STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL.53 No.634 OCTOBER 1999

THE WRONG VICTIM!

A startling incident from this week's gripping school story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars.

MEMORIES OF HERBERT LECKENBY by Roger Jenkins

I first got in touch with Herbert Leckenby during the war, when I was in the R.A.F. and Herbert was on the telephone exchange at Cavalry Barracks, York. He had written an article in Bill Gander's quarterly Story Paper Collector, and this impelled me to get into correspondence with him. His small, neat handwriting and his impressive command of English enhanced the exchange of letters, which grew and grew over the years.

Herbert Leckenby

Herbert's Yorkshire accent, perfectly understandable person to person, was most difficult to make out over the telephone. He seemed an insignificant person to meet but, as Eric Fayne used to say, he had more in his shop than he displayed in his window. This was proved true when illness struck Bill Gander and he had to suspend the SPC. Herbert offered to publish it in England, but Bill would not relinquish the title. Thus it was that Herbert started the *Collectors' Digest* to fill the gap. It was his finest hour. The early copies, which had Maurice Bond as co-editor, were roughly duplicated, but Herbert's ability shone through, and soon a more professional production appeared. The SPC returned, but nothing could now stop the CD.

The Leckenby family always regarded Herbert as a disappointment. His brother owned the Leckenby ice-cream factory but in the event I think it was Herbert who made most of his talents. I doubt whether even he, in his most optimistic moments, would have imagined that his beloved CD would retain its monthly public appearances for over half a century.

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

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR
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W.H. GANDER

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Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

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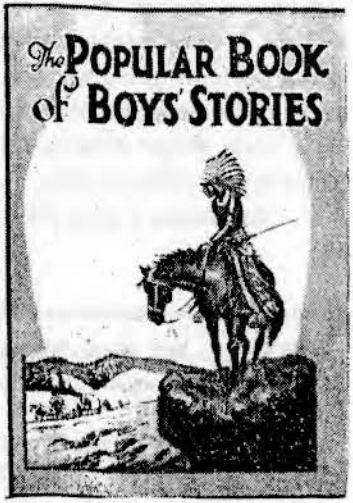
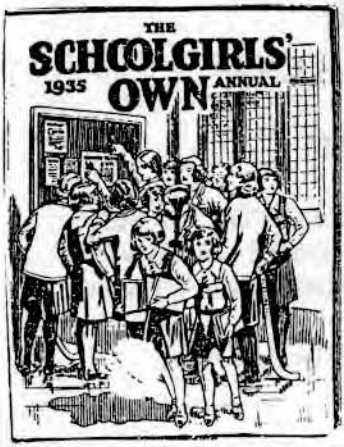
ANNUAL PREVIEW

As mentioned last month, I now provide a foretaste of some of the contents of this year's C.D. Annual which already promises to be as memorable and rewarding as its predecessors.

Hamiltonian items so far received include a selection of Les Rowley's atmospheric and seasonable pastiches, *Greyfriars Prepares for Christmas,* Roger Jenkins' perceptive study *Games and Sport in Hamiltonia,* Peter Mahony's entertaining look at certain boys 'having a flutter', and from Tony Cook a Christmassy story starring Mr Quelch. More Hamiltonian articles are promised which I will trail next month.



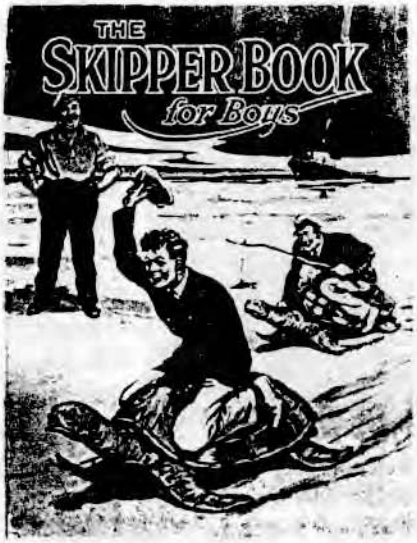
Other areas of the hobby are well represented. Bill Bradford has contributed a very interesting and informative article about the supplements to *Chums* over the years. J.E.M. looks back affectionately in *Golden Ghosts: A Nostalgic Journey* at aspects of the Sexton Blake



canon, and Des O'Leary has provided a lively account of *The Big Five Story Papers of D.C. Thomson.* I am anticipating some Nelson Lee features too.

With *The Celluloid Years* Brian Doyle continues his autobiographical memoirs, giving us further insights into 'working in the movies' and describing his own film debut in *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes.* The saga of that great detective also provides the background of an intriguing feature by Derek Hinrich.

There is of course much, much more, about which I shall be writing next month. I trust that readers who have not yet ordered their Annuals will do so in the near future. You will understand that it is extremely helpful for me to know well in advance how many copies need to be printed. The Annual, with post and packing costs included, costs £12 for UK readers and £13 for those living overseas.



FORTY YEARS ON . . .

Brian Doyle has reminded me that October 21st marks the 40th anniversary of the death of the C.D.'s Founding Editor, Herbert Leckenby. Herbert would have been delighted and thrilled to know that his brainchild is still thriving, and, in this issue, Roger Jenkins has contributed a memorial tribute to him.

As always, I wish you Happy and Satisfying Reading.

MARY CADOGAN

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MOLLIE ALLISON 1917 - 1999
An Obituary Tribute from the Rev. Geoffrey Good

A leading light of the Northern Club for many years (and librarian/treasurer) Mollie Allison died on 28 August. Mollie worked in the Midland Bank from the age of 20 until she retired. She had three older brothers, Gerald, Arthur and Jack, in whose families and pursuits she took great interest. Gerald and Jak also are remembered as valued members of the Northern OBBC.

Mollie had a wide scope of literary interests. She read Angela Brazil, Agatha Christie and - inevitably - *The Magnet, The Gem* and other 'gems' of Hamiltonia.

Mollie travelled widely (surprisingly for those who have known her only over the past few years). She visited her brother, Arthur, in Australia five times, her family in the USA twice and visited Europe, including a visit to Oberammergau to see the Passion Play. Unhappily, she developed Alzheimer's disease after she retired. She spent nine-and-a-half years at the Gratton Home, where she was well cared for.

She was a happy person, loved by all. The Northern Club was represented at her funeral on 8 September. Mollie played her part to the full in her membership of the Northern Club, doing her bit in keeping the light of literary culture shining in the North of England.

Her part in the life of the Clubs should not be forgotten.

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FRANK RICHARDS AND THE BROADSTAIRS CONNECTION

Ian Sayer's article (below) was published in the Kent Messenger *last October and it was, of course, a report of the 1998 Frank Richards Day. We are re-printing it here to whet readers' appetites for this year's Frank Richards events at Broadstairs (see details on page 32).*

A 1930s Magnet with a Thanet setting - Billy Bunter's fat career nearly ended at Margate

Frank Richards reading a copy of The Magnet at his home in Percy Avenue, Kingsgate

The writing phenomenon who created Greyfriars is celebrated for his associations with Thanet

King of the school story

by BRIAN SAYER

CHARLES HAMILTON – better known as Billy Bunter creator Frank Richards – was the subject of an affectionate talk to a group of people in the council chamber of Pierremont Hall, Broadstairs.

The talk, on Tuesday last week, was part of the town's Celebrity Connections week.

To several present at the talk, Frank Richards (the author once said this name had become more real to him than his own) was the greatest celebrity of all those celebrated in the town last week.

Some Hamilton admirers had travelled great distances to be there.

The talk was given by author and writer Mary Cadogan.

Her work includes a book on Hamilton – *Frank Richards, The Chap Behind the Chums* – and she is the editor of *Collector's Digest*, which over many years has featured numerous articles about author and his creations.

Mrs Cadogan said that as a school story writer, Hamilton had never been surpassed. He was a writing phenomenon.

It is estimated that he wrote the equivalent of one thousand full-length novels and his output – reckoned to be 70 million words – gained him a place in the *Guinness Book of Records*.

Yet he always produced quality work. "He was very accomplished," she said. "His work ranged from drama to farce. He used rich language, full of quotes from the classics, and he used high-flown similes."

His stories reflected his passion for learning. When he tapped away on his battered Remington it seemed, he once said, the characters were alive and he was taking down dictation.

Mrs Cadogan said that one word summed up the author's approach over many decades. That was "decency", which somehow seemed out of fashion now. Although nearly 80 years had passed since its creation, Greyfriars, his most famous school, "was never out of print".

Mrs Cadogan said that at the height of its fame, boys wrote to Remove hero Harry Wharton, asking to arrange soccer matches.

