# STORY PAPER
# COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 54 No. 638 FEBRUARY 2000

BILLY BUNTER IS FUNNIER THAN EVER THIS WEEK ! Meet him inside.

# Morcove Cameos

## Betty Barton.

Our Betty Barton leads the Form,
A steadfast chum in calm and storm,
Admired by all
Both big and small.
Her eye is true, her heart is warm.
Long may she guide the Morcove Fourth
This schoolgirl from the distant North.

Class-time and play-time, see her lead,
No better friend in hour of need.
Throughout each term
Courageous, firm,
" We'll manage " is her well-known creed.
Long may she stay at Morcove School
Long may " The Fourth " enjoy her rule.

## Polly Linton.

Our Polly's the reverse of sad,
The jokes that Polly Linton's had !
We have to thank
Each merry prank
For making term time not too bad.
And even victims of her chaff
Join in and share the gen'ral laugh.

At hockey, tennis, Polly shines.
The shouting Fourth Form on the lines
Acclaim her play
And cry " Hurray " !
" The Fifth once more to Fourth resigns."
And now I want a rhyme for " Polly."
Ah ! Most appropriately—Jolly !

# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

**Editor: MARY CADOGAN**

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR
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W.H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST
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## The Editor's Chat

Once again we have a fine issue of the C.D. I'm sure you will agree that our authors and artists continue to "turn up trumps". You will see that this month's *Forum* includes several references to our recent Annual which seems to be voted "one of the best ever".

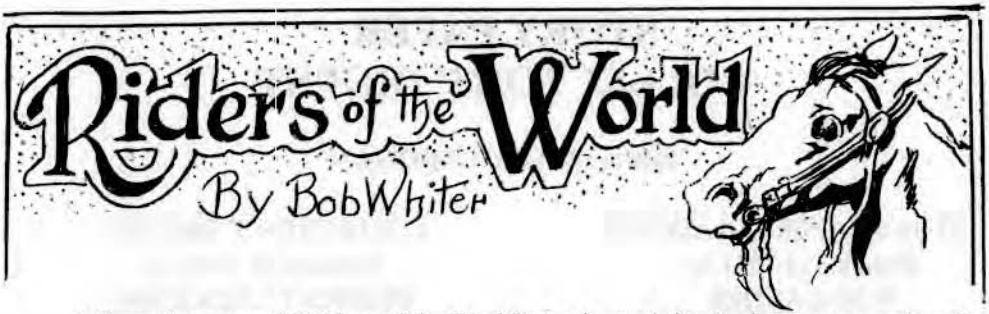
I receive a large number of letters and comments, which I much appreciate, and I generally try to publish in the *Forum* extracts from those letters which represent the views of several correspondents. I know that many readers find this feature of particular interest.

I am glad to be able to report that *Nelson Lee – and ESB* items (which a little while ago were in short supply) are now coming in with satisfying regularity. However, there is <u>now</u> a sparsity of contributions for *Blakiana* – so I hope that enthusiasts of the great sleuth will soon be writing about Sexton Blake and his associates or adversaries.

The London Old Boys Book Club have elected me as Chairperson for the current year, and I feel it is a privilege to hold this office, as well as being President of both the Northern and Cambridge Clubs. It is just over thirty years since I attended my first Club meeting: what a lot that has led to, and what grand Clubs these are.

Happy Browsing.

MARY CADOGAN




I drew the page of "Riders of the World", hoping to bring back some memories of 'derring-do', which most of us I am sure found, in the pages of our favourite story papers, *The Boys' Own Paper, Chums, The Captain* possibly being the chief providers, but we mustn't forget D.C. Thomson and their Big Five, namely:- *Adventure, Rover, Wizard, Skipper* and *Hotspur. The Magnet* and *The Gem,* together with *The Nelson Lee,* although containing mainly school stories, did on occasion have the boys travel to adventurous lands; whilst the secondary story often dealt with highwaymen or tales of the Foreign Legion.

These were in the main weekly or monthly issues – so we mustn't forget the yearly annuals – yes I know, these days most people probably remember when the *Chums* was issued as an annual, but I'm referring to such productions as – *The Popular Book of Boys' Stories, The British Boys' Annual,* etc., not to mention that most weekly papers had their own annuals, generally published in September, ready for the Christmas trade. I know some collectors will be up in arms if their own particular fancy isn't mentioned, so let me add a few more titles, and hope the paper of your choice is among them. The *Boys' Friend,* both the weekly and the later monthly, *Popular, Ranger, Pilot, Modern Boy, Champion* and *Triumph.*

