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COLLECTORS' DIGEST

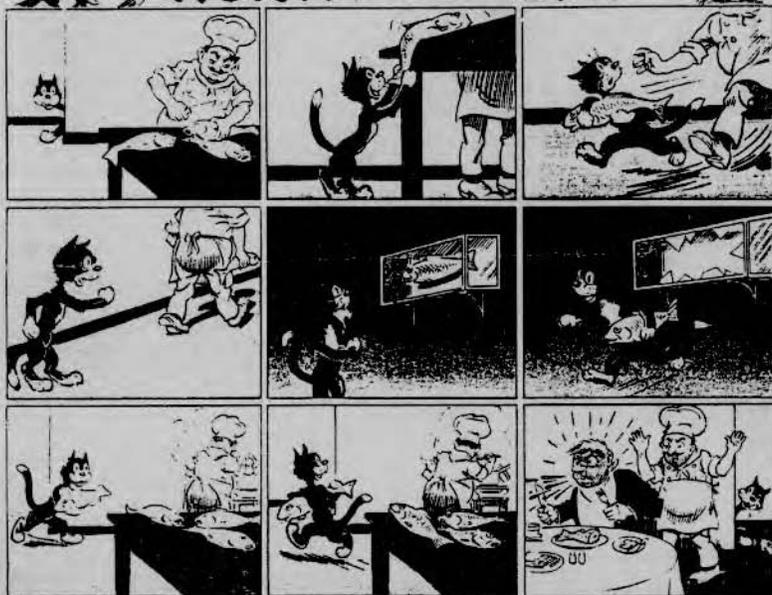
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KORKY THE CAT



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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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BETWEEN FRIENDS

Des O'Leary, our popular Thomsonian contributor, recently alerted me to the fact that history was being made - number 3007 of *The Dandy*, dated July 10th, made this publication the longest-running comic. I bought a copy of this historic issue which combines nostalgia with the usual current contents: it is good to see Desperate Dan adorning the cover, and to know that this British comic, together with its companion *The Beano*, has such resilience. It is sad that so many excellent home-grown comics from the past have withered and died, but *The*

Dandy's continuing popularity gives us cause for satisfaction.

A more recent phenomenon in the world of juvenile literature is the astounding success of the Harry Potter books by J.K. Rowling. Our two articles about them in this issue of the C.D. vividly convey the appeal of these stories, and I feel sure that several of you will buy them for your children or grandchildren but first read and enjoy them yourselves. It is interesting that Harry Potter is another example of a very popular fictional boy character being created by a woman author: he follows in the footsteps of Richmal Crompton's William and Sue Townsend's Adrian Mole.

As I write this editorial, it is ideal weather for deck-chair reading, on holiday or in the garden at home.

Happy browsing!

MARY CADOGAN

WHOSE PAL? FRIENDSHIP AND ISOLATION AT GREYFRIARS

by Andrew Miles

Part Four - Conclusion

In Study 14 are three late arrivals to Greyfriars - Bull, Squiff and Fish. Fish receives a cordial welcome and occasionally chums with the Co. in his early days, and even receives holiday hospitality, but, as his stinginess becomes predominant, he is left strictly alone. He is the only Removeite who cannot plant himself in the holidays and then feels acutely the isolation of a vacation at school. In term time, however, he is happy with his money and his account book. When he is planning one of his schemes or talking of the superiority of "over there" (USA), he is very extrovert and determined. When he loses out in a deal (e.g. the bicycle stolen from de Courcy which he bought from Bunter) he is inconsolable. He soon recovers from his gloom, however, and shows great resilience as he plans his next wheeze. His loneliness over the Christmas hols bites deeply in the "Silver Cigarette Case" series; his joy at wangling the chance to stay briefly at Wharton Lodge while delivering the missing case to Bunter is as great as at any financial coup. The fact that Colonel Wharton will stand the railway fare quells any doubts. He is actually looking forward to some company, although he is prepared to forsake that company by "freezing" onto the case and bolting back to Greyfriars. We learn that, after the summer hols of 1932 which Fish had to spend at school, he talks continually as the fellows return to school. Yet he prefers the loneliness - however "fierce" - to spending money and remains doomed to loneliness. In the "Silver Cigarette Case" series Bull actually prefers him to Bunter!

Johnny Bull, the fifth member of the Co., serves a rôle as sage and pillar of common sense. He is an effective foil to the thoughtless Cherry and the arrogant Wharton. He is too stubborn and sententious to be a close chum to anyone, but is a sound and faithful member of the Co. His loyalty to various relatives and to a sense of what is proper and honourable wins him few friends but much respect.

Squiff is a stalwart fellow who, in the early years, chums with the Co. regularly. During Bull's visit to Australia (367 ff) he actually takes his place as one of the Five. After Bull's return he gradually fades into obscurity. He is not unpopular - even serving briefly and effectively as Form football captain in the 2nd Wharton Rebel series (1285 ff) - but seems only to chum closely with Tom Brown. He is a fine sportsman and always backs up Wharton, but only on rare occasions after WW1 does he take tea in Study 1.

Temporary members of the Remove often cause isolation or become isolated themselves. Stacey and Da Costa both create difficulties for Wharton, but the Co. stands firm. In the Da Costa series it is Squiff who frankly and generously advises Wharton to hit on the head the rumour that he has received a letter from a bookie.

Bertie Vernon and Paul Dallas are both responsible for lengthy periods of unpopularity for the Bounder. In each case the Bounder has his own vicious nature to blame. Dallas

meant him no harm and Vernon would not have conspired to replace him if the Bounder had suppressed his hostility. The Bounder does not have Redwing to support him in the Dallas series and it is only the kidnapping of Redwing which results in Vernon releasing him and Smithy from the clutches of Captain Vernon. Stacey, Da Costa, Lancaster and Vernon are friendless while at Greyfriars. Their general nature and strength at games guarantee popularity, but because each harbours a dark secret, none can intimately chum with anyone. Some temporary Removites, such as Crum the Hypnotist, de Vere, Durance (the impostor), Roger Quelch, Wilmot (Hacker's nephew) and Skip remain friendless because of their manners and customs. Flip of the Second suffers similarly. All of the above are initially shown creditable hospitality by the school.

Similarly, one significant, temporary member of the Fifth - Compton - is very popular, but his smuggling commitments preclude him from having any special chum. Despite his sterling prowess at games and universal popularity - he is even allowed to speak in the quad with Sixth Form Bloods - he is condemned to remain a very lonely figure.

The small fry of the Second and Third Forms are portrayed with great homogeneity, with a few exceptions. Bunter Minor displays all his brother's foibles but none of his humorous tendencies. In a Form considerably less tolerant than the Remove he is largely shunned. Hop Hi also differs from his peers as Wun Lung does in the Remove. There is no Wharton or Cherry to protect Hop Hi ("we'll make him hop high" were the words of Nugent Minor when he arrived), but he displays "Oriental wiles" by bribing his way to popularity. In the Remove, the decent chaps scorned Wun Lung's wealth and the rotters seldom showed interest. Nugent Mi, Gatty and Meyers participate in a few recorded escapades together, but there is little loyalty. Second Form friendships are largely based on each fag's capacity to prove himself or to bribe his way to popularity. Nugent Major's devotion to Nugent Mi periodically tests the loyalty of the Co., but Dicky is never grateful.

In the Third, Tubb is the acknowledged leader; he will certainly become a bully in later years. He often checks Remove or even Fourth Form men, but does so alone. He seems to suffer the isolation of Bolsover or Bulstrode; nevertheless, his size and manner ensure him respect and an undisputed captaincy.

Wingate Mi features periodically in yarns focusing on his occasional prominence owing to the position of his major George as School Captain. He is sulky, aware of his unique position and inclined to blagging. Although he finds a place in the Form, these attributes seem to preclude him from having any special chum. He learns enough of Greyfriars ways to behave in a way which will ensure acceptance by, if not popularity with, his fellow fags.

Among the masters friendships are few. Mr Quelch and Dr Locke are clearly personal friends as well as close colleagues, bound by a love of Greyfriars and of the Classics. Quelch is a tower of strength for his chief and a key confidant. Dr Locke deeply misses both his company and clear-headed advice during the High Oaks Rebellion (1043 ff) and makes a deeply sad and lonely figure in that series. When Bunter takes his phone call for Quelch after Colonel Wharton has solved the crisis, we hear Dr Locke refer to Quelch as "my old friend". Nevertheless, their friendship is not on equal terms. Quelch's discomfiture over his lateness to class and the estrangement arranged by Skinner show that Quelch is undoubtedly a subordinate who is permitted intimacy only on the Headmaster's

terms. Thus we see again the loneliness of a leader and the hierarchical nature of Greyfriars friendships.

