen, and douse the glim. I go to the end of the passage, turn up the subway, and scramble through the hole in the wall. That's the programme."

They meet, a revolver is fired and fire damp is ignited. When he comes to, Crook is dead, and Blake recovers a leather purse stuffed with the stolen diamonds, from the body. Then "He produced his case-book, and methodically entered details of recent events."

The rescue-party were just in time!

I think this must be the first case that took Sexton Blake down the pit, but not the last. This must have been the well remembered 1944 "Case of the Conscript Miner" by Walter Tyrer. Would that all Tyrer's case-books were as well remembered as this.

As a footnote, 1902 was the year Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* first appeared. A first edition copy recently sold for £72,000 at auction, because it had retained its dust-jacket. Only four copies are known in this state.

THE TRAVELLING MERRYMAKERS

by Dawn Marler

No. 1 of a Grand New Series by DAPHNE GRAYSON



To go on a luxury cruise all the way to Australia! That was the wonderful treat Sally Warner was to have. And she was not going to let a jealous member of her party spoil one moment of her fun.

The Cruising Merrymakers' travels and adventures took place in the years leading up to the Second World War, during the war years, with a few following on after the war. While Europe and the rest of the world were being torn apart by war, the Merrymakers

travelled widely but they saw no warships or aircraft. They crossed the war-zones at sea, yet they were not torpedoed. Therefore, these stories were ideal reading for children in a war-torn world; they formed an escape from the horrors of the Blitz and other wartime hardships. This was the author's mission to those children, and it is this that makes these stories unique.

The Merrymakers, Sally Warner, Fay Manners, Don Weston and Johnny Briggs, are the most widely travelled group of youngsters I have met, so far, in children's fiction; they also have the most varied adventures and mysteries to solve; they never appear to settle in one place for too long, so they come into the category of nomads (wanderers). As far as having a home and family life, only Sally could make that claim: the Pine Ranch in Arizona, which belonged to her uncle Steve Carson, was her home, and this she shared with her three loyal chums, who seem to have no parents or relatives of their own: it was, therefore, natural that Sally should act as their leader.

The four chums, who were always together, were created by Daphne Grayson (C. Cecil Graveley). Each of their adventures was characterised by mystery and suspense: each story was fresh and original, and generally complete in itself. A few ran as serials, and these later appeared in the *Schoolgirls' Own Library* (Second Series). One of the attractions of the series was the vividly described sight-seeing engaged in by the chums in their wonderfully varied surroundings. The stories were a regular feature in the *Girls' Crystals* which carried on throughout the Second World War years. In the later post-war *Girls' Crystals* the Merrymakers disappeared, to appear in the *SGOL* with a few adventures in the *Schoolgirls' Picture Library* and the odd one in the *Girls' Crystal Annual* for 1957 under the title 'Detective Sally'.

One of the settled periods, when the Merrymakers temporarily broke away from their nomadic life, they spent in Arizona, living with Sally's uncle, Steve Carson. Only a short time before, the Merrymakers were cruising in the Mediterranean on the ship *Dorian* in the series called 'The Cruising Merrymakers', that ran in the *Girls' Crystal* during the 1940s; this was also published in the *SGPL* (26). This cruise included "The Merrymakers in Italy" (*SGPL* 59) and "The Merrymakers in Arabia" (*SGPL* 80); the *Dorian* was then bound for the Far East, and as the ship steamed through the night, towards its next port of call in the Persian Gulf, the chums were involved in a thrilling adventure.

There are plenty of adventures and mysteries in "The Merrymakers in Arizona" series, which ran in the *Girls' Crystal* (1943/44). This series included "The Feud in the Merrymakers Club" (*G/C* 1944), which was published as a complete story in the *SGOL* (66). The story tells of a feud within the Merrymakers club itself; a club which they,

THE MERRYMAKERS IN EGYPT

BY Daphne Grayson



Girls' Crystal no. 188 (27 May 1939)

Detective SALLY



Sally Warner seemed to be getting herself into deep water when she tried to solve the mystery of the stolen pearls. Even her chums, aboard the cruising liner, were not very sympathetic. Her only real ally turned out to be a kitten!

By DAPHNE GRAYSON

themselves, had formed. They had rivalry with the Paragon Club, and all were tied up with the Junior Clubs contest in canoeing, riding, and so on.

The Arizona series continued into "The Merrymakers and the Masked Rider" (G/C 1944-45), published in the SGOL (43). The Merrymakers were on the move again. With Sally's uncle, they accompanied a young girl, Jill Patterson, on a journey across the Sandstone Desert to Jill's Uncle Clem. The journey was not without its excitement: who was the masked rider, and why was he working against them? After an arduous journey they eventually reached Uncle Clem's log cabin on the edge of the desert. This was not the end of the journey. The mystery led them to Exhibition City, in New Mexico, where they had to meet 'the man in the blue cloak', a friend of Jill's Uncle Clem; from there they had to go to Redwood Heights Lumber Camp in the Canadian Rockies, and find the Bear Cave situated in the area, before the mystery could be solved.

After the adventures in Arizona and the journey to the Canadian Rockies, we find Sally and her chums at a co-ed college in California called 'Roxburgh' in "The Merrymakers at College", a long series that appeared in the *Girls' Crystal*, starting at No. 500 (1945-46). It was never published in the SGOL nor in the SGPL. The series continued into "The Merrymakers in New York" (G/C 1946) with Sally and her chums on college holiday. They visited a number of places of interest including some of the museums, the Empire State Building, Brooklyn Bridge, and Fifth Avenue.

The series continued with "The Merrymakers on Holiday" (G/C 1946), which found them on a liner bound for Southampton. The next one in the series is "The Merrymakers at the Winter Sports", G/C 1947) when Sally & Co. are on holiday in Switzerland; from there

they return to 'Roxburgh College'. Each story in the college series is individual and complete.