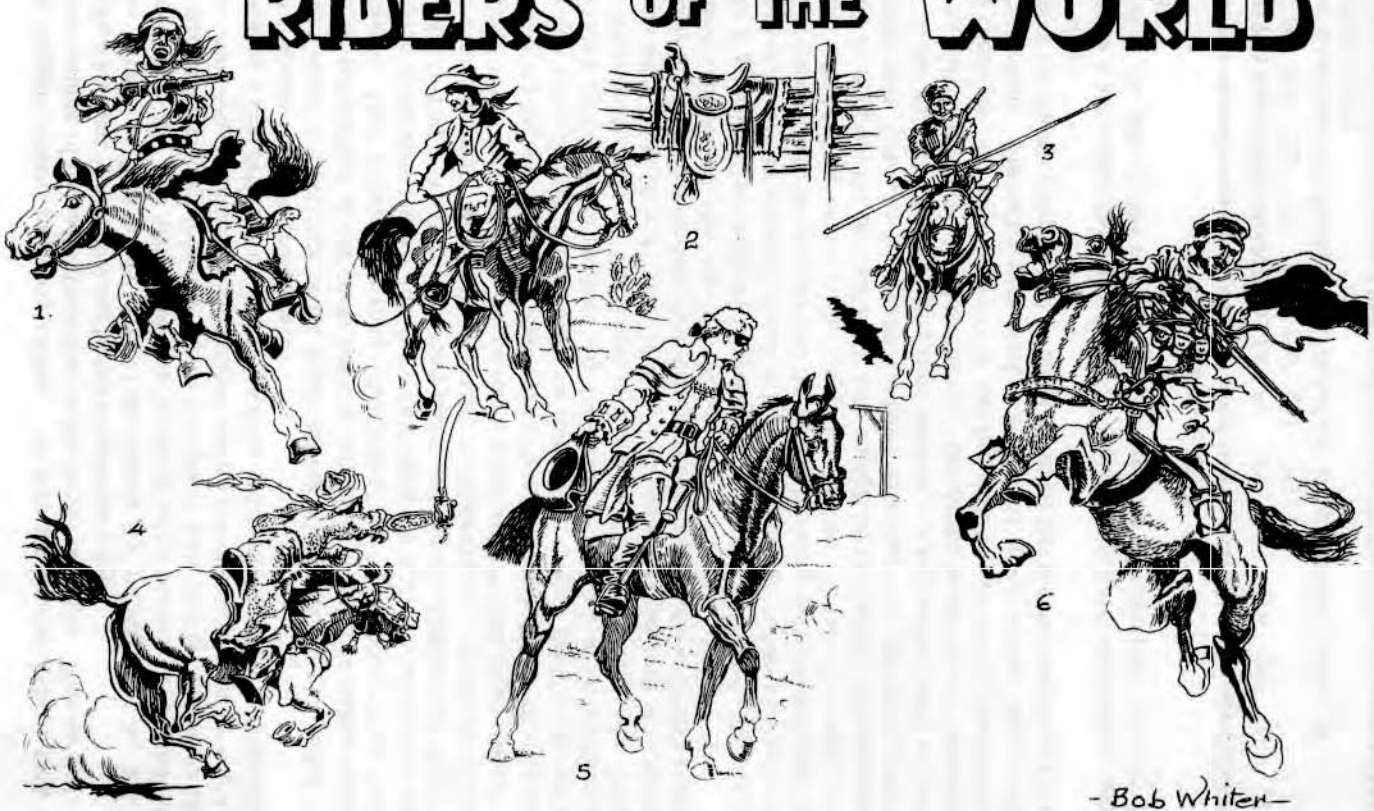
Let us take a brief peep at the riders portrayed and some of the periodicals in which they appeared.

No. 1 shows a Chiricahua Apache warrior, armed with an 1873 Winchester carbine, which probably has the woodwork decorated with brass tacks. Some authorities list the Navajo among the Apache tribal group; but most include only:- Western, Chiricahua, Mescalero, Jicarilla, Lipan and Kiowa Apache. The last named adopted a Plains orientated culture, closely related, as their name suggests, to the Kiowa Indians (memories of the Texas series *Magnets* 1573 – 1582).

No. 2 together with the aforementioned No. 1 conjures up all our boyhood loves of the Wild West. From Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill Hickok in the *Aldine Library* and the *Wild West Weekly,* to the fictitious Trigg M'Fee and 'The Lost Ten Thousand' in the *Wizard* and the Rio Kid in the *Popular, Modern Boy* and *Magnet.* Beside our cowboy is a typical Western saddle, the design of which was influenced in turn by the Spanish vaqueros and the Moors, namely the horn in front and the cantle in the rear.

No. 3 shows a Cossack, one of Russia's famed horsemen. So renowned was their riding skill that the Comanche Indians, regarded as the finest equestrians of the native Americans, were often referred to as the Cossacks of the Plains. Our subject is armed with a nine foot lance (which carries no pennon), a typical guard-less Cossack sabre,

# RIDERS OF THE WORLD



kinzhal (dagger) hidden, and slung carbine. As with the Apache Indians there were numerous sections of Cossacks depending on the district of origin. Thus we had:- Don Cossacks, Ukrainian, Volga, Ural and Kuban to quote just a few.

No. 4 takes us back to the days of the British Raj in India and the Battle of Chillianwallah 1849. The Sikh cavalryman waves his tulwa (sword). Of special interest is his mail and armoured forearms; notice the spiked spurs and the peculiarly shaped stirrups. Although our subject sports a turban, quite a few of his companions would have been wearing a steel helmet decorated with a brass spike and fittings; something after the style of a German cuirassier pickelhaube.

No. 5 shows a 'Gentleman of the Road' doffing his tricorne hat to a gibbet. Very few of the publications of our youth failed at some time or other to feature stories of highwaymen. Dick Turpin, Tom King, Claud Duval and 'Swift Nicks' John Nevison, being some of the more famous; (the last named being the actual person to carry out the famous ride to York). Apart from the story papers and annuals, Lambert and Butler even carried a set of cigarette cards entitled "Pirates & Highwaymen". Whilst the celebrated poet Alfred Noyes was not above composing a poem entitled "The Highwayman". Let me see how my memory is . . . "the road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor – the moon was a ghostly galleon tossed on cloudy seas – when the highwayman came riding, riding up to the old inn door. He'd a French cocked hat on his forehead and a bunch of lace at his chin . . ." You'll have to excuse me if I haven't got it right – I learned the poem when I was 10 or 11 years of age! I still have a photograph of 'yours truly' dressed up in the role and the fond memories of winning a prize at my school's Christmas fancy dress competition! (See page 32. Ed.)

No. 6 portrays a French Spahi trooper armed with the 1895 Lebel rifle and sabre. Although carbines were normally issued to the French cavalry, certain sections used the rifle – its greater magazine capacity and the lengthy distances encountered in the desert no doubt influenced the choice of the longer arm (Britain and the USA being the first countries to recognise the need for a rifle long enough for the infantry and short enough for cavalry use). I wonder how many 'old boys' remember "Six Bullets for Abdul the Cruel" in the *Wizard*? Writing again from memory – a legionnaire finds his brother, killed by 'Abdul the Cruel' and his Tuaregs. Beside the body lie six ? bloodstained unused cartridges. He vows he won't be satisfied until he uses one of them to kill the Berber chieftain. Thereafter each week was devoted to his efforts being fulfilled. Readers of the Thomson papers will no doubt recognise this familiar theme used in many of their series.