The Common Room is often portrayed as a gathering of petty-minded rivals. There are many references to the masters collectively chewing on topics of gossip like "a dog on a bone". Twigg and Wiggins are vague and ineffectual little men of little substance - rather like their forms. Sometimes one or other of them might have their legs walked off on one of Quelch's grinds. Hacker's sarcastic, vindictive manner and his unsuccessful social climbing earn him no friends. Prout, the overweight windbag, full of anecdotes and advice

on how to be a better Form Master, is politely shunned. Capper, plump though not as pompous, tries to compete with Prout for an audience. Prout likes to talk of the Rockies, Capper of hearing the midnight chimes at Oxford; neither wishes to hear the other. Lascelles, a fine sportsman and mathematician and, after Quelch, probably the best teacher, is very taciturn. His colleagues resent his refusals to participate in the latest gossip. Poor little Mossoo is friendless - having to face endless ragging in class and the occasional intervention and patronising sympathy of the others. Only Quelch shows great tact in apologising to Mossoo for his Form's misconduct. As



No. 1. Mr. Quelch, the Remove Form Master. No. 2. Mr. Prout, master of the Fifth Form. No. 3. Dr. Locke, the Headmaster. No. 4. Mr. Lascelles, Mathematics Master. No. 5. Mr. Hacker, Master of the Shell Form.

An early picture of some of the Greyfriars masters

a group, the masters are very lonely. Only the Head is married. Quelch, Prout and Hacker have nephews, while Mossoo has endless connections whom he must maintain in France. Lascelles served in WW1 and we learn a little of his pugilistic connections before he came to Greyfriars.

Temporary masters invariably stand aloof from their colleagues because of the shady secret each must keep. Gilmore (his convict half-brother), Steele (an undercover detective),

Lambe (a thief) and Teggors/Smedley (an evil-bent impostor) are some examples. Each remains a lonely and isolated figure.

There are some interesting friendships to be found at Highcliffe. There Ponsonby is the unquestioned leader of the knuts, because of his unshaken commitment to unheard of levels of "outsider" behaviour. Gambling, smoking, lying and snobbery are normal activities. His cronies include Monson, Gadsby, Vavasour and Drury. He tolerates Skinner because of shared tastes and Smithy because of his similar tastes and capacity to pay his way. He blatantly manipulates Mobby and anyone else whom he wishes to use. He will even gamble with Billionaire Bunter (*Magnet* 1383 ff). He is very resilient, supremely confident in his higher social standing. His contempt for paupers, bounders and "City" people is never diminished. He is always ready a rag a Greyfriars man 3-1, to continue his nefarious activities and to look down on others with an unrestrained, supercilious arrogance. In seeking revenge he displays unlimited tenacity (e.g. the diamond tie-pin in the Da Costa series). Yet he suffers the same isolation as any leader. His vicious, vindictive reaction to any vicissitude frightens his cronies. They will never support him beyond a certain limit - and he knows it. He carries out his worst plots alone.

The friendship of Courtenay and Caterpillar is of a different nature. De Courcy, formerly a knut, was saved "like a brand from the burning" by Frank. The two are completely different - Courtenay is a diligent, upright chap, strongly committed to decency and ashamed of the slack nature of his school. De Courcy is languid, aristocratic and cynical; the two are united by their common interests in games and in their basic good intentions. The isolated Courtenay has only the Caterpillar to support him as he faces the contempt of the knuts and tries to rally the better elements of the Form. They become firm chums of the Famous Five, but on rather formal terms. Teas in the study - both at Highcliffe and Greyfriars - and regular games fixtures are important, almost diplomatic affairs. They are rather akin to state visits between national leaders. Like the Romans who strictly observed *hospitium* - the obligations between host and guest - the chums are careful to observe every nicety.

At Cliff House we meet only girls of the Fourth Form. Marjorie and Clara are close chums who regularly socialise with the Co. They are very popular with Greyfriars boys generally, but, for Marjorie, Wharton is first and the rest nowhere. Clara should be a natural chum for Cherry, but she always sticks by Marjorie, while the hapless Bob - forever straightening his tie - is never allowed to get close to Marjorie. He must admire her from afar, stealing the odd few minutes when Wharton is otherwise engaged. It is interesting that - during the second Wharton Downfall series (1285 ff) - Wharton's total isolation is reinforced by a complete absence of the Cliff House girls for a whole term.

Marjorie is all the more popular for her petite, helpless and gentle presentation. Clara the tomboy does not endear herself to anyone with her use of schoolboy slang. In the famous Greyfriars/Cliff House feud (engineered by Ponsonby), we see an estrangement which makes, ultimately, for a deeper relationship. Of the other girls, only Bessie Bunter is prominent. Alarmingly like Billy, she occasionally imposes on the goodwill and hospitality of the Co.

Servius once wrote "solitudo . . . regem semper est comes": "loneliness . . . is always the companion of kings". It is also the companion of many friendless Greyfriars chaps in a

school seemingly buzzing with social activity. Yet it is isolation which allows some superb character portraits to be painted by the master of the school yarn.



LIBRARY CHAT

by D. Ford

Janet Frame, in her recent autobiography, tells of being born in New Zealand in 1924 and her father, a railway worker, reading Sexton Blake books. One of them might have been the book I now mention.

It is page fourteen before we come on the predicament that confronts Irma Mason on the cover of this 1927 SBL case-book. Thunder was rumbling outside, when a great expanse of the red-tiled sitting-room floor heaved "a hump". "Something came through - steel, glittering like silver. It rose - and rose and hissed into the air; the whirling head of it pulsed - enlarging - shrinking - enlarging and then gently slowing down." A head peeped out of the steel door which opened in the side, followed by a body in black leather - a masked man. It was the inventor-criminal Carl Steffson come to kidnap Irma as a hostage to compel her engineer fiancé, Jack Arden, "to leave me and my invention alone".

A loose cover from an armchair envelops her and she is strapped next to Carl in the machine and the borer returns to a cowshed in a neighbouring field from which its journey has begun. But the "Mole's" first use was to slip Danby - "The Woodshed Murderer" - from the condemned cell in Scrubbswood Prison to serve as an assistant to Steffson.

To find the source of the tunnel, Sexton Blake ties the loose end of a ball of string to the prison cat's neck and lets it dive down the burrow. Later they find the cat crouched at the end of the tunnel on a shed floor in a builder's yard, near to the prison.

Page seven now gives us the technical details: "At each end was a giant gimlet screw, which gripped and nosed into the earth below which was a pulsing, expanding ring of hammers which throbbed outwards with a breathing movement, forcing back the soil ad beating it hard and solid round the bore - to obviate the necessity of removing loose earth. These pulsations were continuous and rapid, and battering thousands to a minute . . .

"There seemed to be a spiral nose and a pulsing ram at each end, so that the thing could travel backwards or forwards at will, with its human cargo going head, or feet, foremost, as necessity demanded. A faint hissing, as of escaping gas, was all the sound that came from this stealthy implement when at rest. When at work there was a booming hum as the pulsing, circular ram vibrated to its work and the steel shell ground its way through."

When dismantled it was packed away into a Ford van bearing the name of Rosemary Laundry, London.

From a yard behind a fishmonger's shop, Steffson and Danby next dive into the strong room of a bank, recovering bars of gold and silver.

Then Steffson goes back to his day job, for which he has sent out his card "James W. Hurstmonceaux, Marine Engineer, Torpedo and Salvage Specialist, Braywick Manor, Bucks." to a demonstration of Arden's new steel in his one-man submarine to the men from the Admiralty. (Steffson was also the inventor of a steel golf ball, coated with a secret preparation.)

Steffson, going to the river's edge, picks up a floating piece of cork and presses a button on it. "With a gurgling and a bubbling, something rose to the surface." With Danby at the controls the submarine completes the experiment when the front part is released as a torpedo. Steffson then returns to the bungalow in his "Mole" to pick up a trunk of clothing for Irma.

When Steffson reads that the *Swindon Castle* from South Africa is bringing a large consignment of bullion into Southampton, he determines that will be the next work for his borer . . . through the ship's plates from underwater. But it nearly gets stuck in the steel plates. The head revolving, the hammers beating, allow a slow withdrawal back to land.

Next day he reads that the bullion has been transferred from the *Swindon Castle* to a bank in Pimlico. Steffson and Danby spend the next two days overhauling the borer, before they load the sections into Steffson's limousine which he has converted for the purpose, the laundry van disposed of.

They get into the vault, but it is a trap of Blake's and they only escape by a whisk of the borer. They have to divert and end up in the ground-floor bedroom in 41 Larkspur Street, with an adjoining builder's yard in which there is a lorry. The machine is once more taken to pieces and loaded onto the lorry and covered with planks and sheeting from the yard.

Earlier Braywick Manor has been raided by Blake and Tinker, and Irma has been released. And the Manor House is Steffson's destination. But there is no light in the turret window, an arrangement he has made with his housekeeper, signifying that all is well.

Back then to the place where it all started - the builder's shed near Scrubbswood Prison. The borer is once more unloaded into the hole and Danby is returned to the condemned cell. The machine returns the way it came, but Steffson is now in despair and he explodes the machine in its tunnel.

Chapter 41 concludes with "The busy bustle of the awakening town swallowed him up, and he became merely one of its walking millions . . . a lone, solitary, bitter, broken, disillusioned man".

"Magazine Corner" that month told of "Inventions of Criminals", among them the recent silent revolver used to murder a man seated in the heart of an audience of some 200 people.

The above finally begs the question, does any reader know the author of this "science fiction" and was the character ever used again?