"The Merry-makers Afloat" (*G/C* 1947), although a new series, is the continuation of the college series. Sally & Co. are on board the ship *Ocean Star*, among the contingent of students chosen from various schools in the U.S.A. and all over the world to go to a new International College in Australia. During the long voyage (from

When Johnny Briggs Dressed Up As A Mexican He Little Realised What He Was

Letting Himself In For



From *Girls' Crystal* no. 613, 19 July 1947

New York to Australia) the ship was to call at several ports to pick up students from Mexico, the West Indies and from all over South America. They visited a small Brazilian town called Pae Cortella ("The Merry-makers in Brazil", *G/C* 1947). Once the ship was ready all the students rejoined the *Ocean Star* in "The Merry-makers Afloat" (2) (*G/C* 1947-48).

In "The Merry-makers in Rio" (*G/C* 1948), from the college ship they visited Rio de Janeiro for sightseeing of the enchanting and beautiful city; then they flew to Buenos Aires, where they were to rejoin their ship ("The Flying Merry-makers", *G/C* 1948). The Merry-makers' sojourn in South America is told as a complete story in the *SGOL*, "The Merry-makers in South America".

(To Be Continued.)

(Editor's Note: In the *Girls' Crystal*, the Merry-maker stories were illustrated by V. Gaskell, one of the very few women artists then employed on the A.P. girls' papers. Her pictures greatly added to the appeal of the series.)

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.

WHOSE PAL? FRIENDSHIP AND ISOLATION AT GREYFRIARS

by Andrew Miles

Part Two

A study by study examination of the Remove reveals an astounding number of isolated and dependent characters. In Study 1 Wharton stands apart from the Remove in a number of ways. As captain, he must put down bullying and repeatedly make decisions about the make-up of cricket and soccer teams. In the early days he is assisted by a committee, but later he acts alone. As Quelch's Head Boy he must - more than his peers - "toe the line" in such matters as ragging and breaking bounds. His pride and occasional arrogance and outbursts of temper periodically make him an outcast in the various "downfall" series. Generally aloof from the Form, he has the Co. as his stalwart supporters. Following the principle of "one in, all in" they support each other through thick and thin. When Wharton allows himself to be led astray by the exuberant Bob Cherry in some thoughtless rag, he has Bull's two stock comments for consolation: "one fool makes many" before the escapade and "I told you so" after it. His main confidant, however, is his studymate Nugent. Close chums since Wharton saved Nugent's life in *Magnet* 1, the two are clearly closer to one another than to the rest of the seemingly inseparable Co. Although the Co. always chum together - except when there is some discord such as the Wharton "Downfall" or "Bob Cherry Swot" series - only Wharton and Nugent are really close. It is always Nugent who is most upset over Wharton's periodic downfalls.

In Study 2 we see three lonely figures. Bulstrode in the early days is a thoughtless bully only seeking to be "up against Wharton and his set". Skinner, Snoop and Stott are among his staunchest allies but never support him when he must face the music before the Form. He is shown again and again walking away with his hands in his pockets - alone. When he briefly replaces Wharton as captain, he experiences the isolation of leadership and it is to Wharton that he turns for counsel. His former followers are only interested in study teas and arousing discord. It is interesting that, in the early days, Skinner has not yet developed fully the devious manipulative skills which feature prominently later. After the death of Bulstrode Minor, Bulstrode Major fades and never regains his early prominence. We can assume that he returns to Greyfriars after a lengthy absence, a reformed but colourless and still lonely figure. His last appearance is in *Bunter's Last Fling* (Cassell) where he leads a rush to eject Coker from the Remove passage.

Hazeldene is also a lonely figure. Although he and Tom Brown seem to chum together, on bike spins for example, he is too weak to align himself with any group. He is too funky to accompany the Bounder on regular escapades and too poor to be of interest to Skinner and Co. He is a useful reserve goalkeeper, but not sufficiently committed to games to be taken up by the rest of the Form. The Famous Five periodically invite him to tea or picnics only for the sake of Marjorie. Hazel's pathetic borrowing from Wharton to service gambling or other debts is tolerated only because of the latter's respect for Marjorie.

Tom Brown's friendship with Hazel could not be deep. He is one of the decent chaps who bars blagging and is never approached to help Hazel out of one of his numerous holes. Brown seems thoroughly popular generally and a good man at games. In the Stacey series

he is elected Form Captain. Apart from Hazel, his usual chum for outings is his fellow antipodean, Squiff.

In Study 3 Ogilvy and Russell - both good chaps and strong at games - seem to chum together, but few details are available. The well-known Samways sub. tale shows Russell in the spotlight, but totally alone. He funks a scrap in the village, then trains in secret to win the Public Schools Boxing Championship. As happens frequently in "genuine" yarns, Russell breaks his isolation by a spectacular deed which wins him the acclaim of his peers.