Others sent tuck to Billy Bunter. One old lady sent food for the school cat.

Charles Hamilton was a bachelor. His closest surviving relative, his niece Una Hamilton Wright, shared some of her memories of her uncle with the audience and spoke of times she stayed with him as a little girl at his Kingsgate home.

"He was a born entertainer," she said. "He never looked down on his readers. My holidays with him were educative – and often excruciatingly funny."

□ □ □ FRANK Richards was only one of many pen-names used by Charles Hamilton.

As Martin Clifford he enthralled readers of *The Gem* with his tales of St Jim's. As Owen Conquest he captured millions of fans with his stories of Rookwood. He also wrote western yarns.

The author lived at Kingsgate, for some 30 years. He died there, at 86, on Christmas Eve, 1961.

by Derek Hinrich

In the autumn of 1903 Mr Sherlock Holmes, now rising fifty, retired from a practice which had become wearisome to him and settled in a cottage on the South Downs, five miles from Eastbourne and in sight of the sea, to keep bees and, no doubt - as the humour took him - to begin to draft that promised *magnum opus* of his declining years, *The Whole Art of Detection.*

Some months earlier, by one of those strange coincidences which were so often to characterise their careers, that other celebrated detective, Mr Sexton Blake, exhausted by prolonged overwork in rounding up The Brotherhood of Silence and other malefactors, dismissed all his staff except for his new page-boy (a cheery urchin known as Tinker whom he had recently rescued from a life on the streets), closed his office and, under the name of Henry Park, retired to a cottage in the secluded village of Brampton Stoke. There he, too, contemplated life as an apiarist. After some months, however, his idyll was shattered by a sudden charge of theft levelled against him by Sir George Clinton, the squire of Brampton Stoke (I have been unable to find this village in any gazetteer but as its neighbourhood was served by trains from Euston, it is probably somewhere in the West Midlands). Poor Mr Park evaded arrest but Sir George Clinton then sought Sexton Blake's help in tracking him down. Blake, moved by the irony of this novel commission, determined to use it to clear his *alter ego* and find the real culprit. With Tinker's help, he was successful and returned, reinvigorated, to his practice which he was to continue to pursue for another 66 years to the confusion of the criminal classes world-wide.

Lest it be thought that this adventure of Mr Blake's was in part an exercise in plagiarism, let me point out that the account of his temporary retirement was published in *The Union Jack* of 15th October 1904 (in the story "Cunning Against Skill"), nearly two months before Mr Holmes's was announced in *The Strand Magazine* in "The Adventure of the Second Stain".

My Blake collection does not include many of his early adventures, so that my knowledge of his cases in the 'nineties of last century and the early years of this tends to rest substantially on secondary sources ('writings about the writings'), that is to say, some of the initial researches of the former Sexton Blake Circle which I have been fortunate enough to have been lent, on an article in *The Saturday Book* for 1946, and on E S Turner's *Boys Will Be Boys.*

From these I have gathered that when he first came to London Sexton Blake had lodgings in Islington and that he later occupied a room in a small villa in Shepherd's Bush. This was in, I believe, 1895. One point I have not seen addressed (though it may of course

have been discussed in those transactions of the Sexton Blake Circle which I have not seen) is the date when Blake moved to Baker Street. Not even Turner mentions this precisely.

I have, however, just chanced upon this information. The date is given in the Christmas 1904 issue of *The Union Jack* in the story "The Mystery of Hilton Royal". Here it is stated that Blake had taken rooms in Baker Street for himself and Tinker (then aged seventeen) shortly before the autumn of 1903 (when the Hilton Royal case takes place). Presumably Blake had moved thither on completion of the Brampton Stoke imbroglio and the resumption of his practice.

At this time Blake was still in lodgings for he had an anonymous landlady. In the secondary sources I have seen reference to a landlady, a Mrs Gaffney, who preceded Mrs Bardell. This may have been she, but since I believe Mrs Bardell (who came on the scene in 1905) was always Sexton Blake's housekeeper this suggests that Blake shortly moved to other premises in Baker Street - presumably No 252 - as either freeholder or leaseholder (most probably the latter in that part of London) and then engaged Mrs Bardell (I have not seen UJ 97 of 1905, "The House of Mystery", in which Mrs Bardell first appears, to verify this, so the point is perhaps tenuous).

The Hilton Royal case concerns a complicated conspiracy involving fraud, murder, kidnapping, false imprisonment and personation. The action takes place mainly in Buckinghamshire near the house that gives its name to the tale, and in Morocco. Blake investigates vigorously, undertaking a virtually incessant number of journeys to and from London to the Slough-Marlow neighbourhood, mainly by motorbicycle, and seems constantly to be changing into yet another suit of tweeds for this purpose (he gets soaked several times). At one stage an attempt is made to imprison him with the object of starving him to death. It is a very nasty business indeed.

While interesting as an example of 'Early Modern Blake', as distinct from the Ur-Blake of the 'nineties, the case contains one simple but shattering statement: Tinker is Blake's adopted son.

Now if this is accurate and is a matter of deed-poll and all that, Tinker's surname should surely have been Blake from the beginning of the Baker Street *ménage*. Lewis Jackson would have been mistaken in calling him 'Tinker Smith' (surely a mixture of trades?) in SBL3/77, "The Case of the Five Fugitives", nor would there have been any question of his name being Edward Carter in the fourth and fifth series - oh, if only proper files had been kept! A cry from an ex-civil servant's heart!

It also raises a query about the little matter of the nickname Tinker deriving from the middle of the name Austin Kerswell in Martin Thomas's SBL3 (or 4)/466, "Dead Man's Destiny". But then I suppose I should stop trying to reconcile the irreconcilable and fall back on Dorothy L Sayers' observation about the adventures of Sexton Blake forming a loose cycle of stories grouped about a central character in the manner of the Arthurian romances.

Still, it may be safely said that this Arthur entered his Camelot in the early autumn of 1903, perhaps even as the removal pantechnicon bore the Other Great Baker Street Detective to his Avalon on the South Downs.

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J.E.M. WRITES:

In response to Mr Ford's recent query about the 'Human Mole', this character, though with a different name, had already appeared in the *Jester* comic in 1908, almost 20 years before the SBL story. Entitled "The Burrowing Machine", this earlier adventure was written by Colin Colins, a pseudonym used by Houghton Townley who was, of course, also the author of the later SBL story Mr Ford refers to. Though not a Blakian tale, "The Burrowing Machine" contains incidents - rescue of convict from condemned cell, kidnapping of girl, etc. - which were to reappear in the SBL story "The Case of the Human Mole". Three years after the SBL tale, "The Burrowing Machine" turned up again in the pages of *Film Fun*, this time under the revised title of "The Human Mole". So, to prevent all this becoming a bit confusing, here is the sequence of the mole stories:

"The Burrowing Machine" (non-Blake) 1908
"The Case of the Human Mole" (SBL) 1927
"The Human Mole" (non-Blake) 1930

The boring machine had many successors in the old story-papers, perhaps the most famous being the Black Sapper in the pre-war *Rover*. However, it might be safely claimed that Houghton Townley was the true inventor of what I once called a 'subterrine'.

* * * * * * *

(Footnote: I dealt more fully with this subject in *Digests* No. 302 and No. 475 - both, unfortunately, containing one error: I named *Bullseye* instead of *Film Fun* as the source of the 1930 reprint of "The Burrowing Machine". I owe this valuable correction to the late Bill Lofts, whose scholarship in such matters was always impeccable. How we miss him!)

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ECLIPSES

by Dennis Bird

Only the most elderly have any recollection of the total solar eclipse of 1927. For most of us, the one on August 11 this year was a strange and unique experience. Where I live, we were outside the band of totality, but we did have a 95% eclipse. The sky did not go completely black, but we had an eerie darkening and a strange, dead greyness everywhere. A brief silence settled on our world until the sun regained its strength and put the moon to flight.

Eclipses have been predictable from surprisingly long ago. Apparently Christopher Columbus made use of one in 1504. He was in the Caribbean, short of provisions, and the natives were unwilling to help. Knowing the sun would shortly disappear, he threatened them with permanent darkness unless they supplied him.

There are a few similar instances in fiction. Allan Quartermain in Sir Henry Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) knew from his diary that an eclipse was due, and was thus able to save himself and his companions. So did Hergé's character Tintin in the 1946 book *Prisoners of the Sun*.