THE MAN WHO MET HIMSELF

Part Five: Cavendish Meets The Grouser

by Mark Caldicott

A few months ago, writing in the CD, Bill Bradford listed "The Strange Case of the Antlered Man" as one of his favourite ESB stories. Indeed, "The Strange Case of the Antlered Man" has a special position in the Brooks catalogue, being his first hardback novel. Published in February 1935 it also represents the beginning of his attempt to get into the adult hardback novel market. We should remember that (as Norman Wright tells us in his article "The Development of Norman Conquest", CD Annual, 1996) this was a difficult period in ESB's writing career. *The Nelson Lee Library* had disappeared in 1933, and *Union Jack* had transformed into *Detective Weekly* in the same year. The Norman Conquest stories would not be appearing in *The Thriller* until 1937. 1935 was a kind of interregnum between the reigns of St. Frank's and Conquest/Cromwell, and the difficulty in Brooks' position is demonstrated by the fact that 1934 had been a relatively lean year for his stories - only a handful of *Detective Weekly* stories, some St. Frank's stories and a serial in *The Gem*, and two *Boy's Friend Library* yarns. This was not to say that ESB's storytelling power was diminishing: some of the 1934 stories are excellent. The problem was that of a changing market.

Brooks always seemed to have a good understanding of his market, and the kind of stories which would sell well. However, even he could not have foreseen in 1935 that in five years' time the story paper, his major source of income, would be gone for good. Nevertheless he seems to have realised that the road to survival was the adult fiction.

And so in February 1935 Brooks made his first attempt to enter the arena of hard cover detective fiction. "The Strange Case of the Antlered Man" was the chosen vehicle.

For this story he invented an entirely new character and reintroduced a new favourite. For the first time appears Brooks' long, loose-jointed Scotland Yard detective, untidily dressed in an ancient blue-serge suit, and with a propensity to grumble about anything and everything. He is introduced to us as Chief Inspector William "Grouser" Beeke. And who is it that Brooks chooses to accompany his newest creation? None other than our friend the Honourable Eustace Cavendish, now a fully-fledged Detective-Sergeant at Scotland Yard.

The carrying through of the Cavendish character into the hardback novels demonstrates Brooks' fondness for him. And certainly he fits very well into the new partnership. His cheery disposition is the perfect foil for the Grouser's interminable sourness. Having moved away from the story paper, and from Amalgamated Press, Brooks finds it tactful not to mention Eustace's former association with Sexton Blake to his upmarket hardback audience.

The move obviously had some effect on Eustace's memory too, for it is odd that Cavendish was not able to solve the puzzle of "The Strange Case of the Antlered Man"

sooner since it has within it, though pieced together rather differently, many of the elements of the earlier case in which Cavendish had assisted Sexton Blake to unscramble the mystery of the Man-Bat of Stoke Henney ("Terror By Night", *UJ* 1357). But then if The Grouser had consulted with Dixon Hawke he would have discovered that Hawke had dealt with an identical case in December 1933 ("Mr Dexter's Mystery Field", *Dixon Hawke Library* 366). Despite the fact that it was a close rewrite of the Dixon Hawke yarn, which I happened to read first, I still find (like Bill Bradford) "Antlered Man" to be a most enjoyable story.

A second "Grouser Beeke" novel, "The Grouser Investigates", appeared in April 1936. Again elements of earlier stories are pieced together to make a most satisfying yarn. Warren Clinton, test pilot, bails out of his stricken plane and lands upon the roof of a tree house which turns out to be the quarters of a retired seaman, built into the tree. From inside the tree house, the swaying of the branches gives the impression of being on the high seas. (This building first made its appearance in the Waldo story "The Tree Top Murder" (*Detective Weekly*, 19, 01-Jul-33). Moreover, once gaining the ground Clinton finds he is trapped in the grounds of a house surrounded by a high wall (cf. "Waldo's Wonder Stunt", *Union Jack*, 1219, 26-Feb-27). The house is occupied by a reclusive eccentric, and issues are complicated by a beautiful girl who, we find, believes this recluse to be guilty of a murder for which her father has been imprisoned (again we wonder why Eustace didn't notice similarities to his previous case with Sexton Blake in "Pool of Escape", *Detective Weekly* 33, 07-Oct-33). Despite the fact that the tale is reconstructed from a number of earlier ideas, this is among my favourite of all Brooks' stories. Given the sheer breadth of choice, this is saying something.

The Hon. Eustace's "silly ass" manner has been toned down for his new role - obviously the discipline of police work - and, as befits his official status, he has become more the detective's assistant than the prime mover. However, he is still the old Eustace we have come to know from the Sexton Blake stories.

Brooks, in his interview with Marjorie Norris shortly before his death, tells how, in order to get "The Grouser Investigates" accepted for publication, he had to make major revisions to his character Warren Clinton. Harraps found the character "too facetious", and to his disgust ESB had to tone him down. This level of interference was too much for him, and he gave up with Harraps.

Thus ESB's first attempt at penetrating the hardback novel market had failed. No more Beeke and Cavendish novels appeared. Brooks had been working on a third novel, but rather than deal further with Harraps, he sold it instead to *Detective Weekly* where it appeared as the serial "Mr Nemesis" which spanned numbers 217 - 230 (17-Apr-37 to 17-Jul-37). The story concerns Duncan Wayne, a man wrongly convicted of murder, who has evaded capture to live in exile in Michigan under the name of Floyd Trenton. (Wayne was obviously a keen reader of the *Detective Weekly*, having carefully chosen as a false name one which, we remember from last time, originally belonged to the similarly-framed Bayswater murderer whom Sexton Blake proved innocent in "The Pool of Escape".) As Trenton he has become a millionaire motor manufacturer. However he risks capture by returning to his home town to rescue his daughter from a forced marriage to the real murderer. This gripping, well-constructed and swift-moving tale would have made an

excellent follow-up to "The Grouser Investigates" and it is a shame that, in its first appearance at least, it was relegated to the status of a weekly serial.

The experience with Harraps must have been damaging to Brooks' confidence, for even before "Mr Nemesis" appeared in serial form he had already been quick to move Beeke and Cavendish stories to the story paper format. Individual Beeke and Cavendish stories had already begun to appear in *The Detective Weekly* from July 1936 when an editorial decision (temporary, as it turned out) to cease to run Sexton Blake stories had made it possible for Brooks to make the transition of his partnership back to the story-paper medium. There are four of these stories.



The first, "Cyclists' Rest" (*Detective Weekly*, 179, 25-Jul-36), is a wonderfully atmospheric story. The setting of the scene in so very few words is a masterpiece of narrative:

The evening shadows raced down the gorse-laden slopes from the forbidding tors which stood out starkly against the angry sunset. The south-westerly wind, with a chill to its edge, was rising to a gale as the eight cyclists pedalled wearily against its direct thrust . . .

This is typical lost-on-the-moor seek-shelter-in-spooky-house stuff, but Brooks' story-telling skills turn it into a gripping piece, and it is not long before there is a suspicious death.

Beeke and Cavendish arrive on the scene, and, since Eustace is now in a

role which is unfamiliar to readers who previously met him as Sexton Blake's companion, Brooks repeats the words of "The Grouser Investigates" giving the explanation:

Eustace was not the ordinary run of the C.I.D. men. To the consternation of his father, Lord Halstead, he had chosen detective work as a career; he had studied crime until, as he said himself, it oozed out of his pores. He had served some months in uniform in the Metropolitan Police before being promoted to the C.I.D.

Introductions over, the pair set out to solve the mystery, with Cavendish this time relegated to admiring-assistant status.

Eustace's propensity for having friends who draw him into mysteries is again evident in "The Mystery of the Wailing Pool" (*Detective Weekly*, 210, 27-Feb-37), another eerie tale, this time beginning with a foggy night on the Isle of Sheppey, a dead man propped against a gatepost, and a damsel in distress. When his pal Tony Marshall, who experiences these phenomena, fails to turn up at his holiday destination and Eustace's borrowed car is found abandoned, the Grouser is persuaded to look into the mystery.

Tony Marshall is obviously prone to holiday adventure, for when he and Cavendish visit an Isle of Wight holiday camp, they find themselves involved in the suspicious death of an unpleasant gentleman who is confined to a wheelchair, and who takes an unplanned journey to the bottom of Witch's Chine in the third Beeke and Cavendish *Detective Weekly* adventure, "The Holiday Camp Mystery" (*Detective Weekly*, 235, 21-Aug-37).

Finally, in "The Fantastic Affair of Cloon Castle" (*Detective Weekly*, 252, 18-Dec-37), we are presented with ESB's version of a Christmas ghost story, with the Grouser invited to spend the festive season with Cavendish's father Lord Halstead, and a party of his friends. Challenged to sleep alone in the Death Room, the braggardly Ronnie Charlton is, of course, found dead next morning. Has he been frightened to death? Is the ghost of Cloon Castle abroad? What is the mysterious figure which leaves no footprints in the snow? It is fortunate for Lord Halstead that Beeke and Cavendish are on hand to provide the explanation, and to lay the ghost of Cloon Castle.

Apart from the appearance in serial form of "The Strange Case of the Antlered Man" (*Detective Weekly*, 304-317, 17-Dec-38 to 18-Mar-39) and "The Grouser Investigates" (*Detective Weekly*, 343-350, 16-Sep-39 to 04-Nov-39) the Cloon Castle episode was the final appearance of Beeke and Cavendish. Reading these stories, and in the light of Brooks' later success with the "Ironsides" stories, we are surely justified in claiming that it was Harraps and not ESB who got it wrong. Brooks' instinct for the market was sound, as the popularity of the Cromwell novels proved. It was nothing more than his unfortunate first choice of publisher which kept him out of the adult detective thriller novel market for several years, and, to return to our theme, which eventually caused the demise of Eustace and the emergence of - Johnny Lister.