In Study 4 is the most enduring and intriguing of Greyfriars friendships - that of the Bounder and Redwing. Theirs is a true and lasting friendship, well documented and tried and tested in many yarns. It is a friendship in which mutual respect, rather than mutual dependence, appears to dominate. Redwing does not need the Bounder's company or money. He is popular in his own right but chooses to chum with the Bounder. Smithy gets no support for blagging from Redwing, only "sermons". That Smithy chums with Redwing shows us the best side of his character. He will happily ditch Redwing when he wants the company of rotters like Skinner or Ponsonby, but always returns to him when their company fails; and Redwing will always receive him back. The Bounder's tantrums periodically isolate him from the Form and he needs Redwing more than Redwing needs him. The Bounder has all he could want materially - wealth, a loving and indulgent father, popularity through sporting prowess and any number of flatterers. Yet the decent fellows in the Form have no interest in his wealth and only Redwing is a true chum. The Bounder misses him deeply when they are apart. The rift in 1927 is very deep - thanks in part to the machinations of Skinner - but reconciliation is finally obtained. The Bounder also happily chums with the Famous Five from time to time, but their indifference to his tantrums and their wholesome characters invariably pall. Redwing alone will tolerate his moodiness and bad hat proclivities. Skinner and Co. delight in the Bounder's company - and money - when they can get it, but Smithy is knowingly cynical. His many good points are recognised and appreciated by Redwing, who is the only chap who will also put up with the bad ones. When not with the Bounder, Redwing seems quite happy to be alone; although scorned by the cads for his terrible background, he is very popular, but his loyalty to the Bounder dooms him to isolation.

In Study 5 Hilary and Kipps are study-mates, but whether they are chums is unclear. Kipps' regular giving of magic tricks suggests that he moves in his own world - indifferent to the rest of the Remove. Hilary is just one of the crowd, with little information available on him.

Study 6 is said to have four occupants - Desmond, Morgan, Rake and Wibley. Of these only Wibley features prominently in the yarns. He has two obsessions - theatrical activities and the desire to play in the soccer XI. He is totally egocentric, utterly indifferent to all else. Despite this, he is popular for his skill at impersonations. His regular shows are the price for being left alone. He gains universal condemnation when he impersonates a good player to wangle a place in the XI and finds - to his astonishment - that he is not up to the standard of play. In the "Archie Popper" series (1536ff) we see the best evidence of his friendship with Desmond and Morgan. He shuns them through fear that they - as his chums and study-mates - might recognise him. His general popularity is shown when Bolsover and Toddy, yearning to rag "Popper", cheerfully support him when his disguise becomes general knowledge.

Desmond and Morgan are rather different characters. Desmond, the cheerful Irishman, has a sense of humour and likes a lark. Morgan, more sensitive and a music-loving Welshman, is much quieter. Rake's nature and exploits are seldom mentioned. Clearly, the friendship in Study 6 is sincere and based on mutual tolerance.

Study 7 has the "four freaks" - Bunter, Dutton and the two Todds. Bunter has myriads of friends in his mind's eye, but is tolerated only by the Famous Five and occasionally Mauleverer - only because of his irresistible "palling" with them. In the early days, Bulstrode and Nugent happily accepted him in Study 1 to cook. He performs the same rôle for the Famous Five when they are together in Study 1, but they gradually tire of seeing tea eaten instead of cooked.

Peter Todd is something of a protector for the study. Bolsover and even the Famous Five are not permitted to boot Bunter for grub-raiding in his presence. A strong member of both the soccer and cricket XI, he is sidelined from playing a stronger leadership rôle by his protector rôle and by his egocentricity. He insists that Dutton should play in place of better men and thinks that he himself should be captain. His obsession with his legal studies condemns him - like a swot - to lengthy periods of isolation. Dutton, because of his deafness (or do we today have to call him "aurally challenged"?), and Alonzo Todd, because of his eccentricity, are similarly isolated. Toddy and Dutton do, however, always tea together and are often seen cycling together. In addition to their isolation, the four freaks have another thing in common - stoniness. Consequently, Bunter is never grateful for Toddy's protection from Bolsover *et al.*; he repays him with lofty, patronising snobbery and is very desperate before he contemplates landing himself on Toddy for the hols. He is never successful; Toddy does not think that his rôle as protector extends out of term time.

(To Be Continued)

WANTED: The Rover, Nos. 1210 to 1217 (1948). I am also searching for a copy of *The Eye of Suda* by Major Charles Gilson. Please write to:
JOHN HAMMOND, 49 BECKINGTHORPE DRIVE, BOTTESFORD, NOTTINGHAM
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FOR SALE: *Boys' World* (1963) Volume 1 complete (Numbers 1-49). Includes some free gifts. Good condition. £64.
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DENNIS HILLIARD, 45 MOORBRIDGE LANE, STAPLEFORD, NOTTINGHAM
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Round The Year With Cliff House



by Margery Woods

JUNE - NOT ALWAYS WITH ROSES!

By June's advent there is the feeling that holidays should soon be on the cards but the Cliff House girls remained in their tunics and blazers as earlier artists often insisted on depicting them even when they were actually on holiday. It was T.E. Laidler who put the girls into party dresses and old-time fancy dress at Christmas and pretty summery frocks or suitable safari-style gear when their hols took them to jungle or desert. So the month of June would find them still in heavy tunics and blazers, manacled to desk work, and even receiving new girls although term was well through.

At least there was plenty of summery sport, tennis and cricket and swimming, all of which invariably provided lots of scope for dirty work to discredit the genuine talent and allow the show-offs and the second-rate with ulterior benefits in mind to represent the school, until they were ousted at the eleventh hour, which is exactly as life should be, at least at Cliff House.

June 1935 was occupied by a major series introducing a new girl, Thelma Warrington, who comes to Cliff House with definite unaltruistic purpose. She embarks on a deliberate course of mischief-making intended to bring the school into disrepute, and causes a feud with Courtfield High, a school with which Cliff House has always enjoyed a good relationship, spiced, naturally, with friendly rivalry. Clara in particular suffers through Thelma, being accused of breaking a glass case of butterflies, the treasured collection of a local bigwig, while the entire school is in danger of falling into disfavour with a wealthy 'old girl', Miss Fielding, a benefactor, who is related to Thelma and whose fortune Thelma sees as rightly belonging to herself, not some potty old school. Unfortunately Thelma makes an enemy of Lydia Crossendale, who is quite as bad and just as vindictive. All Thelma's efforts to get Lydia expelled and out of the way fail, until an exciting climax of danger brings about the downfall of Thelma, and Cliff House's good name is restored at last.