What about the story papers? I am unaware that the pupils of Greyfriars or Rookwood, Morcove or Cliff House ever saw an eclipse - no doubt readers can correct me if I am wrong. But there was one author who certainly made good use of the phenomenon. This was 'Anne Laughton' - Mrs J Addenbrooke, one of (I think) only four women writers employed by the Amalgamated Press. She wrote two stories about Binnie Bowden for the *Schoolgirls' Weekly*. The first, "Mystery at Meads", appeared in 1937 and was a light-hearted tale about a riding school; it featured some quite comic characters and only a very mild pair of villains.

The other story was much more dramatic. In "Queen of the Secret City" (1938) Binnie and her three friends have to mount a rescue operation to save her stepfather and mother, who have been captured by the inhabitants of an unknown land while exploring in South America. Eventually Binnie finds them, only to be told that they are to be human sacrifices at a ceremony ordered by the imperious young Queen Eleta. Binnie's friend Peter Cairns, a merchant seaman, knows of the imminence of an eclipse; he persuades the Queen to delay the ritual without revealing his purpose. When the day comes, "the black, obscuring orb of the moon was already covering a portion of the sun's radiant globe" as the barbaric rite began.

> 'The High Priest brandished the sacrificial knife in dedication towards the sun . . . Peter glanced upwards. He could see that they were entering the penumbra of the eclipse. Already a subtle change was taking place in the light of the sun - that strange, sinister masking of the light, like a grey pallor of death spreading over the earth . . . By now all were conscious of the gathering darkness, and a terrified, long-drawn moan rocked the whole assembled multitude. Light and colour went, as though smudged out by some gigantic hand. A dim shadow in a world of ghost-like figures, Eleta shrank back in terror. Priests, acolytes and slave-girls grovelled with their foreheads on the stones . . .
>
> 'There fell a momentous hush. Thin and weird in that silence and darkness came the Queen's command: "Free the white prisoners!" . . . A great shout of joy rent the air to thunderous echo. The rim of the sun was appearing: the darkness giving place to murky light.'

That vivid description was something like what we saw here in August. Perhaps 'Anne Laughton' was remembering her own observations in 1927? Her two Binnie tales were later reprinted in the 'yellow books', the *Schoolgirls' Own Library*, as Nos. 697 and 718 in the First Series.

Postscript: Since writing the above I learn from my erudite friend Ian Gillies (question-setter for the BBC's 'Brain of Britain') that Mark Twain also makes use of eclipses in *A Connecticut Yankee*. (D.B.)

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

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"INKY" by Peter Mahony

Part One

The fourth member of the Famous Five was Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur. Commonly known as 'Inky', the Nabob brought to Greyfriars a keen brain, a placid temperament and a weird and wonderful variety of spoken English. Most of the time he was an unobtrusive member of the Co., happy to comply with the wishes of the dominating Wharton and Cherry. Inky did, however, 'have his moments' - of which more anon.

Hurree (probably an Anglicisation of Hari) Singh's background was the reason for his Greyfriars career. In late Victorian/ Edwardian times, many Indian princes were sent to English schools - an effective way of preparing them for dealing with the British Raj. Most of them attended English schools in India; but a sprinkling of them were sent to England to enjoy the benefits of the public school/university system. Charles Hamilton, well aware of this feature of 'upper crust' life, cleverly adapted it to provide an amusing - and sometimes bizarre - element of his Greyfriars saga.

A Chapman illustration from the 1939 Holiday Annual

Inky and Ranji

The most famous Indian Prince of Edwardian times was Kumar Shri Ranjitsinhji, Jam Sahib of Nawanagar, and England Test

cricketer. 'Ranji' had come to public notice in the early 'nineties, when he played cricket for Cambridge University. By the end of the century, he was a household name, with an Australian tour under his belt and more than 20 centuries for his adopted county, Sussex.

Ranji's rise to fame came during Hamilton's formative year as an author. By the time Greyfriars emerged (1908), Ranji's best cricket was behind him and he had succeeded to the Jam Sahibship (March 1907). Hamilton drew freely on Ranji for his creation of 'Inky'.

Bhanipur, like Nawanagar, was a small principality (in Indian terms, that is). Set in the foothills of the Himalayas, it was remote from the main centres of the British Raj. Kathiawar (Ranji's state) was in the extreme north-west of India, not far from present-day Pakistan. Ranji, mainly through his cricket, had become very Anglophile; Inky followed his example at Greyfriars.

Cricketing skill became a potent factor in Hurree Singh's acceptance by his schoolmates. A demon bowler (Ranji was a batsman), Inky won many matches for the Greyfriars Remove. Wharton, Cherry and Vernon-Smith piled up lots of runs, but someone had to bowl the opposition out - and it was usually the Nabob who achieved it. Inky was an 'average bat' (which probably means a number 8 or 9 in the batting order), but his fielding was on a par with his bowling - a safe catcher, a rapid retriever, with a bullet-like throw. A fair argument could be made that Hurree Singh was the best junior cricketer at Greyfriars. Wharton and 'Smithy' may have shone regularly with the willow, but for all-round effectiveness Inky takes some beating.

Ranji, in his Sussex days, acquired a bosom chum in C.B. Fry, the famous scholar/sportsman. Fry was a prolific batsman, an international footballer and a world-class long jumper. He was also a very erudite classical scholar, an author/editor, and a pundit on almost any given topic. Hamilton used the sporting part of Fry's character in developing Bob Cherry. Early on, Cherry and Inky became studymates and the 'esteemed Bob' was a favoured friend of the Nabob.

In later life, Fry became an adviser/secretary to Ranji - they were particularly active at the 'League of Nations' in post-World War I days. Another interesting parallel arose when Hamilton used Colonel Wharton and Harry as Inky's advisers in the *Magnet's* famous India series (1927). Hamilton was always ready to adapt real life to his fictional needs.

Inky's succession to Bhanipur was achieved through a maze of intrigue and skulduggery involving jealous relatives in Bhanipur. Ranji had to endure similar opposition before his own succession to Kathiawar. One of his predecessors was poisoned - reputedly at the instigation of the mother of a rival claimant. Hamilton drew freely on such Indian events when he wrote the Bhanipur series.

Inky the Pukka-Sahib

In much of his behaviour, Inky was 'more English than the English'. His placid good-humour and gentlemanly manner was not very different from that 'glass of fashion and mould of form', the Hon. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Hurree Singh rarely 'made waves'; though, like Gussy, he could be angry when his honour was questioned. He endured, with apparent tolerance, Bunter's jibes of 'nigger' - though it is noticeable that he was never the 'soft touch' for Bunter's borrowing that Cherry and Wharton were.

The frequent falls from grace of Harry Wharton always found Inky ready, at least in the early stages, with good, sound counsel, based on 'playing the game'. He also tried to

dissuade the tactless Johnny Bull from overdoing the "I told you so's"; and Bob Cherry from indulging in too many boisterous rags. Constantly, Inky made deliberate efforts to 'do right' in English eyes, even though his oriental upbringing influenced him otherwise. For example, he always paid his way - showing a quality that Ranji sometimes lacked. Hurree Singh also remembered kindnesses - which he reciprocated whenever opportunity arose. In the "Mystery of the Christmas Candles" (*Magnet* 723) Inky surprised his friends with expensive gifts - a return for their hospitality to him at holiday times over the years.

Flowery politeness was another trait of the Nabob's. His English vocabulary was extensive and peculiar. People were 'esteemed', 'sublime', 'ludicrous', 'uproarious' etc. etc. - all meant as compliments! He was also a great mis-quoter of English proverbs and poetry - "A stitch in time saves ninepence"; Shakespeare's "Dreamful Summer Midnight" etc. etc. But his trademarks were 'fulness' and 'terrific': "the laughfulness was terrific"; "the eatfulness of the esteemed Bunter is terrific", etc.

(The interesting point about Inky's speech is that it is credible if read aloud. The trick is to speak his lines in the lilting sing-song of the Hindu (of whom there are many in England nowadays). When rendered like that there is a flow to Inky's speech that makes it much more acceptable than the printed word read silently. *Magnet* readers should try it: it's quite revealing.)

Hurree Singh - The Clever Thinker

Academic attainment is not the only criterion for success. Many people have brains, but are short on commonsense. Extreme examples in the Hamilton canon are Herbert Skimpole of St. Jim's and Clarence Cuffy of Rookwood. Both of them were clever enough pupils at subjects which interested them; neither was capable of recognising devious behaviour in others. Left to themselves, they blundered from one disaster to another: stupid scholars like Trimble and Tubby Muffin could make rings round them in matters of straightforward commonsense.