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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A copy of B.F.L. No. 446 "The Ocean Outlaw". It is the B.F.L. version of the *Modern Boy* serial of the same name, but I suspect that it also contains parts of the M.B. serial "Hunted Down" (M.B. Nos. 200 - 209) and would like to confirm this.

R. HIBBERT, 30 ALTON ROAD, ROSS ON WYE, HR9 5ND.

HARRY POTTER AND THE BEWITCHING OF A CD READER AGED 62

by R.J. Walpole

I rarely read modern books. I never read fantasy books. My tastes are, however, fairly wide: from Austen and Ainsworth to Wodehouse and Wood (Mrs Henry). I often feel guilty about my attitude to modern authors so I make a point of reading the reviews. Sometimes I acquire a contemporary book. I am usually disappointed.

Through reading the reviews I became aware of the Harry Potter books. The hype surrounding the first two books was almost muted in comparison with that of the third book which is currently dominating the news columns as well as the reviews. Even so I learned that parents were fighting with their offspring for possession of the books and that city gents were secreting them in their broadsheet newspapers to read on their commuter trains. The publishers had even brought out an edition with a more adult-looking cover to mitigate adult sensitivity at being seen reading a children's book.

The first Harry Potter book, somewhat to my surprise given all the publicity, appeared in a bargain catalogue tucked into my *Daily Telegraph*. It was reduced by £6. I was ordering another book as a present so I added it to the order, mainly to justify the post and packing charge.

Some days after it arrived I picked it up. It was *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. I glanced idly at the first page and underwent an experience as devastating as that of Alice when she fell down the rabbit hole. I entered a new and amazing world. A world as complete as anything created by Tolkien but which interfaces, hilariously, with our own.

I lost all interest in my surroundings and devoured the book ravenously. I dashed out the next day and obtained the second book, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, paying the full price. I would have paid double.

Harry Potter is a Wizard raised by an appalling non-magic (Muggle) family which includes a Hubert Laneite cousin. He attends Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry - a most unusual and fascinating institution populated by a host of amazing and interesting characters. His adventures are very humorous, scary, extremely complex, challenging, and conducted at a very fast pace. The plots and sub-plots are highly inventive. The writing is economical as, I imagine, is necessary when writing for today's children. Characterisation and descriptive prose is tight but complete. I find the books a very satisfying read and so complicated that even on a third read (yes, my addition is serious) fresh delights are to be had.

There are two aspects of the Potter books which worry me. Firstly, the ability of eight- to eleven-year-old children to cope with the complexities of the plots. They must be much cleverer than I was at those ages.

Secondly, and more seriously, the intention of the author Ms J.K. Rowling to limit the Potter saga to seven books: one for each of Harry's years at Hogwarts School. This will create a similar frustration to that felt by Jane Austen devotees - addictive books brilliantly written but only a handful of them. The third book *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* places Harry in his third year at Hogwarts. This would be a good point to time-freeze the characters. Charles Hamilton, E.S. Brooks and Richmal Crompton were able to

write prolifically about the same locations and characters because the characters never aged.

The time freeze could offer another possible benefit. One of Harry's most appealing qualities and vital to story development is his innocence of Magic and the ways of Wizards. This is because he was brought up by Muggles. As he progresses through the school years, this quality with its rich scope for accident, disaster, discovery and surprise will atrophy. Harry in the sixth form should be quite competent in his wizardry and with his unavoidable maturity should have lost his terror of the teachers. Much of the humour and novelty could be weakened. Saddest of all would be the loss of Hogwarts School and its abundant riches. I suppose it could be preserved with a fresh diet of characters with an adult Harry Potter coming and going rather like Ferrers Locke or Lord Dorrimore. This would be better than nothing but less than ideal.

Harry Potter, his awful Muggle relatives and Hogwarts and its rich cast of inmates deserve a longer future. Ms Rowling's devoted, and seemingly insatiable, readers will never be content with a mere seven books.

The third book is as good as its predecessors. Harry's confidence is a little higher and the plot and its new characters become grimmer and more threatening earlier in the story. Ms Rowling's inventiveness is unabated, the core characters continue to captivate and the book is unputdownable.

I am, I like to kid myself, fairly well read and somewhat critical by nature. Are these books as good as I think or do they merely touch some hitherto unrecognised quirk in my literary tastes? Have I succumbed to publishers' hyperbole at my time of life?!

Perhaps it's just magic!

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Some time ago I wrote an article on *Schoolgirls' Own Library* and at the time of writing, thought I'd like to do a more in-depth article, so here goes.

The first *Libraries* I read were in the second (post-war) series - and one of the very favourite series was the *Manorcliff* stories. The adventures of Jill Waring, Jane Heatherly and Dolly Potter were brilliant reading. Dolly is a loveable duffer who has inadvertently solved a lot of mysteries that befall Manorcliff. Other characters who emerged were Veronica Vanda de Vere - a spoilt rich girl who does have a conscience though - and Ena Ewell, the mean sneak of the Fourth. When I began research into the history of *SGOL*, I actually found Manorcliff was based on Cliff House.

One brilliant story is *Mystery Girl of Study 13*, which I enlarge upon here. Also *The Tennis Feud at Manorcliff* and *Skating Rivals of Manorcliff* are excellent stories.

Manorcliff were holding their Old and Modern Manorcliff Girls Exhibition and Margaret Dean (a comparative newcomer to Manorcliff), who owned a very expensive stamp collection, was going to loan it to this exhibition. However, unbeknown to the other girls, Margaret's father was in serious financial difficulties so Margaret sent her stamp collection to him, thus not being able to lend it to the exhibition.

No. 274. -SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY.



MYSTERY GIRL of STUDY 13

An enthralling story featuring popular Jill Waring and the chums of Manorcliff School.

By HAZEL ARMITAGE

ill and can she go to the Shetlands to help her mother nurse her. So Jane leaves for the station, accompanied by the other girls. The weather is very foggy and they find it hard going. Whilst on their way back to the school, during a brief lift of the fog, Jill is stunned to see Jane go past in a car!

Upon their return Dolly Potter suddenly remembers that she has no mounts left to exhibit her stamps so Margaret tells her that there are some left in her desk in the old Study 13 in the West Wing, which is undergoing renovation, and the girls are apparently forbidden to enter the West Wing. However, Dolly goes to the West Wing to get these mounts and collides with a figure in a black mask and collapses. Jill and Margaret hear her

Jill and Jane have a conference with one of the mistresses regarding the exhibition and during this it is revealed that several years ago the school had a similar exhibition and a very valuable stamp collection disappeared. A senior girl named Sophia Marle was in charge of the stamps when they disappeared. Jane is amazed to hear this as she has heard from her cousin Isa who lives in the Shetland Isles speak of this said Sophia Marle. Jane knows nothing of the stamp affair, though. At the end of the conference, Jane is handed a letter from the Shetland Islands stating that her aunt is very

cries for help and go to the rescue. Later, Margaret has cause to go to her old study and finds that several strips of wallpaper have been torn from the wall.

That night, Dolly has a headache so Margaret offers to get her some painkillers which are in the desk of her old study. She goes there and comes across a person in the room tearing strips of wallpaper from the wall.

Also at about this time, Jill finds evidence that Jane has not gone to the Shetlands as supposed but is taking refuge in the school, so naturally she wonders what is happening.

Details of a scholarship are announced and Margaret decides to sit for it, to enable her to stay at school. With all the excitement of the scholarship she remembers in the excitement of it all that she has not paid attention to collating the stamps, so back she goes to Study 13 to get more equipment. There, again, is the mystery person. Margaret gives chase and down one of the main corridors the mystery person pushes upon a jade statuette that was loaned for the exhibition by a Miss Niobe Middlehurst, and then magically disappears. In the ensuing confusion Margaret is caught with the mystery person's black cowled headdress next to the smashed statuette by Miss Ironside. Trouble ensues.

Jill then finds Jane has been cooped up in Study 4. The following night Jill, Margaret and Dolly decide to investigate further and they revisit Study 13 to find that more strips of wallpaper have been torn away. They are all caught by Miss Ironside, with further trouble adding to their woes. In addition, Miss Middlehurst decides to add to Margaret's woes by charging her father for the smashed statuette. Margaret tells Jill everything that has been happening. Speculation is also abounding as to why Margaret is sitting for the scholarship as it was thought that her parents were well-off. This is a prime opportunity for Ena Ewell to spread malicious rumours about Margaret. Shortly after, Veronica Vanda de Vere gives Margaret some very valuable stamps towards the exhibition and tells Jill there is a letter for her, but when Jill goes to the letter rack it is gone!

Margaret formulates a secret plan to unmask the mystery girl plus studying for the scholarship. Late at night she yet again investigates and sees the mystery girl in the act of peeling the wallpaper and gives chase, which leads outside the school towards a parked car and Margaret sees her meet a woman driver who seems familiar. Before they drive off Margaret catches snippets of their conversation. Whilst Margaret is returning to the school she is caught by Miss Ironside and Miss Adair.