I hope I have rekindled a few happy memories in this brief dissertation, and will close using the title of that excellent BBC programme of yesteryear – namely Doris Arnold's

"These you have loved".

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## CLIMATIC CAPRICES

**by Ted Baldock**

I saw two clouds at morning,
Tinged with the rising sun;
And in the dawn they floated on,
And mingled into one.
*J.G. Brainard. Epithalamium.*

In few books does the weather play such a prominent role as in Hugh Walpole's *Jeremy*. The charm of Polchester, already an attractive little cathedral town, is enhanced immeasurably by the great weather changes continually sweeping over. The introduction of the dog into the Cole household is enhanced by the great weather, it is dominated by the harsh conditions outside throwing into greater relief the warm comfort within. One may also recall the calms, storms and climatic influences of the novels of Charles Dickens.

Has any detailed consideration ever been given to the not unimportant part the weather, our wonderful, unpredictable, teasing English weather, has played in the unfolding of the Greyfriars story?

Generally speaking, as a race we are much concerned with the vagaries of our climate. Upon its fickle fancy depend so many of our outdoor activities and pleasures. A grey sky with low scudding clouds and squalls of rain will decide the fate of a cricket match. It will cause the cancellation of important fixtures. Little-side becomes a grey, misty, uninviting vista swept by rain and presenting a far from pleasant aspect. Hopes, which in the morning had been riding high, are considerably dashed in the afternoon. Humours become decidedly frayed. Vernon-Smith is certainly not displaying his better side, having sharp, sarcastic rejoinders for his closest friends, Redwing not excepted. Harry Wharton and Co., more rational – and philosophical, accept with good grace the situation which cannot be altered and foregather in the pavilion to discuss possibilities and alternative activities. Thus does the weather play a significant role in the Greyfriars saga.

One recalls *Magnet* illustrations depicting atrocious weather conditions, yet there would be our heroes disporting themselves in Eton jackets – collarless and scarfless. These illustrations tend to send shivers running through the frame even when the reader is in a warm room with a glowing fire. Upon consideration one must concede the sad fact that the passing years are taking their inevitable toll. Many of us senior 'men' have far more in common with Mr Quelch than perhaps we would care to admit. These unwelcome little reminders explain in part the ever-widening gulf between youth and age. However, providing that the heart beating within the ageing frame remains psychologically young, all will be well.

Greyfriars 'men' turn out and cheerfully face a bitterly inclement night of high wind and swirling snow (in pursuance of the plot currently in hand) clad only in light waterproof coats and scarves. They will forge ahead, apparently oblivious of the conditions. These facets exert a far more forceful influence when the stories are read at eighty-plus than ever they did in our teens.

There have been times when the autumn rains have caused small streams on Courtfield Common to double their width and depth to flood proportions. A rickety plank

bridge has collapsed and precipitated a junior, a senior, or possibly a master into the swirling waters. On hand, fortunately, is some plucky fellow who, without hesitation or removing any articles of clothing, plunges in and effects a splendid rescue in the traditional Greyfriars style. Recall the fact that it is autumn and try to imagine the temperature of the water; then observe the utter disregard of consequences which could easily follow such an immersion at that time of the year. Once more the weather – and the barometer – have been set at nought.

Six fellows with up-turned coat collars and Greyfriars caps are standing huddled together beneath the weeping boughs of a tree several miles from the school, sheltering from driving rain. A grey wintry sky overhead gives little promise of a cessation in the immediate future. Five are silent and more or less patiently accepting the situation; one is groaning audibly from fatigue, over-indulgence and the general dampness.

The tea-rooms at Chunkleys Emporium have, not for the first time, proved irresistible. Bunter had insisted on polishing off the last tart, the last fragment of plum cake and the few remaining biscuits, the net result being a missed bus back to the school, a drenching in the rain, and the certain prospect of an interview with Mr Quelch later in the evening. Having aggravated an already delicate predicament, the weather is doing its atrocious best to make the situation worse. Given a fine summer evening, the Famous Five would have probably stepped out in their usual energetic style, leaving Bunter to grouse and complain in the rear. Once again the elements have played a role in determining the dramatic possibilities of the current adventure.

On another occasion it was warm – very warm. Bunter, his fat features crimson and perspiring, was hot, fearfully hot. His fat little legs ached and he groaned dismally. The road, as far as he could see, was dusty, shadeless and shimmering in the afternoon heat. It seemed to stretch into infinity. Bunter's shadow, now very short, was tottering along faithfully behind him, the sun being almost overhead. A whining swarm of very persistent flies was buzzing round his fat head. Bunter swatted and groaned and thought of long, cool glasses of iced lemonade – and tarts, and of those beasts Harry Wharton and Co.

It is a set piece from a score of stories, predictable to the last degree. Yet it still projects the same timeless atmosphere and pleasure. Here is the weather displaying its better side. The skies are blue and the sun is performing its allotted task even though to the discomfiture of the Owl of the Remove. Such incidents would be null and void of interest without reference to the weather. We take these allusions for granted while reading, but remove such details and try to imagine how flat the stories would become without them.

Occasionally some member of the school is confined to the 'sanny' as the result of some deed of 'derring-do' performed under stormy and icy conditions, for which he is now paying with a first-class cold. But, as ever with the Greyfriars fellow, he remains cheery if impatient, and slightly pampered by the Matron, a worthy soul of whom we know so little. He soon effects a complete recovery under her expert ministrations. Young frames shake off with nonchalance ailments which in later days we regard with apprehension.