Inky was the opposite of these. Though handicapped scholastically by his excruciating English (I wonder if he ever finished an exam paper; he probably wrote two or three times as many words to complete a sentence as the average candidate would) - there were no flies on him when it came to solving mental problems. He was easily the most worldly-wise of the Famous Five: on a number of occasions (as we shall see) he cleared up mysteries and averted disasters which were threatening his chums. The Da Costa series was a case in point: the Eurasian villain was rumbled by Inky very early in his nefarious activities. So, despite his self-effacing manner, Hurree Singh made himself a stalwart member of the Co. He was too slim and lacking in 'beef' to be a doughty fighter; but he made up for it by cool-headed craftiness.

Inky - the Footballer?

This last point raises one of my chief concerns. Could Inky hold his own at soccer? Certainly he had pace and craft; but would he have coped physically with (a) the English winter; and (b) hefty full-backs?

There are many instances in the stories of Hurree Singh suffering agonies in the depths of England's winters. Football in the autumn on hard grounds and in bright sunshine might have seen him play effectively. On cold, wet, muddy days it must have been a different

matter. Backs like Herries of St. Jim's and Raby of Rookwood would have made a meal of him in conditions where pace and craft are nullified. My own feeling is that Ogilvy or Nugent (both of whom were in and out of the Remove XI) had better claims to regular inclusion than Inky.

The Indian Prince

For better or worse, Hurree Singh's Anglicisation was largely due to Mook Mookerjee, the Munshi who taught him English. Apart from the flowery mode of speaking, Mookerjee instilled into Inky his own concepts of 'Britishness'. Most of it was valid, but there were some misconceptions passed on to the young prince. What is learned in the formative years remains: it is very difficult to erase such data later.

Alas, Inky was reared to deal with purely Indian matters in the Indian way. It was quite a shock to the Co. when they found that their normally compliant chum would brook no interference with his rulings in Bhanipur - roles reversed with a vengeance! - especially when they realised that Inky was prepared to have rebels executed out of hand. "East is east, and west is west, and never the twain . . ." etc.

Hamilton's insertion of an easterner into Greyfriars had much happier results than at St. Jim's. Inky integrated beautifully into the Greyfriars ethos: Koumi Rao, with his bloodthirsty streak barely suppressed, was never comfortable at St. Jim's. Ninety years ago, one Indian integrated well; the other did not. The fact that such anomalies still arise today (in our 'enlightened' society) shows that Hamilton knew his stuff - another example of the great man's perspicacity.

(Next month: 'Inky's' progress in the Greyfriars saga.)

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST. ANNUALS. 14.

1956, 1959, 1962, 1965, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1993, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998.

MAGAZINES. 444 copies including Nos. 181 & 182, - The report of F.R.'s death & the Commemorative Issue of F.R.

44, 46-47, 49-59, 62-73, 80, 85-89, 91-95, 97, 105, 110, 127, 133-144, 146, 153, 157-161, 163-167, 181-188, 190-191, 196-197, 199, 201, 203, 205-207, 209-210, 214-216, 218-221, 225-241, 243, 248-257, 259-267, 270, 272, 278-290, 292, 295-300, 303, 305-322, 324, 329-331, 333-336, 338-358, 360-399, 401-416, 418-429, 445-449, 457-507, 509-539, 541-545, 548-549, 554, 561-628.

INDEXES. Contents List Nos. 1 to 579 (Naveed Haque).

Let's Be Controversial Column Listings (Naveed Haque).

ALSO BBC CHILDREN'S ANNUAL 1955, BBC CHILDREN'S HOUR ANNUAL ?

BBC CHILDREN'S HOUR ANNUAL 1954. 3 copies each containing original Jennings stories, Jennings' Amazing Record, idea later used in *Just Like Jennings* (1961). When Dr. Spottiswode becomes Dr. Tiddyman, Jennings Switches On, idea later used in *Our Friend Jennings* (1960). When Aunt Angela becomes Mrs. Arrowsmith & Jennings At School, idea later used in *Jennings As Usual.*

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YESTERDAY'S HEROES

For the 10th article in his popular series, BRIAN DOYLE spotlights a famous and distinguished Oriental detective who once said of himself: "Not very good detective - just lucky old Chinaman". But he was both. Not that Charlie Chan would ever praise himself; he was far too modest. "Man who blows own trumpet often plays wrong notes and deafens people", he might say in one of those trade-mark 'aphorisms' or philosophical proverbs that his public liked so much - and doubtless learned from too. Earl Derr Biggers created Chan and the likeable Chinese-Hawaiian-American Detective-Inspector from Honolulu appeared in nearly 50 films, as well as in books, magazines, theatre, radio, TV, comics, comic-strips and animated cartoons. The wise and witty sleuth, who always got his man (or woman!), was truly 'a Chan for all seasons' . . .

"Writing about humble self brings to small mind honourable Mr. Shakespeare's excellent play *Much Ado About Nothing*. I am modest man, but then I humbly claim to have much to be modest about . . ."

So might Charlie Chan, that great Chinese-Hawaiian-American detective of the Honolulu Police Department, have protested in one of his famous aphorisms if he heard that someone was writing an article about him. What would he have said about American author Earl Derr Biggers, who created him and wrote six books about him, doesn't bear thinking about! Not to mention nearly fifty films!

"Once toothpaste is out of tube, it is difficult to get back", perhaps. Or maybe "Once story is told, cat out of bag and impossible to catch".

But then he might also take heed of another of his little sayings: "Man who hides light under bushel can sometimes stumble in dark".

Detective-Inspector Charlie Chan (he was Detective-Sergeant Chan in the original novel, but received promotion after brilliantly solving an important case) was famous for his aphorisms (or wise sayings, or epigrams or, as they were known in Hollywood studios in later years, 'Chanograms'). They were, I suppose, the modern equivalent of all those 'Confucius, he say . . .' quips that most of us learned in our youth. Typically, upon being told of his promotion from Sergeant to Inspector, he reacted with the words: "I am rewarded far beyond my humble merits".

Most people came to know Charlie Chan from all those 'B-picture' movies in which he featured throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Apart from three early 'silents', there were 44 films in the popular series with three different actors playing Chan; as one died, another would step into his shoes and achieve almost overnight stardom as the wily old sleuth. As Chan might have remarked (carefully removing his hat): "Death, as well as Life, presents opportunities". More about those popular movies later.

First a word or two, or even three, about who created Charlie Chan and how . . .

Chan was created by the unusually-named Earl Derr Biggers. From my own researches into the derivation of the name, I understand that it could well mean 'a noble and strong bee-keeper who lives in a place where deer roam'. I make no comments - but Chan would no doubt have remarked: "Name is unimportant. It is person behind name that counts".

On that subject, I once saw a Charlie Chan book listed in a second-hand book dealer's catalogue and credited to one 'Earl Derr **Biggles**'! Ironically, of course, the middle name of W.E. Johns, Biggles-creator, **was** Earl and Biggers wrote a Chan novel called *The Black Camel* and Biggles piloted a Sopwith Camel aeroplane in the early stories and Johns wrote a Biggles book called *The Camels Are Coming*, but he didn't write *Charlie Chan Flies East* or *Charlie Chan in the Orient* or even . . . but you get the picture! But I digress . . .

Warner Oland as Charlie Chan

Biggers was born in Warren, Ohio, in 1884, graduated from Harvard in 1907 and worked as a journalist in Boston. His first novel, *Seven Keys to Baldpate* in 1913 was dramatised by the famous George M. Cohan (remember James Cagney in his Oscar-winning performance as Cohan in the film *Yankee-Doodle-Dandy*?), starred in the drama on Broadway and had a huge success with it. It ran for years, in New York and on tour, and both silent and sound films were made of it too. So Biggers' name was originally made as a novelist who made a big hit in the theatre!

Charlie Chan made his bow in Biggers' novel *The House Without a Key*, published first as a serial in the American magazine *The Saturday Evening Post* (as were all Biggers' subsequent Chan novels) and then in book-form in 1925. Chan was not 'drawn from life' (as some people have suggested) but inspired by Chang Apana, a Chinese-Hawaiian detective in Honolulu Biggers happened to read about in a local newspaper while visiting Honolulu on holiday.

Bigger, who evidently was a short, plump and likeable man, with twinkling eyes and a friendly manner, once said: "Sinister and villainous Chinese are old stuff. But an amiable Chinese on the side of law and order had never been used in fiction. If I understand Charlie Chan correctly, he has an idea that if you understand a man's character, you can nearly predict what he is apt to do in any set of circumstances." I like that "if I understand Chan correctly" quote; Biggers created the man so who could understand him better . . . ?!