Next morning Veronica wants some of her stamps back for some reason or other and Margaret finds they are missing, as are some of Ena Ewell's. Another prime opportunity for Ena to sneak! Eventually everyone thinks Margaret is the mystery girl of Study 13, except for Jill and Dolly. Jill by now has 'had enough' and decides to enlist the help of her dog Hadrian to find Jane. She comes up against a brick wall when Hadrian loses Jane's scent. However, underneath a bush she finds a piece of paper which turns out to be a page torn out of Manorcliff school record 1950 - 1955, which she guesses fell out of the mystery girl's clutches when she got into the vehicle the previous evening which Margaret had told her about. Jill goes along to the Library at Coltby and studies a copy of the Manorcliff school records there. Sophia Marle was mentioned in the book for 1952 and she was in Study 13, West Wing! 1953 year stated she was expelled for being out of bounds. 1954 there were alterations to Manorcliff and the Fourth Form had taken over the West Wing. Jill then remembers the conversation Margaret heard between her and the woman driver so she decides to watch the West Wing that night without telling anyone. In the meantime

Dolly decides to exercise Jane's dog Jackie, and has tea at Granny Brent's, a favourite eating place for the Manorcliff girls. On the way back she passes Old Mill Cottage and the dog is very interested in this supposedly empty cottage. An occupant is very rude to Dolly, who goes back to school indignantly.

That night Jill is out on watch and sees two figures creeping into the school and go into Study 13. One of them is the car driver who looked just like Jane. The other is talking about the way the room has been altered and that she had had no time to get the stamps out of the school before she was expelled. This must be Sophia Marle! - and the other is Jane's cousin Isa, who looks remarkably like Jane! They laugh about being wealthy now, as they have found the right place where the stamps were concealed behind the wallpaper. Jill now decides to show herself, which sends the thieves into a panic and suddenly Jane comes along to the rescue with her dog, enabling Jill to get the stamps! Then Miss Ironside puts in an appearance and Jill gives her the stamps.

Much later, in the Head's study, the whole story comes out. Jane is getting on the train but is told it is going to be delayed by fog so she goes to the bookstall to buy some magazines and unexpectedly sees her cousin with Sophia Marle. She hears Sophia laughing about getting Jane out of the way whilst they seek the stamps. Jane realises the letter was a forgery to get her out of the way so she decides to follow the pair. Isa was going to Manorcliff in disguise as Jane. Jane wrote Jill a letter about the whole plot but of course it was intercepted. Jane states she hid all the stamps of Margaret's and Veronica's and Ena's because she thought they were the ones the thieves were after. A reward is offered to Jill for the return of the stamps and she spends it on paying for the smashed statuette. Margaret gets a letter from her father to say things are picking up financially so she does not need to sit the scholarship. Of course, the exhibition is the best Manorcliff has ever staged.

(Editor's Note: Hazel Armitage, the author of the Manorcliff stories, was John Whewy, the "Hilda Richards" of the 1930s Schoolgirl. It is easy to see how, when the Cliff House saga ended, he changed the name of the "new" school to Manorcliff. Arguably the chums of its Fourth Form (Jill Waring, Jane Heatherly and Dolly Potter) are reincarnations of Cliff House's Barbara Redfern, Mabel Lynn and Bessie Bunter - with variations, of course. Dolly Potter, unlike Bessie, was not plump, for example.)

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The Tennis Feud at Manorcliff

Another Enthralling Story Featuring Jill Waring, Jane Heatherly and the Girls of Manorcliff School.

By HAZEL ARMITAGE



An enthralling story of school and ice skating, featuring popular Jill Waring and the Fourth Form chums of Manorcliff.

By HAZEL ARMITAGE

RAY HOPKINS WRITES:

Referring to Robert Marsh's letter in the "Forum" section of the July C.D., I recently came across a lengthy article by Herbert Leckenby in the 1952 *CD Annual*, a section of which was concerned with the Teddy Lester stories. The following brief extract may be of interest.

THERE WERE OTHER SCHOOLS! by Herbert Leckenby: SLAPTON.

The stories of Slapton School were written by John Finnemore, an author who could to advantage have been employed more frequently by the publishers of boys' weeklies, for he certainly could write a good yarn. Those of Slapton appeared I believe only in the *Boys' Realm*, though there may have been reprints.

Two of the serials were "His First Term" and "Teddy Lester in the Fifth", and there were also a series of complete stories, entitled "Stories of Slapton School". Leading characters were Teddy Lester, Tom Sandys and Arthur Digby, whilst in "His First Term" a Japanese boy Ito Nagao was introduced. In those days round about 1906, it must be remembered that we talked about gallant little Japan which had bravely fought the Russian Bear, in consequence Japs in stories were always shown in a favourable light. So little Ito came to Slapton, and was soon a great favourite. He was also capable of all sorts of strange tricks, much to the discomfort of one Birling, generally known as "The Lubber", and others of his kind.

An unusual feature about Slapton was that they played Rugger instead of Soccer, and the stories contained some very good descriptions of games under the handling code.

The usual village was Oakford, but it appears to have been three miles from the school. There was also, of course, a river, but I have been unable to trace its name.

Dr. Balshaw was the Headmaster and one of the masters Mr Jaynes.

In "His First Term" the boys got into conflict with Sir Jasper Popham, a local landowner, but they later became great friends.

It is interesting to note that not long ago the Slapton stories were re-published in several volumes of excellent appearance by Latimer House, Ludgate Hill. Collectors who have seen them were quite impressed, and apparently the stories have stood the test of time. It is something unusual for serials which appeared in a boys' weekly to be given the dignity of stiff covers over forty years later.

(End of SLAPTON section of Herbert's article.)

The Latimer House editions of the six Teddy Lester stories were published in the late forties. However, all six had previously appeared in hardback, published, as far as I am aware, just a year after their first appearance in *The Boys' Realm*. The publisher was W & R Chambers Ltd. of Edinburgh. Titles and dates of first publication in hardback according to the British Library Catalogues are as follows:

Three School Chums	1907
His First Term	1909
Teddy Lester's Chums	1910
Teddy Lester's Schooldays	1914

Teddy Lester, Captain of Cricket 1916
Teddy Lester in the Fifth 1921

John Finnemore (1860 - 1939) is shown as the author of 93 publications in the B.L. Cats., the subjects including Histories, School Readers, Fairy Stories and stories for boys. A very respectable body of work.

It is strange that the Amalgamated Press did not reprint this long-running, successful series in the *Boys' Friend Library*. Perhaps this was because of the rather swift reprinting by Chambers in their hardback editions.



by Margery Woods

AUGUST MEANS HOLS. HURRAH!

The ghostly monk Benedict, said to haunt Cliff House, might well have been forgiven his alarm or puzzlement should he have indulged in a melancholy wander round the school near the end of July. "Goodbye Latin! Goodbye French verbs! Good riddance!" rang round the building amid choruses of joyous whoops and surrations of sighs that would pervade the echoes, sounds of anticipation unbeknown in the mediaeval cloisters of the monastery where he had languished in vain for the love of the fair Charmian. But the joy of escaping lessons and school discipline for a whole five or six weeks was beyond his experience; monks did not have holidays.

The Cliff House girls' first summer in *School Friend* 1919 sadly appeared to hold no holiday joy for them, either. School continued through July and August bringing the arrival of Miss Potter. This lady was the first of a succession of tyrant headmistresses who would blight the girls' lives during the intermittent problems that would cause the absences of Miss Primrose. That first summer led them into the great barring-out by the rebellious schoolgirls.

The next year, 1920 (*School Friend*) proved a little more in holiday character when the girls went camping; unfortunately they were clobbered with the company of Miss Bullivant. Despite this handicap they managed to have some adventure and fun. Philippa Derwent stopped a runaway horse and caravan; Bessie met a ghost, or thought she did, and then got put in the ancient village stocks. Before August was over they were all back at school.

Things livened up considerably in 1921 (were the writers beginning to get their holiday act together?).

Earlier that same year the chums had met Grace Kelwyn and Barbara Redfern's Uncle Tony had treated them to an Easter cruise. Now in August they embarked on a three-day cruise to France and met Grace again. But Uncle Tony's cruiser was fated. They were wrecked and picked up by an ocean-going liner which, while the crew were extremely kind, was bound for South America and simply couldn't turn round and take them back to England. Uncle Tony meets an old friend and on arriving at Rio de Janeiro the chums continue their journey along the Paraguay River to visit Sir Stanley Beech's ranch. Uncle Tony receives a mysterious and threatening note and Bessie and Grace take a canoe trip and go missing. Every ploy for excitement goes into this

four-part adventure series. Rapids in the river, capture by Indians, a giant puma seizing a child and Grace pursuing the beast up a tree, literally to stare eyeball to eyeball with it until it drops the child and gives it all up as a bad job. The Indian tribe are rather pleased about this and make Grace their queen. But the tribe have an outcast who is the villain of the story, and Bessie has a strange role thrust on her, that of the Daughter of the Full Moon. Marjorie becomes a soothsayer of great magic and there is a golden goblet with hieroglyphics which she is able to decipher and lead the way to a secret city.