Thelma was a forerunner of Faith Ashton, able to wear a face of charm and a winsome manner that appealed to many of the girls unable to recognise the treachery beneath the attractive facade.

This June had five issues and thus included five instalments of a serial featuring one of Cliff House's most fascinating characters: Jemima Carstairs. The enigmatic member of the Co. was on leave at that time in order to care for a relative, Mrs Marsh, who had been taken ill. Also to be cared for were the young daughter, Gracie, who'd been injured in an accident, plus two little ones, Bobbie and Doreen, and the shop on which the Marsh family depended for their living. As if this were not enough, the family and shop were under threat from a Mr Loftus, whose unspeakable daughter was none other than Marcia, who had recently been expelled from Cliff House. (Author Hilda Richards, Wheway? Ransome? certainly piled problems on the slender shoulders of his young heroine!)

ALL ADMIRERS OF "JIMMY" CARSTAIRS WILL LOVE THIS DELIGHTFUL STORY



JEMIMA IN COMMAND!

WHAT a shock it is to the undomesticated Jemima when she finds herself in charge of a village shop, looking after two children, and nursing two invalids! But the elegant and monocled "Jimmy" hides a heart of gold beneath a flippant exterior. She will strain every effort to make a success of her self-appointed task.

by Hilda Richards

Jemima needed all her powers of resourcefulness to cope, with much humour needed as her somewhat undomesticated talents for cookery, nursing, housekeeping, child-care and shopkeeping were tested to the full. The way in which she thwarts the despicable Mr Loftus, who is every bit as unlikeable as his daughter, is a joy to read. Admirers of Jemima can find this entertaining story, "Jemima in Command", in *Schoolgirl* numbers 302-313 inclusive, or in slightly edited form in *Schoolgirl's Own Library* 551 under the same title.

The following year, 1936, found Diana deep into film-making and, as usual, at war with the world and all authority therein. She was determined to play the lead in the film of school life being made nearby, but, being Diana, she won't tell anyone that she is playing Good Samaritan to a young girl who is desperately dependent on her job as typist to a novelist. When she scalds he arm she is unable to continue typing the author's new novel. So Diana takes over, a task that causes her quite a lot of trouble at school. Finally, on the

verge of Diana's expulsion, the author and the scalded girl turn up and Diana, yet again, is transformed from bad girl into heroine.

June 1932 concluded an early Rosa Rodworth series, then continued with Babs and Mabs fooling their chums and the school into believing they were two dainty Japanese girls. Even Miss Bullivant was taken in. There were 'Japanese' midnight feasts, and much conflict with wicked uncle Tantula, as Babs and Mabs, supposedly on a weekend leave to see Mabs' Aunt Elsie, took the place of two Japanese pupils who were in great danger. The weekend's oriental escapade occupied most of that month's issues, while the final week starred Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn - and a tennis match - in "Marjorie the Mysterious" which ran on into the following month with mystery in the ruins on Belwin Island and the disappearance of Clara.

Of the Cliff House girls originally created by Frank Richards for *The Magnet* who remained throughout the continuing saga of the school in the girls' magazines of the twenties and thirties, Marjorie Hazeldene was the character who remained closest to Richards' conception. She did become a bit more feminine-gentle and devoted to the recognised pursuits considered suitable for females at that time, and became the girl who was turned to whatever skills in these pursuits were needed. These characteristics did not just happen; because of the much denser focus on the girls once they became full-time occupants of the weekly *School Friend* stories, more detail had to be developed and Marjorie seemed a natural as foil to her chum Clara's hoydenish tomboy ways. But she possessed an unsuspected steely core not often revealed, and could be extremely obdurate at times of necessity.

She no longer had Wharton and Cherry and Smithy prepared to do or die in order to get her scapegrace brother Peter out of the troubles of his own making. Peter was not allowed to appear, and neither were any other of the Greyfriars characters, in the cliff House stories once the school was established in its own right in its own magazine. So the new Hilda Richards soon introduced a cousin for Marjorie who was modelled along the lines of Peter. This was Ralph, and because of the change in situation, with school rules and limitations, plus the likes of Connie Jackson and Sarah Harrigan constantly on the spying trail, Marjorie's reactions had to change to suit this whenever she had to rescue Ralph. She did not always confide in her chums because her nature would not allow them the risk of incurring trouble on her behalf. So she acted alone, which often resulted in conflict with her chums who did not know why her behaviour was so puzzling. Of course they found out eventually and hove to the rescue, all of which was the added ploy of conflict worked out by authors down through the years. So the tougher side of gentle needlewoman Marjorie Hazeldene emerged, as depicted in "Championed by Marjorie".

This story began the June 1938 offerings. Cousin Ralph seems to have reformed but is suffering by comparison with schoolboy idol Clifford Brownlow, who, sadly, has feet of clay. He also has a sister at Cliff House, Myra, who is in conflict with Marjorie. Being a prefect, Myra has weight on her side. Marjorie can't bear seeing Ralph branded as a coward, to the extent that he runs away, despised by everyone. But thanks to her support and a final calamity that proves Ralph's courage and Brownlow's true cowardice, all ends happily. There was a minor character at Ralph's school, only mentioned once, who was graced with the name of The Honourable Laceport Levendon. It would have been interesting to have heard more about him . . .

Meet Barbara Redfern & Co., in this Splendid Long Complete Story—



By 1938 the Cliff House saga was into single stories, which, while not carrying the nail-biting promise of further developments the next week, were still well plotted and characterised. Following Marjorie's story came "Their Captain in Peril", featuring Dulcia Fairbrother the Captain of Cliff House, in which Jemima played a big part. Jemima also starred in the following week in "The Haunted Studio".