Charlie Chan himself was born in China in 1885 and moved to Honolulu when he was 15. He became an American citizen a few years later and was extremely proud of this.

The Chan of the books was slightly different from the Chan of the movies. He was a far more complex and three-dimensional human being, with the usual doubts and misgivings that we all have from time to time. He was highly intelligent and studied Chinese philosophy in his spare moments (when he had any!). Apart from his police work, he was a

loving and committed family man, with a loving wife and (eventually) 13 (or was it 14? It was never made really clear . . .) children. "Unlucky for some, but very lucky for me", he remarked cheerfully.

Unlike the films' Chan, the literary character has no moustache and is completely clean-shaven. He is unfailingly polite and courteous to everyone (and that's not tautology - Chan **was** doubly polite to all!) - and even had a habit of bowing politely as he handcuffed a prisoner, as he murmured "If you will kindly do me the honour of accompanying humble self to the police station, if no trouble, please . . ."

Also in the original books, Chan has an assistant, Kashimo, who is Japanese (a race not generally favoured by Chan). Kashimo is small, anxious to please but rather inefficient. He frequently apologises - when Chan snaps "Be sorry out of my sight - I feel my self-control under big strain . . ." But Chan never loses his temper or becomes angry or ruffled; he never shouts or raises his voice. Cool, calm and quietly efficient - that's Charlie Chan. He has perfect manners and always doffs his hat - usually a white panama or a black homberg-style with high crown and circular brim - when meeting or leaving a lady. He is sensitive, wise, gentle, humorous and observant - few things ever escape his keen Oriental eyes.

Biggers introduces Chan in his first book about him, *The House Without a Key*, thus:

> He was very fat indeed, yet he walked with the light, dainty step of a woman. His cheeks were as chubby as a baby's, his skin ivory-tinted, his black hair close-cropped, his amber eyes slanting. As he passed Miss Minerva, he bowed with a courtesy encountered all too rarely in a workaday world.
>
> "Charlie Chan," Amos explained. "I'm glad they've brought him. He's the best detective in the Force."
>
> "But - he's a - Chinaman!"
>
> "Of course."

Of course, indeed . . .

A few pages on and he's described as 'a huge, grinning Chinaman'. He is also said to be 'a man pursuing the truth' and he comments (in what is probably his first aphorism in the saga: "Chinese most sensitive people in the world - sensitive, like film in camera".

Charlie Chan began to 'catch on' with readers of the *Saturday Evening Post*, who then went out and bought the first book, and Biggers wrote more Chan novels, all originally serialised to the magazine before book publication. There were *The Chinese Parrot* (1926), *Behind That Curtain* (1928), *The Black Camel* (1929), *Charlie Chan Carries On* (1930) and *The Keeper of the Keys* (1932). There was also a fat Omnibus of over 1300 pages, *The Celebrated Cases of Charlie Chan* (1933), which contained the first five books. Biggers sadly died in 1933 at the early age of 48. And these six novels were the only ones that he wrote about Chan.

Many historians of the detective story maintain that Biggers wrote no short stories about his famous character. But the great Ellery Queen discovered two and published them in his *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*; they were *The Ebony Stick* and *The Apron of Genius*.

The Charlie Chan books have been reissued many times, both in hardcover and paperback editions, and the latter were popular in Britain for many years (though they are not in print at present). American author Dennis Lynds also wrote a new story *Charlie*

Chan Returns (based on the screenplay of a TV pilot movie) which appeared as a Bantam paperback original in 1974. There was also an American illustrated paperback collection of Chan's aphorisms!

In 1973, Nicaragua issued 12 postage stamps depicting the most popular detectives in fiction. Charlie Chan was on the 60 cent stamp - probably the only case where Chan finally found himself licked . . . All the characters shown were chosen as the result of a poll run by America's popular *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine* and other detectives illustrated on the stamps, as a matter of interest, included Poirot, Wimsey, Maigret, Father Brown, Sherlock Holmes, Perry Mason and (of course) Ellery Queen.

I can trace no appearance of Chan ever appearing in any boys' paper or magazine (or adult ones, for that matter) in Britain, which is rather curious. But, in 1920, Sexton Blake worked closely with, not a Chinese detective, but a Japanese one, Kyoto Saburo, created by author Trevor C Wignall (*The Case of the Japanese Detective*, SBL No. 119 (1st series), and again in *The House With the Red Blinds* (SBL No. 143 (1st series), also in that same year, when Saburo was a kind of secret agent for the Japanese Government.

But, of course, it was through the medium of the cinema that the vast majority of people came to know and enjoy the many adventures of Charlie Chan and, although he was Chinese, he was never ever played by a Chinese actor in cinema, TV, theatre or radio!

Japanese actor George Kuwa was the first to portray Charlie Chan in the 1926 silent film serial *The House Without a Key* (based on Biggers' novel). And another Japanese actor, Kamiyama Sojin, played Chan in the silent film *The Chinese Parrot* in 1928 (again based on Biggers' novel). Both portrayals would doubtless have displeased Chan himself since, as was mentioned in two or three of the original stories, he did not like or trust the Japanese! Strangely, it was a British actor, one E.L. Park, who was the third interpreter of Chan in *Behind That Curtain* in 1929 (again based on the novel), but the character made only a minor appearance at the end of that particular silent movie.

Then, in 1931, came the first of the 44 films in what may be termed the 'main' movie series - *Charlie Chan Carries On*. There were more films about Charlie Chan, by the way, than about any other screen 'hero', apart, of course, from Sherlock Holmes, who has notched up well over 200 film appearances. Chan's grand total is 48, plus the TV series (of which more later).

Warner Oland was the original Chan in the series, making his bow in that first one in 1931. Most people consider Oland to be the best of the screen Chans and they are right. He was born in Sweden in 1880 and had played Oriental villains in many silent films, including the popular Pearl White serials. He appeared in over 60 films, apart from the Chan series, and made his professional stage debut in the role of Jesus Christ in a touring production. (As Chan might well have remarked: "Those who start career at top sometimes end up playing humble Oriental policeman on cinema screen, so be careful and do not miss footing on career ladder.") He made his first major screen impact in the famous *The Jazz Singer* in 1927, in the part of Al Jolson's Cantor father. Then he became famous as Sax Rohmer's classic Oriental evil genius, Dr Fu Manchu, in a trio of silent films: *The Mysterious Dr Fu Manchu* (1929), *The Return of Dr Fu Manchu* (1930) and *Daughter of the Dragon* (1931). "Though from Sweden, I guess I must just have had that Oriental look - and it stood me in good stead", he once commented. That was proved in 1931 alone,

when he played two of the most famous Oriental fictional characters on the screen - Fu Manchu and Charlie Chan.

Some people consider that one of the very best Chan movies was *Charlie Chan at the Opera* (1936) with Oland as the detective. This had several notable points about it, two of them being that it featured Boris Karloff as a mad singing baritone who had escaped from an asylum (though his 'singing' was dubbed, of course!) and also that the celebrated musician, actor, writer and wit, Oscar Levant, composed a special 'pocket' opera called *Carnival* for the picture.

Warner Oland played Charlie Chan in 16 films and was, by all accounts, a very nice man, but towards the end of his successful run he suffered from 'ill health' and lack of memory (in fact, he liked a drink or two or three and tended to vanish from the studios for days on end - it would have taken a real-life Charlie Chan to find him sometimes, apparently!). For the last two or three pictures, he had to have his lines written up on a large blackboard held at the side of the set.

"Ah, chemicals leave no doubt Lady Warford's drink poisoned," Warner Oland seems to say as he holds a test tube in *Charlie Chan's Secret* (1935). Herbert Mundin's eyes betray his surprise.

People used to say admiringly what marvellous timing he had - how he would stand stock still in the middle of a scene and pause, glancing from left to right to ensure maximum effect, before coming out with one of his wonderful aphorisms. In cold fact, he was reading his lines from the useful blackboard and glancing from side to side to ascertain where the board actually was! As Oland might have said, wearing his Charlie Chan hat: "Man who forgets makes not only bad actor, but also poor detective - memory is good prompt in life".

But it should be emphasised that these unfortunate things occurred only towards the end. For the bulk of Oland's long run as Chan, his performances were impressive and highly entertaining.

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Oland apparently became to 'taken over' by the role of Charlie Chan that he even began to talk during everyday conversations in Chan-like aphorisms (these were usually known in the movie studios, by the way, as 'Chanograms'). He did so, too, when he gave a rare press interview. During one of these, quoted in a movie magazine in the 1930s, he said: "Don't talk too much. Words like sunbeams. The more they are condensed, the more they burn."