All the colour and wild beauty of the jungle surrounds the chums and heightens the effect of the perils they face until at last they escape to sail through tropic nights bound for home and dear old Cliff House once more.

THE
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No. 67. Vol. 3. Three-Halfpence. Week Ending August 21st, 1920.



WHO PUT BESSIE BUNTER IN THE STOCKS?
(An amusing incident from "For Her Sister's Sake!" the magnificent new, long complete tale of the Girls of Cliff House, continued in this issue.)

1922 brought a somewhat more homespun summer break with the chums on a caravan tour round the countryside, and in 1923 they went to explore Cornwall.

In 1924 they were still on home territory when they were invited to the home of their unpredictable form-mate, Vivienne Leigh. This holiday utilised a topical theme of the time, the Great Exhibition at Wembley. Alas, there is a particularly unpleasant fly in the ointment of this otherwise congenial visit. "A sixth former, a great friend of yours," smiled charming and kindly Mrs Leigh, "a dear girl who takes a motherly interest in you all".

The owner of this motherly interest is none other than Connie Jackson - as if the reader had never guessed! Connie arrives with a show of gush, even insisting on motherly kissing. But the girls manage to extract a great deal of fun out of dealing with their unwelcome holiday companion. Appeal is added with the rescue of a waif who is knocked down by a car, then the advent of a group of girls from Danesford spices the conflict angle. Mrs Leigh makes a break from the Exhibition theme when she takes them all to spend a few days with a great friend of hers who is holding a slap-up garden fête. Here Bessie meets one of her titled relations - one she has never heard of, she has so many. Sadly for Bessie this "Lady Bunter" is a fake, arranged by those Danes.

By the following year, 1925, the *School Friend* had been revamped into a more comfortably-sized new series, in sister paper style of the *Schoolgirls' Own*. Otherwise, the stories and illustrations followed the same well-tried pattern of the original series and it seemed time to let the girls loose in Europe on a luxury cruise as guests of Augusta Anstruther-Browne. She selects her guests (at that time the chums' group consisted of Barbara, Mabs, Clara, Marjorie and Freda, and sometimes Dolly, with Bessie as the inevitable freeloader) except for Dolly who is bound elsewhere, and makes Bessie her final choice with the malicious remark, "Yes, Bessie - just for the fun of seeing if you're seasick!"

In Naples they got involved with a secret society, and almost arrested. They discovered Augusta's Aunt, whose name she did not know and whose address had been lost - and with whom they were actually supposed to be staying! From Naples it was on to Venice where Marjorie chose to stay in the hotel to finish embroidering table mats for a birthday present for her aunt instead of joining her friends on a gondola trip along the Grand Canal. Meanwhile, in the stuffy hotel room Marjorie completes her task and is about to go out to post it when she meets a charming lady who has a most beautiful shawl. Marjorie does not give this encounter much thought as she is thinking of her mother's letter with its comment on spiteful cousin Alice. (Do we ever hear of this spiteful cousin again? Poor Marjorie seemed very overburdened with troublesome relatives.) In the gondola on the way to the post office there is a slight scuffle which causes Marjorie to lose her precious parcel in the canal. Her distress over this is doubled later when the lady of the shawl reports it missing and Marjorie is accused of stealing it. Then the missing parcel turns up, its contents still dry, but tragically for Marjorie it contains the missing shawl. But somehow one of the villains makes a mistake, for a witness turns up saying he had seen a man fish a package out of the canal and open it to take out the contents and replace them with the shawl. So Marjorie is exonerated, the charming lady is a thief - there is also a valuable embroidered cloak in the story - and she had made Marjorie her unwitting victim.

This adventure, however, was nothing to the shenanigans that awaited our intrepid chums in the Eternal City, when Bessie was kidnapped (apparently still in school uniform,

in August, in Rome!) and the chums were worried sick, imagining poor Bessie bound and gagged in some dreadful cellar and hungry! The contrast when they eventually found her could not have been greater. For there was their plump chum, literally queening it, wearing gorgeous clothes, being addressed as "Your Royal Highness" and requested only to sign some document relating to the conveyance of some island.

But it was a sad case of mistaken identity. At least Bessie thoroughly enjoyed being kidnapped while it lasted.

In 1926 the chums spent their hols in a bungalow rented by Dolly Jobling's aunt and the stories mainly featured Vivienne Leigh and a circus. The girls were back at Cliff House halfway through August. Although these English home holidays were thoroughly entertaining reading they seemed just a continuation of school adventures out of school and really could not compete with the superbly written tales of exotic travel during the thirties when strange and compelling settings held intricately woven adventures and perils.

By 1927 Jemima Carstairs had arrived at Cliff House and rapidly became a prime favourite with both readers and chums. She was with their party that summer in a boarding house at Seabourne, and again the following year, 1928, when the girls had a working farm holiday. Considerable imagination is needed to picture the elegant, immaculate Jemima as a landgirl in the cowshed! Perhaps it was editorial policy at the time not to allow the writers to indulge in too much holiday escapism, rather to fit the entertaining adventures and gaiety within a framework that the young readers of the time would more easily identify with. It certainly didn't reflect in any way on the skills of the writers - it can take just as much skill to make a homely setting as interesting and fictionally enthralling as the same basic plots embroidered by rich and spellbinding tropical magic, and had already been demonstrated in the earlier South American series.

But John Wheway apparently had neither editorial restraint nor inhibitions when the three-year hiatus of no holidays for Cliff House between 1929 and 1932 was over and Cliff House returned triumphantly to star in the successor to *School Friend*, *The Schoolgirl*. Although one wonders if there was any editorial direction behind his choice of subject for that 1932 summer hols series: a rerun of the destinations of the 1925 cruise series. He took them back to Venice, via Spain and Naples, and it was there that reality was faced, in that holiday brochures and highly coloured postcards do not always reveal the other side of the coin.

The chums are disappointed in Naples, finding it dirty and very noisy, and it is not until they get out into the surrounding vineyards that the scents and colours become sweeter. After a visit to Pompeii they rode to the top of Vesuvius, where Marjorie saves the life of Maud, a not very pleasant girl who, with her governess, had sailed with the chums on the *Plathian* and of course was cast as the enemy in the plot. Now she is ashamed of herself. For history has repeated itself in that Marjorie has been accused of stealing Maud's bag, as in the earlier series with the lady and the shawl. Here, this has come about because Maud herself had left her bag in Marjorie's cabin and the stewardess, innocently supposing it belonged to Marjorie, had put it away safely. On such simple mistakes reputations are ruined and story conflict is woven.

The Venetian adventure has a strong storyline. The chums meet an Italian girl called Rosa and become involved in her problems and mystery. Her father is ill and worried over some plans he has hidden. His secret project has led to his being attacked, burgled and

threatened by a supposedly rich Italian man and his accomplices. The rich Italian also has a daughter, very well educated, called Galli, who targets the chums. Throughout the story they are embroiled in a battle of wits with the Italian girl as she tries to thwart their efforts to help Rosa. The usual fun, skylarking and humorous incidents with Bessie are woven into the drama to keep the holiday atmosphere alive, and the climax comes with a speedboat chase of Clara by Galli along the canals which ends in a crash that would not have shamed a James Bond - except that Bond was never lumbered with a Bessie Bunter, nor the precious gondola which Clara is also towing. But Babs has found the concealed canister

THE SCHOOLGIRL

Every Saturday 2nd

No. 262. Vol. 11.

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED SCHOOLGIRLS

Week Ending August 4th, 1934.



PERIL in the PALACE!

A thrilling incident from the wonderful holiday story of Bessie Bunter, Barbara Bunter, and their chums - "BABS & CO. IN EGYPT" By Hilda Richards.

with the plans just as the gondola and speedboat are sinking, and a launch from the *Plathian* with the ship's doctor is fortuitously cruising the Grand Canal at exactly the right time. The girls are fished out of the canal, the Galli girl and her accomplices are arrested. The doctor goes immediately to tend Rosa's father and her uncle arrives post-haste to lend his aid. The plans relate to buried treasure in a castle being excavated, and all the ends are tied up to everyone's satisfaction - except that of the villains of course.

John Wheway continued to explore the possibilities of holiday adventure in faraway places, taking the girls to America the following year and to Africa in the great series of 1934. The summer of 1935 found them caravanning and visiting a holiday camp and enjoying another "home" summer break in Cornwall during August 36. The Mediterranean and North Africa

tempted them (or perhaps their author) again in 1937 and they took to the treasure trail with *Jungle Jess* come 1938. The war-shadowed threat of summer 39 kept them on home ground in August and proved to be the summer holiday finale for the girls of *Cliff House*. A sad goodbye to all that wonderful enchantment.

Space has not permitted a more detailed analysis of the John Wheway holiday tales. This omission I hope to rectify in a long-planned tribute to this talented writer. Till then - happy holiday nostalgia with the *Cliff House* chums.

GENESIS OF A COLLECTOR

by John Graham-Leigh

I'd never heard of the *Magnet* until about 15 years ago, but I knew the Bunter books from my earliest youth. Probably the first Bunter story I read was in *Billy Bunter's Own* which my elder brother had for Christmas in 1955 - a marvellous tale of Bunter smuggling himself into Mauleverer Towers in a crate supposedly containing a marble bust (cue for a bit of cross-purpose dialogue, with Mr Quelch insisting that there's a bust in the box and Gosling indignantly denying that he's "bu'sted" anything). No doubt hobby savants would compare it unfavourably with *Magnet* Christmases, but I thought it was wonderful. My brother has selfishly kept it (selfishness all round, as usual) so I haven't read it for, probably, 35 years but I remember it extremely well.