Art played a part in this story as the title suggests, and the chums couldn't understand why Jemima was behaving so mysteriously, especially with all the rumours about ghosts. They were even more shocked when their ghost hunt unmasked Jemima herself. But as her admirers all know, Jemima had her own very good reasons for her actions, not the least being the unmasking of the real ghost and his perfect accomplice, and recovering the valuables stolen from Miss Primrose and taken from the school strongroom.

The police are very pleased with Jemima, perhaps causing readers to reflect on what a wonderful opportunity in fiction was missed. Why didn't someone write a series of detective mysteries featuring Jemima Carstairs? She could certainly have equalled, if not surpassed, even the great Valerie Drew.

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.

'School Stories from Bunter to Buckeridge': Papers from the Conference held at the National Centre for Research in Children's Literature, Roehampton Institute, London, on May 2, 1998. Edited by Nicholas Tucker. (NCRCL Papers 4). Published by the NCRCL, 1999.

(Copies can be ordered from Roehampton Institute, Digby Stuart College, Roehampton Lane, London SW15 5PH at £10.00 which includes postage. Cheques should be made out to Roehampton Institute.)



William George Bunter

School stories are the last refuge for the schoolboy or schoolgirl still lurking in our literary minds - our 'scholastic subconscious' - and we like sometimes to revisit the idealised schools and schoolfriends in the fiction of our childhood and youth to re-live those happier times of years ago.

Byron once wrote of 'a schoolboy's tale, the wonder of an hour' (and we must assume that he also meant 'a schoolgirl's tale' too - the staff **and** the distaff, the masters and the mistresses, as well - all called 'teachers' today, of course, to avoid (or increase?) confusion or accusations of political incorrectness . . .

Many wonders of several hours (a whole day, in fact) were well in evidence at the conference title 'From Bunter to Buckeridge', held at the Digby Stuart College, Roehampton Institute, London, on May 2nd, 1998. For a whole day (no half-holiday needed here) celebrated school stories, not only from Greyfriars to Linbury Court, but also from Tom Brown's Rugby to Phil Edmonds' Grange Hill Comprehensive (though often incomprehensible) television creation.

The net was cast wide and ranged from tales in the *Magnet*, *Gem*, *Wizard* and *Hotspur* to pukka hard-cover novels. Such characters as Harry Wharton of Greyfriars rubbed shoulders with the Chalet School's Joey Bettany Maynard, Brookfield's Mr Chips jostled with Red Circle's Mr Smugg, and 'Frank Richards' and Anthony Buckeridge nodded amiably to one another as they passed by in the school quad. It was, I think, a unique occasion; an entire academic day given up to the discussion of school stories. 'Unprecedented, unparalleled', as Greyfriars' Mr Prout might well have boomed.

Those attending, and talking, included authors, editors, librarians, publishers, book-dealers, critics, teachers, university lecturers, psychologists,



Anthony Buckeridge

broadcasters, readers and those just interested, indeed fascinated, by the genre.

This neat, well-produced volume preserves the talks given by eleven of the speakers covering various aspects of the school story over the years. They include Isabel Quigley on "The School Story as Adult Novel", Robert Kirkpatrick on "The History of the School Story", our own Mary Cadogan on "Frank Richards: Heritage and Influence", Jeffrey Richards on "From Greyfriars to Grange Hill", Rosemary Auchmuty on the girls' school story ("From Brazil to Bunty"), Siv Jansson on Elinor Brent-Dyer's 'Chalet School' stories, Geoff Fox's "School Stories for Boys in the Postwar Story-papers", Nicholas Tucker on Anthony Buckeridge and his popular 'Jennings' tales, Adele Geras, the popular contemporary author, on "Reading and Writing School Stories", Michael Rupert Taylor, a noted college lecturer, on "Homosexuality and Boys' School Stories in the 1960s", and Pat Pinsent (of the Roehampton Institute) on "From Tyke Tiler to Harry Potter: Recent Variations on the School Theme".

All these talks/articles are interesting and will be useful to future researchers. Mary Cadogan's piece on Frank Richards is written in her usual entertaining and authoritative manner; after all, she is the author of the definitive literary biography of Richards (who was, of course, Charles Hamilton) and she knows what she is about.

Robert Kirkpatrick is the only secondhand book-dealer who specialises exclusively in boys' school stories 'in the known universe' (as he succinctly puts it) and provides a unique and valuable service (his annotated catalogues alone are a joy to read); he is also the author of *Bullies, Beaks and Flannelled Fools* (an Annotated Bibliography of Boys' School Fiction, 1742-1990) (plus a later Supplement updating it all to 1998), so he knows what he is writing about too. His article takes the whole history of boys' school stories from the mid-18th century right up-to-date and is a brilliant and informative piece of work.

Many people assume that the boys' school story genre began with Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays* in 1857 (with Farrar's *Eric, or Little by Little* coming a year later). But Kirkpatrick establishes that by the time *Tom Brown* appeared, the school story was already a well-established genre with at least 60 novels and many more short stories having been published in the preceding 100 years! I'm delighted that he pinpoints in his pick of the best authors in the 'hard-cover' field, most of my own favourites including Hylton Cleaver, Gunby Hadath, Warren Bell, R.A.H. Goodyear and P.G. Wodehouse's early work. Kirkpatrick selects Hadath as 'the best of the best' stating that he 'fully meets all the criteria'.