Another of Oland's 'Chanograms', spoken by him in the role, was: "Life like piece of delicate jade - difficult to create, easy to destroy". Oland died of pneumonia on a visit to his native Sweden in 1938, at the age of only 57. From 1931-37 he had starred in 16 Chan movies, his last one being *Charlie Chan in Monte Carlo*. He had just signed a contract to make three more Chans. And he never met Earl Derr Biggers who, for some inscrutable reason, apparently never visited the movie set.

Biggers had never become involved in the writing of the film scripts and was content to leave them to other hands. After his death, the pictures continued as before, written by various hands, including those of the well-known crime-writer, Philip MacDonald. Gerard Fairlie, the 'original' of H.C. McNeill's 'Bulldog Drummond' and the man who took over the writing of the latter's adventures after McNeil's death, also wrote a Chan screenplay - *Charlie Chan in Shanghai* in 1935.

To Be Concluded

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OUR BOOKSHELVES

REVIEWS BY

MARY CADOGAN

(Picture by Terry Wakefield)

PORTRAIT OF RYE by Malcolm Saville (available from the publisher Mark O'Hanlon, 10 Bilford Road, Worcester, WR3 8QA at £8.99)

It is extremely satisfying to see this book reprinted. Malcolm Saville's stories, particularly those in his Lone Pine series, have influenced the childhoods (and adult lives) of so many people, and in all of the books his vivid sense of location plays a great part. His special affection for Shropshire and for the ancient town of Rye in Sussex were atmospherically featured in many of his stories. Last year Mark O'Hanlon completed and published *The Silent Hills of Shropshire* (a book begun but never finished by Malcolm). Mark has now reprinted and, where relevant, updated Malcolm's 1976 *Portrait of Rye*. This is a guide *par excellence* but also something more. Malcolm described it as "the consummation of a love affair", and the text, though rich in facts and history, is touched throughout with the author's deep and glowing feeling for Rye and many places nearby, including Romney, Winchelsea and Dungeness. This book is a 'must' for all enthusiasts of Malcolm Saville's stories, and as a guide-book it should also have a wide appeal.

The Chilterns and Thames Valley Film & Television Location Trail
(written and published by Evan M.G. Jones, White Hill Centre, White Hill, Chesham, Bucks HP5 1AG at £5.99 plus £1.00 p&p)

Interesting places again - this time locations 'just 50 minutes from central London' which have been used for, or are associated with, popular films and TV series. We are taken by the author on some fascinating trails relating, for example, to *Dad's Army, Inspector Morse, Doctor Who, The Avengers, Four Weddings and a Funeral* and a host of other favourites. Evan Jones points out that he is exploring with us an area of great natural beauty and that some of the picturesque-looking village backdrops to 1960s TV series seem hardly to have changed over the decades and are indeed 'vintage TV shrines'. The trails described involve both driving and walking, and the text is wonderfully clear and detailed.

To tickle our taste-buds it also includes some literary references (from Milton and Austen to Betjeman, Dahl and Blyton) - and, of course, loads of nostalgia. The author must be congratulated on his energy and expertise in compiling this attractive volume.

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RAY HOPKINS WRITES:

Margery Woods' August CD 'Forum' item is the first time that I have come across the fact that the great boys' school story author Gunby Hadath also wrote stories for girls and that they appeared in OUP girls' annuals under his own name.

In the British Library Catalogues his girls' stories are listed under the name Florence Gunby Hadath, which the BL does not show as a pseudonym for the author's real name: perhaps they don't know - they don't always. The four titles they list under this name are:

Pamela. A story for Girls (and their Aunts and Uncles) (1938)
More Pamela (1939)
Pamela, George Medal (1941)
Pamela Calling (1948)

When I first encountered this name, I thought Florence may have been his daughter, recalling the father/daughter authors John and Elsie Jeanette Oxenham. Then I wondered if she was his wife. Brian Doyle's invaluable 1964 *Who's Who* states that Mrs Hadath typed all her husband's stories before they were sent to the publishers. This reminded me that Mrs Edwy Searles Brooks performed the same chore for her husband which, no doubt, led to her own appearance in print in one of the long-completes which appeared in every issue of *The Schoolgirls' Weekly* in the 1920s. Her story appeared under the byline of Frances Brooks.

Referring to Derek Ford's article in the 'Blakiana' section of the August CD, I presume the title of the story, which does not appear in his article, is SBL 91, "The Case of the Human Mole". Derek wants to know who wrote this fanciful story which sounds as though it would have been more at home in one of the Thomson papers. The 1933 *Sexton Blake Index* shows this story to have been written by Houghton Townley, about whom Lofts/Adley state that he was on the AP staff for many years and wrote much for the comic papers, all anonymously. Brian's entry on the same author states that he wrote one SBL in 1927, presumably the one mentioned by Derek.

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Round The Year With Cliff House

By Margery Woods

. . . Nights in Lonesome October . . .

Not at Cliff House - whatever Edgar Allan Poe might have thought about the tenth month of the year!

Holidays were past joys, term was in full swing with activities from art to ice hockey to treasure hunting to laying ghosts. Clara was chivvying the slackers at winter sports while the thoughts of the playgirls turned to frills and dancing shoes.

The trials and tribulations of Rosa Rodworth kept the pages of *The Schoolgirl* turning during October 1934, much of it entirely owing to her own vanity and self-will (see CD Feb 1998). October 1936 wasn't much better for this headstrong girl when she became the victim of con artists, a new girl at Cliff House called Rene Ballard and her accomplice, a Mrs Dickson, supposedly the widow of a Count, who flatters and charms a Rosa sadly gullible through vanity into advancing money for some investment scheme in London. Unfortunately Rosa's wealthy father is suffering financial problems at this time and is unable to keep his spoilt daughter's bank account topped up. The month was very fraught for Rosa as her cheques started bouncing and the creditors started arriving at the doors of Cliff House.

October in 1939 brought art time again at Cliff House with several young would-be artists preparing their entries for an amateur art exhibition to be held in Courtfield and judged by a famous artist.

Babs, recognised as the junior school's most talented artist, has been chosen as the Cliff House entrant in the section for schools. A young model called Mollie, who is also an aspiring artist, has been engaged to sit for Babs.

One girl in the Fourth is not suited by this arrangement. She has her own pretensions to fame as the winner, entirely for her own glorification and not, as in the case of Babs, for the honour of the school. No guesses needed from readers as to the identity of this young lady. Diana Royston-Clarke decided if she couldn't be the chosen representative for the school why shouldn't she be the model for Babs' picture? Then she had a better idea; why not persuade the young model who was a talented artist but poor, which was why she had to get work wherever she could as a model, to paint Diana. After all, Diana was undeniably a very beautiful subject, wasn't she?

Mollie agreed, but proved not quite as malleable as Diana imagined. She would paint Diana the way she saw her, and the sittings soon grew stormy, until Diana's ill-temper began to show in the portrait. (Shades of Dorian Grey.) It is a very good painting but Diana fails to see herself as others see her and in a flare of rage she slashes the portrait.

While Babs and the chums are trying to console Mollie with tea in Study 4 Mollie suddenly makes a quick pencil sketch of Babs, and from this impromptu moment comes the decision to make Babs the subject of a new portrait by Mollie which will be entered in the art exhibition's open section.

Meanwhile, Diana, with one of her mercurial changes of mood, is beginning to feel ashamed of herself. About to make apologetic approaches to Mollie she hears of the latest development and all her anger flares again. Fired by the need for revenge she burns Mollie's paints and then goes to the art shop in Courtfield and buys up their entire stock of the kind of paints Mollie is using. The owner of the shop protests because another artist lives nearby and is expected in to replenish his colours, but Diana is unrepentant.

The title of this story is "Diana the Fairy Godmother" and its introductory blurb describes it as a charming story. This is true, it is a charming story, even as it makes no secret of Diana's distinct tendency to play a feminine version of Jekyll and Hyde. Her behaviour towards Mollie is vindictive and disgraceful and yet the reader can't help being attracted to the character. John Wheway balances the characterisation of Diana so skilfully that even as she shocks and appals a reluctant feeling of understanding takes over and readers desperately want Diana to realise how unnecessary is all this villainy because she could conquer the world with her charm and generosity if she chose to learn to control her temper.