When mist and fog roll in from the sea they transform the old quadrangle into a strange and rather eerie place, a fit starting point for many adventures. Horace Coker has

been known to establish painful contact with the rugged trunks of the old elms with detrimental results to his already rugged features. Also there have occurred many cases of mistaken identity over the years. Mr Prout, master of the fifth form, has had some unfortunate experiences, while Mr Hacker, the 'acid drop', has at least upon one occasion suffered the indignity of being 'hacked'. The sea fog on this particular stretch of the coast has much for which to answer. It has formed the back-cloth of many japes and mysteries.

Rain driven by a high wind beats wildly against the study windows on winter nights, but providing one is comfortably ensconced within, these storms are tolerable. Yet hardy fellows like Harry Wharton and Co. have been known to sacrifice indoor comforts and to brave such conditions simply for the joy of the undertaking. Does not Bob Cherry wax jubilant upon such occasions with his time-honoured maxim, "What does it matter so long as you are happy?".

Sincere sympathy must be felt for Hurree Jamset Ram Singh who, although he has experienced over a number of years the worst that our island can produce in terms of weather, has never grown to appreciate it. Often, although with great good humour, he complains at the severity of the climate and extols the fiery heat in far-off Bhanipur. He nevertheless makes the best of an unalterable fact of life. Perhaps there is a lesson to be learnt here by us, the natives of our green island. Charles Kingsley with commendable insight has said "'Tis hard grey weather breeds hard English men".

Big side on a perfect English summer day; a blue sky, a few wisps of white fleecy cloud moving swiftly in some upper current of air. The pitch is in perfect condition, having been rolled and rolled again since early dawn. The hour is right, the humour is impeccable. Such days do not occur too frequently, let them be recorded with gratitude.

Wingate and Gwynne are at the wicket, splendid in white flannels; they are doing all that could be desired of great men of the sixth form. The assembled crowd are in festive mood, excepting certain factions of the opposing camp. Is there such a state which may be described as 'perfection' even in Utopia?

Many storms have raged over the old chimneys and gables of Greyfriars over the years. All have appeared more fearsome when they occur during the night. The Remove dormitory is a somewhat bleak, barrack-like apartment with its rows of beds on either side, and large windows looking out over the quadrangle.

When thunder cracks overhead and the great room is fitfully illumined by ghostly blue light, when the rain is lashing against the windows and the draught whistles under the door, the resultant cacophony is impressive. Add to this the stentorian snoring of Billy Bunter and there is a deep, reverberating sound, the general effect coming close in intensity and volume to the more stormy passages of Wagnerian music. Within and without, nature seems to be doing her best to impress mere mortals with her power, and Bunter gallantly if unconsciously aids and abets.

Blast and breeze, heat and frost, rain and snow over the centuries have wreaked their havoc on the old buildings of Greyfriars with no more ultimate effect than a smoothing down and mellowing of stonework, and a crumbling of arches in its more ancient areas. The spirit within remains as young and vigorous as ever. The only visible effects of a semi-harsh climate upon the Greyfriars inmates is to keep them in the enviable state of perpetual youth.


## ACROSS THE CENTURY WITH EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

**by E. Grant-McPherson**

On the 11th of November 1889, Edwy Searles Brooks was born. It could not be realised then what pleasure he would bring to thousands, possibly millions, of boys and girls (and adults), the majority of whom were yet unborn.

Most probably nearly all those readers connected him with St. Frank's. I know I did. Of all the weeklies the *Nelson Lee* was always my favourite; the boys of St. Francis College were as real to my friends and myself as if we actually attended that famous seat of learning.

I was a member of the St. Frank's League. Unfortunately the Certificate disappeared during the war but I still have the autographed photo that Brooks sent me in exchange for one of mine, and it is one of my most prized possessions.

I enjoyed all the stories in the *Nelson Lee* in both the Old and New series. I think that my own favourites were the First Northestrian series, but I must confess by the start of the Second New series the stories were really poor, and the *Lee* went through a very bad patch. I discovered later that this was an editorial blunder, and not Edwy's fault. The stories improved, but never seemed to regain quite their original hold.

But to return to E.S.B. Whilst perhaps not quite so prolific as Charles Hamilton, I thought he wrote with more feeling. His boys, and particularly girls, were, for me, much more realistic. Perhaps some of the holiday situations that the boys and girls found themselves in were a little far-fetched, but after all they were written to thrill the reader which they most certainly did, and, with the aid of Nelson Lee and of course Lord Dorrimore, they always came through in the end.

After the demise of the poor old *Lee* two main characters carried on the tradition: Norman Conquest, a sort of Saint type of adventurer, and Inspector Cromwell or 'Ironsides', a really first-class detective series. These characters were Brooks' own creations, as were the St. Frank's folk, unlike Nelson Lee and Nipper, whom he more or less took over from Mr Maxwell Scott.

At about the same time he developed two more schools, Whitelands and Westchester, cleverly written yarns mixing the traits of several of his St. Frank's boys into one character. These stories were written under pen-names as were his Conquest and Cromwell novels.

In addition to his St. Frank's saga, and possibly not so well known, Edwy had quite an impressive line-up to his credit.