Another favourite was the 1940 *Holiday Annual* - I forget how that was acquired, but I have it still, in a sorry state minus its covers. It contained "Sir Fulke's Warning", a reprint of the 1922 Christmas story. I enjoyed the story, but as a precocious youth keen on history I knew that Sir Fulke Mauleverer, contemporary with Richard the Lionheart, would not have worn full plate armour! Nor could Brian Mauleverer have "dodged into" a suit of armour in a few moments - an essential part of the plot. I'm surprised that our pundits appear not to have picked up these inaccuracies.

Other Bunter books followed - my brother had *Lord Billy Bunter*, I had *Billy Bunter's Benefit* - and I loved them. I read many others from the library. Then I moved into my teens, up into the adult library and on to writers such as Dennis Wheatley (I find him unreadable now), C S Forester, Monica Dickens, Alfred Duggan and many more. Frank Richards and Bunter were all but forgotten.

Then, some time in about 1983, I saw a magnificent display of Howard Baker volumes in Foyle's. It took me a while to realise what they were, but then I bought all I could afford (not many at that time) and came back for more over the next three years or so. Then the supply dried up. I had about a score of volumes of *Magnet* reprints, and during the following decade I acquired about as many more - including lots of the "substitute" volumes which were remaindered. Browsing in second-hand shops produced others, including most of the *Gem* volumes, quite a few *Holiday Annuals* (reprints) and some *Collector's Pies*.

The breakthrough came in February 1998, in an excellent second-hand bookshop in Warwick. Not only were there at least 40 Howard Baker volumes (including some Greyfriars Book Club ones, reasonably priced) - there were also books about Hamiltonia including *A History of the Gem and Magnet* and *The Magnet Companion '77*. Eureka! It all fell into context. I cleared the shop in three trips (my so-understanding wife even helped me carry boxes of books to the car), and then read voraciously.

It wasn't enough, of course. Having discovered the *Magnet* saga, I wanted them all. For the rest of 1998 I hunted *Magnets*, acquiring some originals in bound volumes and then a complete run from 1933 to 1939 at a bargain £60 a year from Ripping Yarns, a specialist children's bookshop in Archway Road, Highgate (recommended - almost opposite Highgate tube station).

The final link came in October when my wife noticed a mention of George Beal's 1996 *Magnet Guide* in *The Bibliophile*. I contacted George, who was extremely helpful and put me in touch with Colin Crewe and the *Digest*.

I now have 1,469 *Magnets* (including over 500 originals and the rest in facsimile), numerous volumes of *Hamiltonia* and all but two of the Bunter books. Anyone got copies of *Bunter Out of Bounds* and *Billy Bunter's Treasure Hunt* they'd like to sell? I also have all the *Gems* reprinted by Howard Baker - over 250. A big gap is the 1926 India series - I only have one *Magnet* from that, so if any reader has the Greyfriars Book Club Volume 4 or original *Magnets* 960 - 970 (except 967) for sale I'd be very interested.

Among my purchases from Colin Crewe were 300 or so *Collectors' Digests* (plus a few *Annuals*) and I've been reading these through selectively, concentrating on the *Hamiltonia*. I feel frustrated that I missed all those debates of the past - "which was the best Wharton Rebel series?", "was there too much Bunter?", "which series were better, school or holidays?" Let's have them all again!

Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee haven't grabbed me. I have one Howard Baker volume of each and have not been impressed. However, give me time . . .

"Billy Bunter Among the Cannibals"

Anyway, having got all that off my chest I'd like to make a point about postwar Bunter books. In CD 453 in September 1984, the late Eric Fayne gave his opinion that *Billy Bunter Among the Cannibals* was unreadable - next month, a regular correspondent enthusiastically agreed. Now, as a very new subscriber to CD I realise that I'm walking on thin ice in disagreeing with the late, great Eric. But I just can't let that pass.

Billy Bunter Among the Cannibals was a Christmas present in 1959, when I was ten (I see that it was accompanied by *Biggles Hunts Big Game*, another favourite). I know now that it was a re-working of the 1927 and 1938 South Seas series, with the usual raiding cannibals who were even more anachronistic by 1950 when the book was written. But I loved it. The characters of Bunter and the Famous Five came clearly through, and while it was primarily an adventure story there was some delicious and original dialogue. Try this for size.

Mr Bunter has castigated Bunter for his "incurable laziness" and has (not for the first time) decided that the money spent on Greyfriars fees is a sheer waste. WGB is extremely reluctant to leave Greyfriars for, he thinks, a place in his father's office, but changes his mind at the prospect of a well-paid post in the South Seas. I'd love to quote the whole chapter, but the following passage gives the flavour.

"The Comet Company does a vast business in copra," continued Mr Bunter. "It has very many stations all over the Pacific, but the one we are concerned about is on the atoll of Lololo. Mr Sanders is our manager there, and he manages the store and trades with the natives. He is the only white man on the island, and will be glad of your company among so many Kanakas."

Billy Bunter thought that possible. But he did not look as if he would be glad of Mr Sanders' company.

"I have only lately become a director of the Comet, and looked into its affairs," continued Mr Bunter. "Mr Sanders has applied for an assistant in his work on Lololo, especially to give help with keeping the books. On learning this, it occurred to me at once that it would be a great opening for you, William."

"But ..."

"I decided at once that it was only just that Mr Sanders should have the assistant for whom he applied. It is only fair to him," said Mr Bunter, benevolently. "Also it enables me to place my elder son in the service of the Company, at a good salary . . ."

Bunter's fat ears pricked up.

"Oh!" he said, as a change from "but". "I - I suppose the Company pays the salary?"

"Naturally the Company pays the salaries of all its employees, William. The cost of sending out the new clerk is also, naturally, borne by the Company. The Company also provides his outfit."

"Oh!" repeated Bunter. "I - I see! I - I didn't know a director could wangle things like that . . ."

"What did you say, William? Did you use the word 'wangle'? What do you mean by wangle?" thundered Mr Bunter.

"Oh! Nothing! I - I mean . . ."

"I have the interests of the Company at heart, in placing my son, in whom I naturally have confidence, in its service," said Mr Bunter, sternly.

"Oh! Yes! Of - of course . . ."

"You are not too young to begin as a junior clerk," continued Mr Bunter, "and Sanders will make every allowance, and give you every help, as the son of a director of the Company"

"Oh!" said Bunter.

His fat face began to brighten considerably.

He had dreaded an office in the City, with the parental eye on him, and some beast named Sanders looking to it that he did some work. That awful prospect had faded out.

A trip to the South Seas, a good salary beginning when he took up his post, and only so much work extracted from him as could be extracted by a manager anxious to keep in the good graces of his father the director, was a very different proposition.

Bunter began to like the idea.

True, he had to leave Greyfriars. But the chief charm of Greyfriars was that it was a safe refuge from work.

Even Mr Quelch had never been able to get much work out of Bunter. Sanders, it was certain, would get less.

Mr Sanders, on Lololo, had applied for an assistant, and was going to get one - but the amount of assistance he was likely to receive from him was probably of microscopic proportions.

That, I think, is Frank Richards at his best. It is followed by Bunter's insufferable swaggering about his prospects, his patronising invitation to the Famous Five to accompany him (all at the Comet Company's expense), his abject terror when faced with the cannibals and then his absolute insistence on returning to Greyfriars.

All in all, I think it's a grand yarn, well up to the postwar standard.

Perhaps it just proves that we always like what we first become accustomed to in our youth. Eric Fayne loved the *Blue Gem* - now, I've so far found *Gems* of the period rather stilted. I agree with the orthodox view that Frank Richards' best work of all was in the *Magnet* between c1926 and c1934, but I have a soft spot for the postwar books - especially the ones I read and enjoyed at the time.

(Quotations from the Bunter Books are by kind permission of the copyright holder, Una Hamilton Wright.)

HARRY POTTER AND HOGWARTS: GREYFRIARS LIVES AGAIN?

by Colin Ray

I have just finished reading *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, so I am one of the vast number of people who have sent this book and its sequels to the top of the bestseller list. Although outside my usual taste in children's books, I enjoyed and admired it but, unfamiliar as it was, there seemed to me to be echoes of other books - but what? Of course, the inconsequent magic is not unlike that in *The Wizard of Oz*, and the last few chapters of the book are reminiscent of C.S. Lewis, the vaguely spiritual breaking in. There was even a passage detailing the menu at the Christmas feast which was almost literally from *A Christmas Carol*.

And then it dawned on me. I am of a generation which was brought up on the *Magnet* and Greyfriars School: for some six years of my boyhood, life was dominated by the weekly instalment of the adventures of Harry Wharton and the Famous Five. Here, at last, they lived again! Consider, for example, Harry Potter, keen, upright, truthful, brave, surely he is a reincarnation of Harry Wharton? The prowess in Quidditch is obviously new - but is it not interchangeable with football or cricket? Harry Potter's bosom friend, Ron, is surely like Bob Cherry - not quite so brilliant intellectually but a stalwart supporter just the same, and ready for self-sacrifice for the common good. Hermione is, I admit, more difficult to equate with Greyfriars, that being an all boys' school, but her female presence may well represent the need to conform to contemporary mores and practices.