By this point of the story the readers must have been wondering where on earth the fairy godmother part came in. The buying of the paints proves to be the cue. Diana marches triumphantly out of the shop carrying the parcel of colours and sees a coin spinning along the road towards a drain and an elderly, shabbily dressed man pursuing it. Diana catches the coin and presents it to its owner. He is very grateful and she discovers that he is the artist who is coming for his fresh supply of paints. Diana is now full of the milk of human kindness and presents him with her parcel of paints. He rather shyly invites her to visit his studio and off she goes with him to the traditional scruffy abode of traditional storybook artists where she is so sorry for the obviously poverty-stricken old man that she decides to don her fairy godmother guise. Off she goes to buy food and then clean up the place and make the artist a nice meal.

He seems a bit mystified but is taken by her and shows her his paintings, which are superb, and Diana has the bright idea of commissioning him to paint her portrait. Her father will pay whatever fee is required and this will help the artist. He agrees and she asks if he can do the picture quickly, although she does not tell him she intends to enter it in the exhibition if she likes it.

Meanwhile, Babs and the chums, having discovered Diana's vindictive destruction of Mollie's paints, have gone to the art shop, discovered Diana's further villainy there, and gone to Eastbourne to stock up afresh.

Mr Thomas's portrait of Diana is gorgeous. Diana bears it away and enters it in the exhibition, blissfully unaware of the shock that awaits her on the great day of the awards. The famous artist, Mr Quimble, who is to judge it, is of course her shabby little artist friend,

now immaculate in a beautiful suit and looking most distinguished. He tells her the painting must be withdrawn from the competition as he is a professional artist and had no idea she intended entering it.

Shattered, Diana sees the school section prize won by Babs, and the junior open won by Mollie, who is also promised a course of training at Mr Quimble's own art school. Then he announces that he has a special gift to make and calls Diana up to the platform. There he tells the assembly that he hates too much publicity and fuss and escapes as often as he can to the old cottage. He apologises to Diana for the deception and then says he wants to tell the audience a story, a story of a very beautiful fairy godmother and a shocking old tramp, how a golden-haired girl took pity on a poor artist and who exhibited his picture, inspired by the idea that she could bring him fame and fortune. He then presents her with the portrait and hopes she will accept it as a memento of one of the happiest interludes of his life.

So like all good fairy stories Diana's has a happy ending. She is the heroine of the hour, makes her peace with Mollie and the chums and they are all invited by Mr Quimble to be his guests at a dinner that evening.

October brought more strange happenings in 1938 with a personality change for Bessie Bunter.

The chums were baffled, the school was baffled; even Miss Bullivant actually thawed with appreciation when Bessie, without a single stutter, gave the answer to a couple of mental maths posers. They were not to know, however, that Bessie, returning from home after a visit to help care for her sick mother, had found a new friend called Bertha whose mother was friendly with Mrs Bunter.

Bertha worked as a companion-help to a Mrs Venner at the Towers, near Cliff House, "where the food is wonderful, every meal like a Lord Mayor's banquet!" Bertha of course is remarkably like Bessie in both features and girth, and ready to egg Bessie into the lark of the century. By the time the train reaches Courtfield Bertha has become Bessie in Cliff House uniform and glasses and Bessie

has become the neatly suited companion-help at the Towers.

This switched identity theme was explored by Frank Richards in *The Magnet* with Bunter and his cousin Wally, and developed at greater length than in this single girls' story, but the possibilities are well exploited in the accounts of Bessie's blundering efforts to follow Bertha's instructions on life at the Towers.

Of course Bertha has an ulterior motive - there is always an ulterior motive! - behind her lark of the century, which skates along on very thin ice, at least for poor Bessie, to its disastrous denouement. Bessie's Aunt Annie arrives at Cliff House to reward Bessie for looking after the ailing Mrs Bunter. But Bertha had got wind of this while in London and Bertha being a rather crafty girl whose striking resemblance to Bessie stopped short of Bessie's dimness, decided that she might as well have a piece of the financial action. Fortunately by then the chums have got it all sussed out and Bertha is given her marching orders. Although Aunt Annie withdraws her reward because Bessie has been so foolish that she doesn't deserve it, Bessie doesn't care. All she wants is to be back with the chums and blundering along in her normal, loveable way.

No space left for the ghostly derelict, the treasure aboard it and the chums' derring-do in another great October series, nor for the riddle to solve on Belwin Island and the battle of wits with arch villain Dimitry.

But be sure, stormy weather lies ahead for the chums come November!

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BOOK REVIEW

by Brian Doyle

***Just Jimmy - Again* by Richmal Crompton.** (Macmillan Children's Books, 1999. £9.99.)

Jimmy's back! Readers may remember that in last October's *SPCD* I reviewed Richmal Crompton's *Just Jimmy*, a reprint of her 1949 book of stories about Jimmy Manning, aged seven and three-quarters, sturdy, stocky, a trifle solemn, and with a slight stammer, and always getting into scrapes of one kind or another, but with the best motives. He is rather like William Brown's young brother - and none the worse for that (well, not all **that** worse!) His best friend is Bobby, his elder brother (perhaps the William equivalent) is Roger aged 11, and his dog is Sandy. There's even a Violet Elizabeth equivalent, a little girl of five and three-quarters named Araminta, who speaks in adenoidal tones and always wants Jimmy to play with her - usually to little effect.

JIMMY SET OFF AT A RUN WITH THE LARGE, ANGRY MAN IN PURSUIT.

Richmal Crompton's *Jimmy* tales originally appeared in the London evening paper *The Star* in 1947 and were collected in two volumes (for full details see my Review in the October, 1998 issue). Now *Jimmy Again* (1951) appears in brand-new hard-cover format (and with the original Thomas Henry illustrations) as *Just Jimmy*

- *Again*, with 29 more stories and published by Macmillan's (modern publishers of all the William books).

The stories continue to be entertaining and amusing and very reminiscent of the William tales. If you're feeling low, then Jimmy - like William - is guaranteed to cheer you up and make you smile. More William book equivalents make their appearance here, as several did in the first Jimmy book. Pretty little Sally, for example, who, like the adorable Joan Clive (William's neighbour) lives in the house next door to Jimmy. 'Sally had blue eyes, golden curls and an entrancing smile, but from the height of her nine years she looked down with contempt on Jimmy's immaturity. Jimmy had admired her all his life and often felt that if she could see him as he really was she would treat him differently.' (I like that 'all his life' bit!) Sally wasn't quite like Joan then, for that sweet young lady really **did** like and admire William.

There is a Hubert Lane equivalent too, in the person of Georgie Tallow ('neat, perfect manners, plump, angel-faced') who is as nasty and pompous a piece of work as Hubert.

> The adenoidal Araminta hasn't changed and remains as marvellously funny as ever. "Hello, Jibby Bannig, will you cub ad play with be?" "No!" said Jimmy emphatically. "I'b clever," she says, complacently. "I'b ad page six id by Reader and I cad draw liddle houses with chibdeys and smoke cubbig out."

Araminta always makes me chuggle.

Jimmy (like William) often lives in a wonderful world of his own imagination.

> 'Jimmy swaggered out of the gate into the road. He had been to the circus the day before, and he was not a small boy in a rather grubby shirt and well-worn flannel shorts: he was a ringmaster in a magnificent uniform, cracking a whip and issuing orders to hordes of wild animals, who obeyed his lightest movement. Elephants sat down on tubs at the flicker of his eyebrows. Lions jumped through hoops at the snap of his fingers. Dogs walked on tightropes at his nod. Seals threw up balls and caught them again . . . bears stood to attention . . . a monkey drove a little goat-cart round and round the ring . . . And Jimmy, the circus-master, stood in the middle - fearless, god-like, omnipotent, lord of creation.'

(No letters, please, from the 'no animals in circuses' brigade - remember this was written in 1947-48, over 50 years ago, when circuses were like that, for better or for worse, and this is no place to argue the point . . . Thank you!)

In this second delectable collection of stories, Jimmy gets mixed up with hypnotism, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, witches, journalism, a haunted house fireworks, baby-minding, Christmas carols and chickens. Jimmy may be smaller and younger than William, but the laughs are just as big. He also possesses that inescapable and irrefutable logic that bright small boys so often have - it's really not his fault if things he undertakes for the best of reasons don't really work out or go sadly wrong.

As Mr Dickens once memorably said in the first line of one of his novels: 'It was the best of times; it was the worst of times . . .". That often sums up the end results of Jimmy's little adventures.

"I sort of g-get ideas . . ." as he sometimes remarks nonchalantly.

If you like William, you'll like Jimmy. And his friends.

Welcome back again, Jimmy!