Isabel Quigley is the author of that admirable history of the boys' school story *The Heirs of Tom Brown* (though that book sadly has many omissions). But why does she seem to believe that the genre began with Talbot Baines Reed's *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's* (1887)? She also dislikes James Hilton's wonderful *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* for some reason and finds it 'offensively trivial'; a strange and almost unique opinion of the classic and heart-warming story. Ms. Quigley also says that Anstey's *Vice Versa* is the only school story she knows that uses magic. I suggest that she gets hold of Richard Bird's highly amusing *Queer Doings at Aldborough* (1927) which tells the story of a schoolboy who unexpectedly becomes invisible, or Skelton Kuppord's *Hammond's Hard Lines* (1894 reissued 1966) in which a schoolboy in detention is granted three wishes by a fairy! One of Frank Richards' Greyfriars series in *The Magnet* also comes to mind, wherein schoolboy

Alonzo Todd (and, for a time, Billy Bunter) is endowed with superhuman strength by taking a 'magic' potion.

The usually excellent Nicholas Tucker says that Gunby Hadath 'is almost forgotten'. By whom? Certainly not by anyone who has ever read his books and short stories. Indeed, Hadath is a hallowed name in the genre and published over 40 novels and many short tales. I trust Mr. Tucker will read Robert Kirkpatrick's view of Hadath in this book.

Professor Jeffrey Richards of Lancaster University can always be relied upon for a good talk or a fine article (or indeed, an excellent book - his *Happiest Days* is a wonderful and very readable history of the public school in English fiction). Here he journeys from Greyfriars to Grange Hill (or, as I might put it, 'the decline and fall of the English school story', for the latter BBC TV series is decidedly not for me). Professor Richards states at one point 'perhaps the most significant difference between Greyfriars and Grange Hill is the presence of girls at Grange Hill'. I should have said that the most obvious difference is the accent; most of the pupils at the comprehensive speak so badly and with such a total lack of articulation that they can barely be understood.

He says some delightful things about Frank Richards, however, and is obviously an admirer of his work. He pinpoints Richards' 'belief that you should never write down to boys, but write for boys as you would for adults, that if boys did not understand something they would pass over it without worrying (or alternatively look it up)'. Richards' classical allusions and Latin tags were taken by his young readers in their stride (even though they probably didn't always 'look them up')!

Richards also gives an hilarious account of his namesake's post-war book *Billy Bunter at Butlin's*. The author had apparently never been to a Butlin's Holiday Camp in his life, nor ever met Mr. Butlin, but he forged ahead nevertheless and presented the tycoon as a genial, imposing Edwardian gentleman. Mr. B. must have been well pleased with *BB at B* though the Butlin's chalets bore little resemblance to those of the Chalet School . . . !

Geoff Fox lectures at Exeter University and if he does so as entertainingly and energetically as he did at the one-day conference at Roehampton, his students surely have a whale of a time! His talk, reprinted here, dealt largely with the long-running series *Smith of the Lower Third* which ran in *The Wizard* from 1947 until well into the 1950s (though Mr. Fox fails to give us the actual finishing date). Tom Smith was a grocer's son who won a scholarship to Lipstone College and was a likeable lad, though he apparently lapsed into 'a working-class accent' for no good reason by the time he ended his adventures in the heady heights of the Lower Fourth (in, sad to relate, a picture strip - the words, with or without an accent, had finally run out for young Tom Smith - who was in no way related to Vernon-Smith of the Greyfriars Remove!).

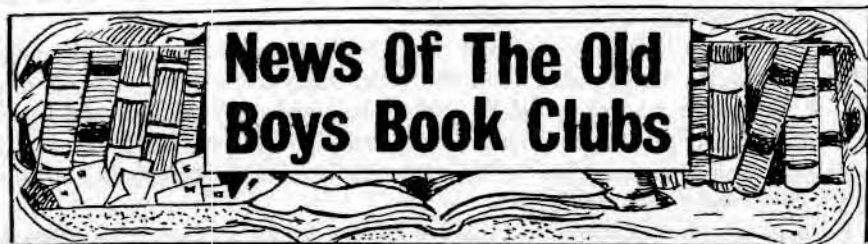
Geoff Fox, who writes with perception and a certain amount of very acceptable gusto, later surveys life at the *Hotspur's* Red Circle School and notes, accurately as I recall, that this establishment 'was, it seemed, in a constant state of high spirits' (but then most of the schools in the D.C. Thomson boys' papers usually were in that happy and incident-packed state).

On a personal note: I had the honour of introducing one distinguished nonagenarian author to another distinguished octogenarian author, when Ernest Dudley met Anthony Buckeridge ('Dr. Morelle' and the 'Armchair Detective' meets 'Jennings!'). Prolific and popular writers both, they both found original fame on BBC Radio many years ago. Each

knew of the other's writings and hearty greetings, memories and congratulations hung in the air like so many unwritten lines and unsolved crimes. Collectors of literary trivia may like to know that Dudley was born in the same year as *The Magnet* (1908) and John Creasey, while Buckeridge made his debut in the same year (1912) as Francis Durbridge (creator of 'Paul Temple') and R.F. Delderfield (author of that superb school story saga *To Serve Them All My Days*).

Schooldays. Everyone has them, and they're often good to look back on. But how many of us would really want to re-live them? Really? What was it that Byron wrote - the blunder of an hour . . . ?

Whatever they may have been, wonders or blunders, a lot of fascinating - and fascinated - people talked about them - and maybe re-lived them too - at Roehampton in May 1998. And here, on the printed page, is a memorable record of just some of the words involved



South-Western O.B.B.C.

Eleven members attended what proved to be a very enjoyable meeting at the house of Tim Salisbury on Sunday, 11 May 1999.

Una Hamilton Wright began the afternoon with the Latin titled "Mens Sana In Corpore Sano" - ("A Healthy Mind in a Healthy Body") - about her uncle, Charles Hamilton, and his views on health and self-healing. Amongst the many remedies for good health, which very rarely involved doctors or dentists, was the use of the aptly named tooth tincture "Bunter's Nerve"!