He wrote 20 Greyfriars stories for the *Magnet*, as 'Frank Richards', and over 40 as 'Martin Clifford' in the *Gem*, and a story in each of the 36 issues of the pre-war *Buzzer*. In the *Boys Magazine* he wrote over 50 yarns, many of these featuring the Monocled

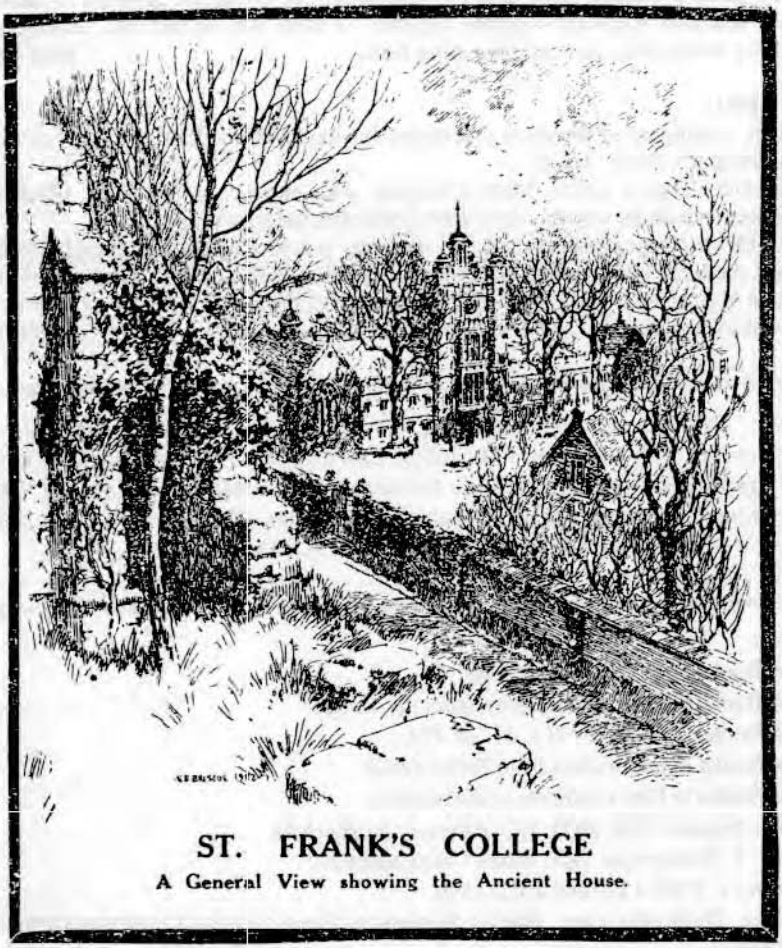
Manhunter, Falcon Swift, and nearly 30 Dixon Hawke tales. Of Sexton Blake, his output was well over the century, appearing in the *Union Jack, Detective Library* and of course the *Sexton Blake* itself. He also contributed to the *Thriller* and many other boys' papers, even writing stories for *Comic Cuts*. The list seems endless.

21 different pen-names were used in accomplishing this Herculean task. Edwy was nothing if not versatile. In addition to the foregoing he also wrote scripts for three films and, in the late '30s, a radio serial running for 12 episodes.

Finally, for the statistically minded, his first published story appeared in 1906, and his last in 1966.

Curiously enough, this was entitled "Curtains for Conquest".

For 60 years of pleasure, Edwy Searles Brooks, I am sure you will always be remembered.



**ST. FRANK'S COLLEGE**

**A General View showing the Ancient House.**

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# NEWS OF THE OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUBS

**Northern OBBC**

The early part of the evening was taken up with filling gaps in this year's programme and the collection of subscriptions to keep our Treasurer happy.

David Bradley presented the first item of the new millennium. In an attempt to sharpen up our minds after the Christmas and New Year celebrations a lateral thinking quiz was in order. For example, a place in Yorkshire: clue "crying at home"; answer: Blubberhouses. We were all glad of refreshments after attempting to answer 35 similar questions.

After the break, Paula Johnson spoke about Arthur Ransome. After giving an insight into his early life Paula introduced us to the main characters in his *Swallows and Amazons* series. By hearing extracts from many of the books we could see how these characters developed, and also Ransome's gentle humour. I think we all felt like reading or re-reading these books after such an interesting item. **Paul Galvin**

**London OBBC**

A large contingent of members assembled for the London OBBC's AGM in January at Duncan Harper's flat in Acton.

*Collectors' Digest* editor Mary Cadogan was elected as the new Chairperson following Roger Jenkins who has done fine work over the past year.

Brian Doyle, Roger Jenkins and Roy Parsons provided quizzes and puzzles; Derek Hinrich got the hairs on the backs of our necks standing with a ghost story by M.R. James and Duncan Harper read from the 'final' Inspector Morse novel *The Remorseful Day*, in what proved to be a cheerful and entertaining meeting. **Vic Pratt**

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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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**WANTED:**
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**Ladybird Books** with or without d/ws from the 1940s.
**Ladybird Books** from Series 413, 417 or 474.
**Ladybird Books** in dustwallets from Series 606B.
**Ladybird Books** in Fine condition in dustwallets.
**Boy's Own Annual** 1896-1903, VG or better, in orig cloth.
W.E. Johns, P. Westerman, G.A. Henty – first editions.
**The Gem**, no's: 1309-1320 and 1652-1660.
Steve Rudge, 70 Bretby Lane, Bretby, Burton-on-Trent, South Derbyshire DE15 0QP. (01283) 546057

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## THRILLER LIBRARY

List by Steve Holland

The *Thriller Library* was a short-lived title from the mid-1930s, running only 24 issues between July 1934 and June 1935. All issues were 96 pages, and the line-up was as good as its namesake weekly, mixing original stories and reprints, including stories by Margery Allingham and Henry Holt and American authors Arthur Roche and Arthur Stringer. Some novels were subsequently reprinted: Gerald Verner's contribution quickly turned up as a Wright & Brown hardcover, whilst George E. Rochester's "Dead Man's Gold" subsequently appeared in *The Thriller* and in hardcover from John Hamilton in 1938.