Editor's Note: Last year's publication Just Jimmy *has now been reissued in paperback at £3.99. CD readers may also want to look out for Macmillan's current reprints of the* William *books, at £3.99 each, which are being reissued in paperback with the lovely, glowing and iconoclastic Thomas Henry full-colour covers.*

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BOOK REVIEW: A further look by MARK TAHA at a book reviewed originally in the C.D. last year.

Death at the Arsenal - Peter Mahony (available from the author, 12 Riefield Road,London SE9 2QA).

We all know Peter Mahony as an expert Hamiltonian who knows his stuff and writes well about it. I can tell readers that he can write his own fiction, too!

This is a period piece in more ways than one - not only is it set in 1940 but it's written in the style of the time. I can honestly imagine its being published at the time - perhaps. slightly adapted, as a Sexton Blake story. It starts with an air raid, combined with a fifth columnist signalling to the enemy bombers. He gets his just deserts from a Home Guard, then one of the villains seizes on the blitz as the right time to commit murder. However, a survivor notices something - and the ensuing investigation opens a large can of worms. Without wishing to give away the plot, I'll just say that it's exciting, well-written, and exposes enemies within in unsuspected places. The characters are well-written and it's often wise to judge by first impressions! The good guys are just that, the bad guys a motley crew of villains.

The hero's a police sergeant, Percy Boscombe - tough, rugged and a decent chap who put this particular Hamiltonian in mind of a grown-up George Wingate or Bob Cherry. The heroine's a lovely chorus girl called Mary Norton, a woman who knew too much. I can imagine this book as a wartime film - two supporting roles, those of an outspoken and likeable ATS Corporal and a dedicated Home Guard, made me imagine Vida Hope and Robert Newton respectively. To get back to basics - Peter Mahony has written a story that never bored this reader and won't bore anyone else who likes a good yarn. So if you do - read it and look forward to his next one!

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NEWS OF THE OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUBS

Northern OBBC

We were all saddened to hear that long-standing Club member Mollie Allison had died on August 28th. The Club observed a short silence.

Tentative discussion took place on how we should celebrate the Club's 50th anniversary next year. There followed a report on the Club's visit to the Leeds Grand Theatre last month to see Agatha Christie's *Black Coffee.*

Our secretary showed the Club copies of the *Magnet* which had been 'restored to life'. It is amazing what professional restorers can do with torn and grubby copies of our favourite story paper. At a cost, of course!

Paul Galvin presented an item which included Biggles, Harry Potter and hobby items on the Internet. To round off the evening in fine style we all congratulated Peter Burgon on

his acceptance into St. John's College, Cambridge. He then presented his fine essay *Charles Hamilton and Class.* **Paul Galvin**

Cambridge Club

For our September 1999 meeting we gathered at the Duston village home of Howard Corn.

After our usual short business section, Howard delivered a wonderfully illustrated talk concerning *Mickey Mouse Weekly* comic. First published in February 1936, the colourful comic had a strange genesis: the Walt Disney organisation in the States via its UK merchandising company Willbank were the proprietors with Odhams Press being the publishers (who also printed it on a unique colour photogravure press at their Sun Printers company in Watford).

Originally Walt Disney material filled the entire editorial pages, and then during wartime and the following decade, just the colour pages of this 12-page comic of tabloid proportions were filled. Much of the Walt Disney material was home-grown as regards illustration, though some did originate from King Features in the States (amazingly some of this material required colouring before being published). Rationing during WWII reduced both the size of the comic and its frequency of publication, although by 1950 everything was back to normal.

With the last issue of 1957 the comic ceased publication and confusingly became two entirely separate publications. The contents separated into those of Walt Disney origination and those belonging to Odhams Press.

Some of the British characters that had typified the comic for many years were mentioned, and Howard used audio-visual techniques to demonstrate these. The main cartoon strip was entitled "Robin Alone" and the Editorials were signed by Robin. Enid Blyton's Secret Seven made an appearance in a pictorial format as did the detective Monty Carstairs - drawn initially by Cecil Orr then by Frank Bellamy. Their school story was a strip cartoon with a lead character called Billy Brave, and in 1955 the publishers included a science fiction hero called Don Conquest. From 1952 the comic - via British artists - gave prominence to three recent British-produced Walt Disney live action colour films: Robin Hood/Sword and the Rose/Rob Roy. Much other Disney film material also got an airing in the publication: animation in the shape of Peter Pan, and Alice in Wonderland; live action with Davy Crockett (1955) and 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (1956). Of course there was always a lot of imported (from America) artwork used in *Mickey Mouse Weekly,* and occasionally English artists adapted Disney characters for one-off stories.

Pre-war *Mickey Mouse* comics are deemed very collectable by Disney enthusiasts and accordingly command high prices; this is not achieved by the more modern issues.

Making a welcome return after a stroke was Paul Wilkins. Paul concocted and presented a twenty question quiz concerning eighty years-worth of cartoonists, animation, strip cartoons and cartoon characters. **Adrian Perkins**

London OBBC

The September meeting was our annual lunch at the Brentham Club, Ealing, at which Una Hamilton Wright spoke on 'Charles Hamilton in Edwardian London'. It was one of our best attended luncheon parties and afterwards several members adjourned to Bill Bradford's home for tea and further chat on hobby matters. **Mary Cadogan**

WHILE I REMEMBER
by
ANTHONY BUCKERIDGE

Anthony Buckeridge shot to fame with his radio plays about the fictional schoolboy Jennings, whose adventures have delighted millions of readers around the world. In this autobiography, not only does Buckeridge tell us of the origins of this much-loved character, but he describes a varied and often fascinating life. It begins with his description of the horrific death of his father and moves on through his tough education, his work first in banking and then in teaching, his fascination for the world of theatre, and of course his writing. Buckeridge has produced a heartfelt story which will be as engrossing and entertaining for his myriad readers as the fictional exploits of Jennings, Rex Milligan and the Bligh family have been for over 50 years.

David Bathurst, author of *The Jennings Companion*, prefaces the book with a brief sequel to the Companion, and provides an appendix giving some background to the illustrators of the Jennings stories.

Published by David Schutte in softback, A5 size, 96 pages, £8.99 + postage, ISBN 0 9521482 1 8

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WHILE I REMEMBER by Anthony Buckeridge

(Published by David Schutte, £8.99 + postage: see page 30)
Reviewed by MARY CADOGAN

Anthony Buckeridge's Jennings stories represent one of the publishing successes of our century. Without doubt the popularity of these warm, perceptive and witty tales will continue well into the twenty-first century, and the appearance now of the author's autobiography is well-timed.

This small but lively and informative book provides insights into the creation of a long-lasting juvenile fictional hero, and indeed into how - and why - Buckeridge originally dreamed up and then continued the Jennings saga.

Jennings began in a different medium from books, starting life in stories **told** by Buckeridge to the boys in his care when he was a schoolmaster on dormitory duty: "It all started with a bribe: 'If you're all in bed in thirty seconds, I'll tell you a story.' It always worked."

It continued to work - first as a brilliant and long-running series of radio plays for BBC radio's *Children's Hour* (starting in 1948) and then as 25 full-length books (from 1950 to the 1990s).

But there is much more to Buckeridge than just Jennings, as this autobiography well illustrates. At a deep level, like so many people of the twentieth century, his life has been affected by war. His father was killed on active service in 1917 when Anthony was only four years old, and his subsequent attempts to 'get to know' his father, who was also a writer, through his poems, make very moving reading. Not surprisingly Anthony grew up questioning the military ethic: however, during the Second World War he registered for military service but, because of call-up delays, served instead of in the army with the Auxiliary Fire Service. (Shades here of Richmal Crompton's life: she and Anthony were both in the A.F.S.; they both were schoolteachers who became immensely successful writers and created astoundingly resilient heroes and humorous stories.)

Anthony speaks warmly of his family life in this autobiography, and especially of his relationship with his wife, Eileen, which has been one of total compatibility and inspiration.

Another important thread in *While I Remember* is that of Anthony's interest in drama. From childhood he was attracted to acting and throughout his long life he has achieved success and satisfaction as a thespian. There can surely be no doubt that his feeling for the theatre has contributed to the success of his Jennings stories, in which dramatic events and lifting-off-the-page dialogue abound. Also we must not forget his Rex Milligan day-school stories, which were written for Marcus Morris's *Eagle* in the early 1950s.

To complete this fascinating autobiography, David Bathurst (author of *The Jennings Companion*) has written an introduction and an appendix about the illustrators of the Jennings books.

Do remember to buy, beg or borrow *While I Remember.*

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