E. Grant McPherson then told us about the last days of "The Demise of the *Nelson Lee*" boys' paper. The last issue of the *Nelson Lee* appeared on 12 August 1933 and became part of the *Gem* on 19 August 1933. The clever ploy of putting the first part of a motorised "Aerocar" kit in the outgoing paper and the second part in the *Gem* the following week ensured that readers made the change, where they were able to continue the ongoing St. Frank's stories until they also disappeared a little over a year later!

The usual excellent tea provided by Mrs. Salisbury followed, after which Laurence Price read some literary first encounters including Alice and the White Rabbit, Phileas Fogg and Passepartout, Holmes and Watson and a certain William Brown and Violet Elizabeth Bott. By contrast, the poignant literary farewell between Captain Nemo and Professor Aronnax was also recounted.

Patrick Morley splendidly read from "A Lesson for Loder" from *Magnet* 1115 of 29 June 1929, which showed Mr. Quelch in a kindly and benign light. Tim finished the afternoon with a brief, but very amusing, video extract of Gerald Champion as Bunter.

Laurence Price

Northern O.B.B.C.

Club business was kept to a minimum at the May meeting as 17 members eagerly awaited Gillian Baverstock's talk on the subject "My Mother - Enid Blyton". She began by stressing the importance of reading to children at an early age. Too many parents cannot find the time and sit children in front of the video. Reading helps develop concentration, imagination and the ability to discuss ideas and criticise constructively.

Enid Blyton's books are translated into 46 languages and 19 full million of her books are bought each year worldwide. Why are they so popular? Gillian Baverstock argues that her mother studied children, as a teacher, and tested her early stories out on them. By the time she began writing full-length books she had created her own readership by writing *Sunny Stories* and by her educational work.

Gillian Baverstock's talk occupied the whole meeting and was enjoyed by all present. It also helped to redress the Enid Blyton story depicted on the TV programme *Secret Lives*.

P Galvin

London O.B.B.C.

The May meeting took place on a beautiful sunny day at Bill Bradford's house in Ealing, where members were treated to a diverse and entertaining programme.

Alan Pratt enthused about the much maligned third series of the *Sexton Blake Library* and discussed contemporary reactions to the attempts that were made to make Blake 'racy'.

Brian Doyle presented a portrait of a schoolmaster: Hylton Cleaver's Mr. Dennett of Greyminster School, the cheerfully eccentric figure who resembled 'a question mark in trousers'.

Larry Morley taxed members' brains with a film quiz about the musical bio-pics of the silver screen and Roger Jenkins presented the ever-popular elimination word-puzzle.

The June meeting will take place at the Wokingham home of Eric Lawrence.

Vic Pratt

FROM BETTY AND JOHNNY HOPTON

ELEANOR EVANS

It is with deep regret and sadness that we report the death of Mrs Eleanor Evans, formerly of Edgehill Cottage, Maypole, Monmouth, at the age of 95 years. She had lived in a residential home for several years. Eleanor was the widow of the late Harry Evans of Maypole. Harry was a staunch member of the Midland Old Boys' Book Club for many years and had many friends in the hobby. Harry was a very enthusiastic reader of all the Old Boys' books and papers.

Eleanor and Harry had a very special claim to fame, as Harry's cousin was the late, great Gwyn Evans, that brilliant author of so many of the splendid Sexton Blake stories, of whom they were justly proud. Eleanor and Harry would often refer affectionately to Gwyn by the special nickname that they had for him, which was "Splash Page". All Blake fans will of course remember that "Splash Page" was the journalist in Gwyn Evans' wonderful

Sexton Blake stories. Eleanor and Harry were also related to the famous author "George Eliot" whose real name of course was Mary Ann Evans.

When we visited Eleanor and Harry at their Monmouthshire home the main topic of conversation was the old books and papers, followed closely by their beloved cats. Every time we visited Eleanor at her residential home we found her always to be bright and cheery. She loved to talk about Harry's beloved books.

Eleanor Evans will be very greatly missed and fondly remembered by her numerous friends and relatives.

BRIAN DOYLE WRITES:

May I add some comments to Derek Hinrich's delightful article on the fondly-remembered 'Inspector Hornleigh'?

Contrary to Derek's statement that Hornleigh began his radio career in the BBC's *Monday Night at Seven* in 1938, his first appearances were, in fact, in that programme's forerunner, *Monday at Seven*, from May, 1937. When the show returned to the air in 1938 as *Monday Night at Seven* Hornleigh continued his adventures into 1939 and early 1940. In that year, S.J. Warmington, who, of course, played the role of Hornleigh from the outset, was tragically killed in an air-raid during the Blitz on London. So Hornleigh's career, as well as Warmington's, was sadly and abruptly brought to a sudden end, since the producers decided not to revive the series with another actor, out of respect to S.J.W.

The role of Hornleigh's assistant, Sergeant Bingham, was played, for the record, by Ewart Scott. And Derek failed to mention the show's 'catch-phrase' (one of radio's first), which became very well-known. When Hornleigh was about to divulge his solution to the current murder or robbery or whatever, he would always begin with the words: "The murderer's (or criminal's) one mistake was . . ."

Hornleigh's creator, H.W. Priwin, later changed his name to 'John P. Wynn' and became a prolific contributor to BBC radio programmes in later years. He devised and set all the questions for *What Do You Know?* from 1953, and the programme subsequently became *Brain of Britain* and he set the questions for this for many (over 20) years - well over 50,000 questions it was once estimated.