KEY: Author. Title. Date (original publisher)

1 Rochester, Geo. E. The Crimson Threat. Jul 1934.
2 Urquhart, Paul. The Exploits of a Dead Man. Jul 1934.
3 Hunter, John. Three Die at Midnight. Aug 1934.
4 Goodwin, David. The Man from Dartmoor. Aug 1934.
5 Bowman, G.M. The Hunchback of Hatton Garden. Sep 1934.
6 Holt, Henry. The Midnight Mail. Sep 1934 (Harrap, 1931).
7 Gielgud, Val & Holt Marvell. Under London. Oct 1934 (Rich & Cowan, 1933).
8 Hawton, Hector. Murder Cave. Oct 1934.
9 Skene, Anthony. The Silver Circle. Nov 1934.
10 Bridges, T.C. Killer's Contract. Nov 1934.
11 Teed, G. Hamilton. Killer Aboard. Dec 1934
12 Vivian, E.C.H. House for Sale. Dec 1934
13 Snell, Edmund. The Yellow Seven. Jan 1935 (Unwin, 1923)
14 Roche, Arthur S. The Case Against Mrs. Ames. Jan 1935 (Dodd Mead (USA), 1934)
15 Allingham, Margaret L. The Black Dudley Murder Feb 1935 (Abridgement of The Crime at Black Dudley, Jarrolds, 1929).
16 Bowman, G.M. The Iron Apple. Feb 1935.
17 Stringer, Arthur. The Door of Dread. Mar 1935 (Bobbs Merrill (USA), 1916)
18 Rochester, Geo. E. Dead Man's Gold. Mar 1935.
19 Hawton, Hector. Frozen Fire. Apr 1935.
20 Quiroule, Pierre. The Man with Two Souls. Apr 1935.
21 Verner, Gerald. Queer Face. May 1935.
22 Rochester, Geo. E. The Black Chateau. May 1935
23 Urquart, Paul. Found in Possession. Jun 1935
24 Clevely, Hugh. Dead Man's Secret. Jun 1935

AUTHORS
MARGARET L(OUISE) ALLINGHAM (1904-1966).
LADBROKE (LIONEL DAY) BLACK (1877-1940). See Paul Urquhart.
T(HOMAS) C(HARLES) BRIDGES (1868-1944).
(STANLEY) G(ERALD) M(OORE) BOWMAN (c1901-1966)
HUGH (DESMOND) CLEVELY (1898-1964).
VAL (HENRY) GIELGUD (1900-1981).
"David Goodwin" is the pseudonym of Sidney Gowing.
SIDNEY (FLOYD) GOWING (1878- ). See David Goodwin.
HECTOR HAWTON (1901- ).
HENRY HOLT (?-?).
(ALFRED) JOHN HUNTER (1891-1960).
"Holt Marvell" is the pseudonym of Eric Maschwitz.
ERIC MASCHWITZ (1901-1967). See Holt Marvell.
GEORGE NORMAN PHILIPS (1896-1972). See Anthony Skene.
"Pierre Quiroule" is the pseudonym of Walter William Sayer.
ARTHUR S(OMERS) ROCHE (1883-1935).
GEO(RGE) E(RNEST) ROCHESTER (1898-1966).
WALTER WILLIAM SAYER (1892-1982). See Pierre Quiroule.
"Anthony Skene" is the pseudonym of George Norman Philips.
EDMUND SNELL (1889-?).
DONALD WILLIAM STEWARD (1896-1980). See Gerald Verner.
ARTHUR (JOHN ARBUTHNOTT) STRINGER (1874-1950).
G(EORGE) HAMILTON TEED (1878-1939).
"Paul Urquhart" is the pseudoynm of Ladbroke Black.
"Gerald Verner" is the pseudonym of Donald William Steward.
E(VELYN) C(HARLES) H(ENRY) VIVIAN (ne CHARLES HENRY CANNELL, 1882-1947).

## I REMEMBER

**by Bill Bradford**

. . . the *Pioneer*, but only just! There were so many good papers on sale at that time that I had to be a bit choosey in my limited purchases so only acquired a few copies during its short life. A few years ago I bought a complete run at an auction, so much of the following is based on consulting these rather than my hazy recollections.

It first appeared on 10th February, 1934, 11" x 7½" in size; initially 32 pages it was reduced to 28 pages after three weeks and later to 26. Quite a familiar procedure in those days. The covers, predominantly of deep orange and blue, with some white background, often depicted modern heroes of land sea and air, with Charles Lindberg on the cover of number 1. Later issues had Malcolm Campbell, Admiral Byrd, Kaye Don, Jim Mollison and T.E. Lawrence. I was not too impressed by these but preferred covers showing incidents from stories within, especially those by Eric Parker. Other artists, mainly inside, included Valda and Glossop, the latter one of my favourite illustrators of all time.

Free gifts were limited to the first four issues, namely a combined spanner/screwdriver/ruler, a height width and distance calculator, a world clock and mileage chart, then a combined set-square ruler and protractor, in that sequence. Despite a wide collection of free gifts from the 1930s I have never seen any of these. Most weeks there were competitions with modest prizes. Personally I never knew anyone who won a prize from any of these papers or magazines, but I expect they were genuine offers.

I will now turn the pages of my volume of *Pioneer* and see which items are worthy of comment. No. 1 saw the first of an 8-part series "Aces of the Atlantic Drome" by Anthony Ford. "Vorg the Viking" was a 9-part serial of Norsemen in North America, complete with Redskins! This was one of only three stories from the *Pioneer* to appear in the *Boys Friend Library* (No. 508). A further three stories, two of adventure and one humorous, gave us a total of five stories, about the average over the months, slightly longer than in some papers. Most issues had "Can You Beat It?", similar to "Believe It Or Not" by Ripley, which ran in the Sunday Express for so many years. The middle two pages, in No. 1 and thereafter, were usually given to the story of real-life sporting or heroic characters, often the subject on the cover.