With these identified, others naturally follow. Malfoy and his bullying cronies, Crabbe and Goyle, are the equivalents of Coker of the Fifth and his henchmen, Potter and Greene (not the name of Potter here). Wood, the captain of Quidditch, is clearly Wingate, the captain of the school.

Two prominent Greyfriars characters are not so obviously present. Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder, is not to be found (although Harry Potter's awful uncle is called Vernon), but Bunter, the "fat duffer", can perhaps be seen in Dudley, the greedy cousin, by whose parents Harry Potter has been brought up.

Of the staff, the parallels are a little more difficult to identify. Filch, the evil caretaker, is the equivalent of Gosling, the Greyfriars school porter, with a built-in grudge against the boys. Professor McGonagall, severe but fair, equates with Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, and Professor Quirell with the browbeaten French master at Greyfriars. Albus Dumbledore, the Head of Hogwarts, is perhaps related to Dr. Locke, Headmaster of Greyfriars.

There may well be other parallels which I have missed. The question is whether there is a recurrent need to establish and describe a world of this kind, however remote from real life, with a standard set of characters to play out the dreams of youth in a closed society?

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FORUM

From Arthur F.G. Edwards:

I seek the help of your readers to solve a trivial problem, but one that causes some concern. The question is - Did Charles Hamilton writing as Frank Richards borrow ideas from himself writing as Martin Clifford, or from substitute authors, or even Edwy Searles Brooks? Or was that scenario reversed?

Although I had read some earlier editions I first took the *Magnet* from January 1929, number 1091, but had taken the *Gem* a few weeks earlier. I took both until they ceased to be published. I have everything relative to the hobby published by Howard Baker. Most of the latter remain unread but I did read H.B. *Nelson Lee* Volume No. 2 as soon as I received it. I must confess to having gained a preference for the *Nelson Lee* over the other papers. For some reason I checked the publication dates of the *Nelson Lees* upon which "The Death of Walter Church" was based and found them to be October/November 1927.

I now remember reading a similar story in the *Gem*, a Fourth-former believed to be dead then revived by a friend. Church had been drugged but Handforth never believed he was dead. I cannot remember who the St. Jim's Fourth-former was but believe him to be Cardew, Levison or Lumley-Lumley. His friend was another one of the three. I have searched Adley and Lofts for a clue without success, but did find that from when I first started to read the *Gem* until July 1931, number 1221, (the start of the re-issue of old stories), almost all were written by substitute authors. There are other similarities, the heroes of both Greyfriars and St. Jim's went to the United States and also had adventures on the Thames. Both magazines had circus stories, barring-outs and Xmas adventures. Both Harry Wharton and Tom Merry had doubles.

I can excuse Charles Hamilton using variations of his own themes but did he copy E.S.B., as suggested above, or even substitute authors?

From Tony Glynn:

The story mentioned by John Hammond was certainly "The House of Thrills", which appeared in *Film Fun*. I remember it from the war years but I'm fairly sure it was published somewhat before 1945 or 1946.

Working entirely from memory, I recall that the name of the man living in the gloomy old house was John Pentonville who was an adventurer in earlier life. An injury had curtailed his own career of adventures so he sought out those who could relate a tale of their own personal adventure. The story, with its Gothic trappings of a mysterious man dwelling in a dark and rambling old house, had the feel of a work by Alfred Edgar but, by the war years, he was in Hollywood, working on screenplays under the name of Barre Lyndon, and had severed his connection with popular fiction in this country. Possibly, however, "The House of Thrills" was a reprint of one of Edgar's stories from the *Bullseye* which had flourished in the early thirties.

Editor's Note: J.E. Miller, Ronald Hibbert, Leslie King and Bob Whiter also contacted me to confirm the above information. Mr. Miller gives the dates when the stories were first published in Bullseye as 1931 - 1934 and says that the author (Alfred Edgar), as Barré Lyndon, later wrote the famous play (and film) The Amazing Doctor Clitterhouse.

From the response to John Hammond's query, I gather that "The House of Thrills" must have been a popular and a memorable series.

From Margery Woods:

Brian Doyle's quote (in June C.D.) from Nicholas Tucker's observation that "Gunby Hadath is almost forgotten", evoked instant memories of this accomplished author. His boys' books are well known and indeed hallowed but how many readers remember or know of his short stories for girls? Some great favourites of mine were to be found in the girls' annuals published by Oxford University Press, several of them featuring a couple of chums known as Pamela and Martha Tydd, and a certain character called Alice Winkerley. These were no schoolgirl stereotypes in the recognised setting of goodies, baddies, meanies and spite and jealousy. His characterisation was skilful, with as much care taken over a short story as in a major novel. They were written with a dry humour that was never cynical or patronising. Alice Winkerley had a long nose that sniffed out secrets no matter how much care was taken to conceal them. She also had to be the best, and shared quite a few of Bessie Bunter's traits, apart from food and waistline dimensions, but while Bessie was generous and curious and irritating and loveable Alice was only irritating and nosy.

One story that brought Pamela and Martha into contention with Alice was when the local peppery Colonel offered a prize to any girl who could serve the best dish of her own original recipe. The insufferable Alice had once won a certificate for cookery and was smugly sure of the trophy. The long nose quivered with disdain when Pamela announced she was running a sweepstake for the winner. On judging day Alice proudly bore her offering to the Colonel, a glorious castle-shaped dessert with all the trimmings. Alas, the castle collapsed into its moat and Alice had to retreat, as did all the efforts which followed, until only Pamela remained. Pamela was not renowned for her cooking but she solemnly offered the Colonel a novelty - "A dish that has never been thought of before" - and unveiled an ordinary boiled egg, announcing it as a boiled poached egg. The Colonel glared, tasted and unwillingly admitted that it was boiled to perfection but what was original about it?

Pamela demurely assured him that it was a boiled poached egg - she had poached it off one of his own nests that morning. Pamela won, and collected the sweepstake. Alice sniffed and said she always knew that gambling was wicked.

There was another dryly humoured tale of Pamela's Provers, when she started a magazine with an insurance scheme that provided impots, for a suitable premium of course. And there was the tale of the lucky hair from a piebald pony. Alice really came unstuck when she fell for that one. And the strange business of Starting the Quagga, a mistress who was totally impervious to surprise or shock at anything that happened.

No, Gunby Hadath is certainly not forgotten.

FOR SALE. 4 Bound Volumes of *Magnets*, 1 Bound Volume *Gem*, 28 assorted Howard Bakers. Nearly all the above are almost mint and with dustwrappers. About 80 assorted Sexton Blakes, mostly postwar. SAE for complete list.

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SOLUTION TO GEORGE BEAL'S CROSSWORD

George Beal writes:

I am sorry that I made some mistakes in the clues which I gave. **13 down** should have read "sixty minutes", not "sixty seconds". I expect a sharp-eyed reader will point this out. I also missed out the clue for **4 down**, which should have read "Top boots and top forms". What reads as "4 down" should be "5 down" . . . I'll try to be good in future!

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NEWS OF THE OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUBS

London O.B.B.C.

Sydney House, Loughton was the venue for the July meeting of the London O.B.B.C., where members enjoyed a diverse range of entertainments.

These included Derek Hinrich's awfully good address entitled "An Awfully Good Address", which referred to 221B Baker Street; Dave Marcus' quiz on the works of Charles Hamilton; Roy Parsons reading a Highcliffe B.F.L.; Stephen Farrell with an interesting film quiz and Roger Jenkins' legendary "Eliminator" game.

Vic Pratt

Northern O.B.B.C.

John and Darrell gave a full report of the excellent meeting of Jennings fans at The White Hart Hotel, Lewes, on Saturday, 19th June. Anthony Buckeridge was present with a total of 50 people being with us.

Those who were able to meet on the Friday evening had a splendid informal dinner with Anthony and his wife, Eileen. The meeting proper was a super collection of contributions from a number of people including Michael Crick, the well-known journalist and broadcaster, who informed us that the "real" Jennings, on whom Anthony had based his original stories, was living in New Zealand! Other contributions included the running of the local bus service which served the area of Linbury Court, the hilarious correspondence in the Jennings books, the adventures involved in cricket and other items which made this a full and very entertaining day. We have already planned the next meeting of the Jennings fans, which will be in Lewes on Saturday, 17th June, 2000.

Darrell spoke about "William's American Cousin". The Penrod Schofield stories were on the scene in the U.S.A. before Richmal Crompton's "William". Booth Tarkington, the author, was originally a journalist who then began to write poetry and short stories. Penrod has many similarities to William: he had a dog, long-suffering parents and just one sister. He did not have a gang of friends as such, but he did have local contemporaries who invariably got involved in scrapes - the instigator of which was usually Penrod himself. The famous films *By the Light of the Silvery Moon* and *Moonlight Bay* were based on the Penrod stories.

Only three books and one compilation were produced on the adventures of Penrod and although all books are now out of print, they ran into many editions in the U.S.A. and were certainly produced at least once here in G.B. If you like William - then you are sure to like Penrod.

Johnny Bull Minor

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