Wynn went on to create many more BBC radio programmes and series, including *Inspector Scott Investigates* (1957-63) with Derek Guyler as the Scotland Yard sleuth. Wynn played a little 'in-joke' on listeners when he made Scott's assistant Sergeant Bingham (following in Hornleigh's footsteps), who was played by Brian Hayes (Patricia Hayes' brother and, no, **not** the one who later became known as a hard-hitting interviewer on LBC and currently BBC Radio Five!) . Wynn's other BBC radio programmes included *Your Verdict* and *Information, Please!* (1964).

The 'Inspector Hornleigh' series, incidentally, became so popular that the *Leader Magazine* ran Hornleigh stories, written by Priwin/Wynn from 1937, and there was also apparently a stage play in 1938, with the good Inspector being played by busy British theatre and film actor John Longden.

I agree with Derek, by the way, that Gordon Harker was totally miscast as Hornleigh in the trio of British films based on the character. It was rather as though Miss Marple was being played by Barbara Windsor!

Inspector Hornleigh Investigates was the one and only book about the detective by Priwin. Surprisingly so, since the author could easily have done a whole series about the character - as Ernest Dudley did about one of Hornleigh's successors in *Monday Night at Eight* (which succeeded *Monday Night at Seven*, of course) - Dr. Morelle . . .

GEMS OF HAMILTONIA

from Pete Hanger

. . . Even Billy Bunter, at school, had to learn a spot of History - just as much as Mr. Quelch was able to drive into an unreceptive head. But Bunter knew how to deal with schoolmasters.

It was true the beasts made him learn things. On the other hand, Bunter could retaliate by promptly forgetting them. *Magnet 1644*

Faint footfalls came in the silence; then he heard a grunt. He started as he heard that.

It was wildly impossible that a pig could have got loose in the House and started wandering about in the middle of the night, but it sounded awfully like it.

But really it couldn't be that. Besides, a wandering pig could not have turned on a flashlamp. *Magnet 1568*

And Bunter realised that he was being quite moderate in his calculations. For there were six-to-one winners, seven-to-one winners; he had even heard of ten-to-one winners. Still, it was safer to be on the moderate side, he felt, in making his calculations. After all, one hundred pounds in, say, a fortnight would not be bad for a chap in the Lower Fourth.

Magnet 1568

"I know!" assented Blake. "That is the soft ass you are, Gussy. Bores take advantage of it."

"Yaas, wathah, I feah so," said Arthur Augustus. "But I have nevah wepwoached you for boring me!"

"Eh?"

"And weally it is only faih to let othah bores have a turn - what?"

Holiday Annual 1941

. . . Perhaps the word "grub" had caught his ears. It was a fascinating word to Bunter. It was more harmonious to his fat ears than the music of the spheres. Grub filled Bunter's thoughts - and, indeed, filled Bunter, whenever he could get hold of it. *Magnet 1499*

"Bunter knows the whole yarn!" grinned Skinner. "He's telling everybody at Greyfriars - in the strictest confidence, of course!" *Magnet 1451*

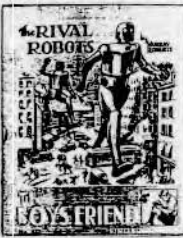


CAPTAIN JUSTICE AT BAY
B.F.L. No. 570 APRIL 1927 THE ROCKETEERS MAY 1926

DO YOU
HAVE
THE
MISSING
PICTURE ?



THE OCEAN ROBOT
B.F.L. No. 629



THE RIVAL ROBOTS
B.F.L. No. 623 AUGUST 1928

40

I don't want **SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE** for its cover, but to read . I have a feeling that its end isn't the same as the end of **THE MODERN BOY** version of the story. I'd like to be sure because Ian and I wondered for years why the B.F.L. never reprinted **THE MODERN BOY** serial **THE FLYING CLOUD**. But we found out recently that they did; they combined it with **THE EARTHQUAKE MAKER**. Tony Walker didn't just send me a picture of the B.F.L. **EARTHQUAKE MAKER** cover he photocopied the whole book and I found that it starts with a much abridged version of **THE FLYING CLOUD** and then plunges into a more than complete version of **THE EARTHQUAKE MAKER**, 640 more words than **THE MODERN BOY** story. It's possible that **SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE** might have been collated with the subsequent **MODERN BOY** serial **REVOLUTION IN SAN LIBRADOR** which never appeared as a B.F.L. publication. So, if anyone can sell or lend me the B.F.L. **SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE** it will help to solve a mystery. Any help in this exercise in the scholarly (!) study of the weekly/monthly publications **MODERN BOY** and **BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY** would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you, Ronald Hibbert
30, Alton Road Ross on Wye
Herefordshire HR9 5ND
Telephone (01989) 564512

NOT A PAGE FROM A CIGARETTE CARD ALBUM

but a page from the BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CAPTAIN JUSTICE STORIES. There are 24 B.F.L. COVERS and if they were on cigarette cards I'd be one short of the set.

A few months ago I advertised for photocopies of the covers of ten of the BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY versions of the Captain Justice stories. I now have nine of the covers needed for the second edition of the Ian Bennett and Ronald Hibbert BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE CAPTAIN JUSTICE STORIES.

I'm grateful to Messrs Bradford, Follows, Frewer, Lewis, Taylor and Walker for their phone calls, letters and photocopies of the covers. Thank you very much.

I still need a photocopy of the cover of

B. F. L. No. 477 THE ROCKETEERS

so, if anyone reading this has a copy, or knows where I can obtain one, please let me know.

AND . . . I would like to buy, or borrow, a copy of

B. F. L. No. 457 SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE

MURRAY ROBERTS' CAPTAIN JUSTICE STORIES



A BIBLIOGRAPHY

compiled by
RONALD HIBBERT & IAN BENNETT

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

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