Commencing in No. 2 there began "The Deeds They Do", a series of outstanding deeds, mainly from the 20th century. In this issue we meet "Sinclair the Searcher", by Carney Allan, who otherwise wrote many first-class stories of the French Foreign Legion over the years, mainly for *Chums*. Incidentally, a series "Charlie Brown's Brigade" appeared in all save the last issue. This featured a small group of teenagers in allegedly humorous adventures. From the excerpts I have read, the author, C.M. Hincks, should have stuck to his Sexton Blake stories.

Between numbers 8 and 11 a series "My Life in the Legion" was an allegedly true account of life in the Foreign Legion. Anyway, it was more interesting than average, although I always eye these 'true life' items with suspicion! "Land of the White Whale"

by Spike Russell, between issues 11 and 18, was set in the Antarctic where our heroes encounter a race of giants and sundry prehistoric creatures. *Nelson Lee* readers may think this sounds familiar. In 14-20 "The Iron Line" is a railroad series set in the South American jungle. This by Arthur Catherall, a most prolific writer.

"Vorg the Viking" returns for three complete stories in 19-21, then 21-24 contain accounts of wild life animal hunting by Frank Bucks, who older readers may associate with the 1932 film *Bring 'Em Back Alive.* For me, the best of *Pioneer* came at the end with "Ghosts of the Spanish Main" by Draycott M. Dell, serialised in the last five issues and which became B.F.L. No. 526 in May 1936. This also turns up as a hardback in Newnes Bluebird Library in 1935. This plus its inclusion in *Chums* Annual 1935/36, all within two years, is almost a record!

In numbers 22-23, there are two good stories of flying in World War 1, "The Flying Furies" by G.M. Bowman, who ended the last war as a Group Captain in the RAF. He also wrote much under the pseudonym of Capt. Robert Hawke. The last item of interest is "The Human Spider", featuring a mystery man who could walk up walls, commencing in numbers 24/25, but continued in the *Ranger* and subsequently in B.F.L. 571.

On 28th July 1934, issue 25, it was announced that from now on the *Pioneer* and *Ranger* would merge, under the title *Ranger* – and we know what that meant! To conclude, there were a number of other authors who contributed to the *Pioneer,* and, apparently, no other paper, probably using pseudonyms which we have yet to identify. Notable features were the predominance of air stories and an above average amount of factual and informative articles. However, having just waded through all 25 issues, I realise why I was not a regular reader and the reason for its short existence.


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## KERR UNRIDDLES A SILENT CRY FOR HELP by Ray Hopkins

The bobbing object, sparkling in the Devon sunshine, spotted by a holidaying group of St. Jim's juniors, is a sealed rum bottle. Swimming close to the shore, Tom Merry is the first to reach it and shouts that it contains a paper. Lowther opines the bottle may have come from the South Seas. Gussy, indulging in a glorious flight of fancy, says he will convince his brother, Lord Conway, that he should lend them his new yacht and they can sail to the tropics and rescue whoever is stranded on a desert island. Kerr as the soul of common sense doubts the bottle would ever have come that far, and they'd better open it to see what the message inside says.

Figgins and Tom Merry and their Co's, together with Blake and D'Arcy, are holidaying in Clovelly with Figgins' uncle, Mr Gandish. On their first night there, a terrific storm ensues. A flash of lightning lights up a vessel as it is blown quickly past the rocks at the foot of Clovelly. The ship vanishes into the night and no more is seen of her. It doesn't occur to any of them, with the exception of Kerr, that the bottle may have been cast into the sea by a survivor of that same vessel.

The intriguing message in the bottle, unfortunately incomplete due to depredations of seeping sea water, which comes into their hands several days after the turbulent storm, says: "Wrecked on ... by cliffs ... and cannot get ... swim, and have no boat. I do not know where I am, but this place ... coast. Help." It is signed "James Calcroft, Mate of the schoon ... ed Wing."

Tom Merry suggests the ship's name could be "Red Wing". Kerr says Lloyds could tell them if there is such a ship and if it is missing. Also, if there is a Mate named Calcroft in the crew. Mr Gandish, as excited as the juniors, concurs with Kerr's suggestion. A telegraph to Lloyds results in them having all the information by the following day.

Kerr, his brain still pondering the puzzle, thinks the third word, rather than 'island' could be 'shore' and, if he was on a shore, cliffs might stop him getting further inland. Kerr surmises that the bottle could not have come from too great a distance otherwise it would never have survived and, too, the longer the bottle was in the water, the more the sea water would have obliterated every word that the message contained. Enough water inside the bottle would have caused it to sink to the bottom. No, Kerr is sure that the bottle was dropped into the sea near at hand. All they have to do is to search along the cliffs for a ship-wrecked seaman!

Figgins' uncle, Mr Gandish, while agreeing with all of Kerr's suppositions, regretted that he wouldn't be able to give them a hand. His foot wouldn't let him. It would have impeded their progress. "He suffered from gout which caused his nose to be of a deep purple colour. At all events, he attributed that to the gout. Unbelieving, scoffing people attributed both the gout and the purple nose to a love of old port, but that, of course, was a calumny."

Figgins says they won't need a boatman. He can skipper because he is as familiar with this particular coast as any local. "Big blank cliffs rose against the sea ... big soaring cliffs, penetrated by the deep green gullies, or coombs," which meandered to the cliff tops. Figgins comments that the coombs are unclimbable and anyone flung from the sea would be a prisoner. And that's where he will be found, Kerr tells them.

The juniors pull in to a small shelf of sand and stare up to the top of the cliffs, three hundred yards above them. The first cave they enter is so deep into the cliffs that carrying lighted candles is the only way to make headway. Kerr doubts that the seaman would have been able to penetrate that far as the likelihood was that he was injured.

They find themselves walking on slippery rocks and, before he can stop himself, Blake tumbles into a deep crevasse. Tom Merry, Manners and Lowther make a chain and Tom's call, made as he leans over the opening, is answered faintly. Blake had fallen twenty feet, the descent having been broken by three feet of water. He has twisted his ankle and has managed to climb onto a rock. He tells them he can see daylight in the distance.

Kerr has brought along a stout rope and, with this, Tom Merry is lowered to join Blake. The plan is for Tom to help Blake along to the daylight at the end of the tunnel. The rest of them, because the rope tears on a sharp edge of rock and has made it impossible to haul the two juniors back to the top of the abyss, will return to the boat and row along the coast until they come to the opening in the cliffs where Blake and Tom Merry will be waiting.

When the two juniors reach the end of the tunnel they find themselves in a tiny cove. Embedded in the sand is a fragment of wood with "Red W..." painted on it. So Kerr was right on both counts as to name and final resting place of the schooner. They make their way along the cove as far as the sand stretches, calling at intervals in case someone is in earshot. Slowed to a shuffle by Blake's damaged ankle, they discover two more objects which reveal that someone has been there before them: a sailor's cap and a broken tobacco pipe. They continue to call but receive no answering hail. Tom Merry and Blake stare at one another, their breath coming in nervous gasps, as they realise that they might, at any moment, stumble across a dead body.

"We've found him!" exclaimed Blake, as the two juniors heard a groan. Tom Merry did not reply; he entered the cave, to see the tattered figure of a man stretched on the ground. His face was pale and emaciated, and his eyes turned wildly upon the juniors. "Help!" he muttered feebly.

They re-enter the cliffs and their shaky calls are responded to by a groan. They have found the shipwrecked seaman! "He was a young man, not more than thirty, with a pale, emaciated face, white through the sunburn on the skin. His eyes, deep and hollow, turned wildly upon the juniors as they came into the cave." His wonder at their knowing his name is not satisfied until after they insist he eat some sandwiches and drink some ginger beer.

They show him the sea-water stained message from the bottle he had flung into the sea. "I never thought I should see it again. I've twisted my leg by falling when I tried to climb the cliffs round the cove." He fills in the missing words for them. "Wrecked on coast, shut in by cliffs, and cannot get inland. Cannot swim, and have no boat. I do not know where I am, but this place must be on the Devon coast. Help." They tell him that one of their schoolfellows – Kerr – "a regular Sherlock Holmes" – had worked it out that this must be the relevant coast, despite the fact that the word Devon had been obliterated.

They are suddenly aware of faraway shouts coming through the opening of the cave. Leaving the still weak seaman lying inside, Tom Merry runs into the cove and Blake limps after him. But there is no sign of a boat and they are puzzled until a further hail from above causes them to look up. Eighty feet above them a cap is waved. Figgins shouts down that there were too many rocks for them to row close in to the cove. Clovelly fishermen had warned them of the danger.

Kerr has a large coil of rope ready to haul the two juniors to safety and he and the rest of the St. Jim's juniors are delighted when they see James Calcroft, strengthened by the sandwiches and ginger beer, emerge from the cave. Figgins and Lowther descend and secure the mate firmly to the rope and he is hauled to safety to Kerr, Wynn and D'Arcy. Tom Merry supports Blake when they take their turn to be hauled to the clifftop.

When they arrive at Figgins' uncle's cottage, Mr Gandish is pleased to provide James Calcroft with a bath and some clean clothes and to prepare a hearty meal for them all to enjoy. The mate has three days to make up for and the food goes down a treat. Fatty Wynn being left far behind in the grub stakes! The rescued seaman congratulates Kerr on his astuteness in deciphering what was left of his message in the bottle and thanks them all for saving his life. Glasses are raised. 'Gratters all round. Jollity reigns!

(From *Gem* 181, 29 Jul 1911, "The Secret of the Sea". Reprinted in *Gem* 1389, 29 Sep 1934 as "The Mystery of the Sea".

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**BOOK REVIEW** **by Brian Doyle**

**Alice's Adventures in Wonderland** by Lewis Carroll, illustrated by Helen Oxenbury. (Walker Books, London, 1999, £14.99)

Here is an Alice for the Millennium!

An Alice as fresh and new and as delightful and different from any you have ever seen before. An adorable, attractive, alive, amusing, appealing and alliterative Alice who is, in the brilliant hands of famous British children's books illustrator Helen Oxenbury, an endearing and entirely lovable new picturisation of the most famous little girl in English, indeed in world, literature. She is 'Alice 2000' and readers, young and not-so-young, will surely take her to their hearts.

Though an admirer of, and enthusiast for, Lewis Carroll's two Alice books since childhood (and a Founder-Member of the Lewis Carroll Society for over 30 years), I have always considered (and it's probably sacrilege to say so) Sir John Tenniel's original illustrations of Alice rather over-rated – she's rather over-solemn, a somewhat gloomy pudding of a tot, with an over-large head and face on a child's body. A little adult more than a little girl. And, of course, Tenniel's Alice never smiled once in any of his 92 black-and-white drawings for both Alice books. On the contrary she appeared cross, bad-tempered and bored. Never once did she relish or enjoy all those wonderful adventures she was having in Wonderland!


Since then, *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland* (no, the title isn't *Alice in Wonderland*) has been illustrated by more artists than any other children's book (possibly **any** other book). There have been well over 150 different English-language illustrated editions and many more in other countries. I myself possess over 120 different editions (and I reproduced 15 variant 'Alices' as illustrations in my book

*The Who's Who of Children's Literature* back in 1968).

In this new and superb edition, Helen Oxenbury's Alice is a slip of a girl in a slip of a dress. A brief, plain-blue dress worn with bare legs and white plimsolls (no, not 'trainers'!). Apparently, Oxenbury saw a little girl of 10 at a wedding she attended around four years ago, and thought she would make a perfect modern Alice! She was on a swing, then playing happily with balloons and in a stream, had long, golden hair, and wore a deep-red silk slip-dress. She was, the artist later discovered, named Madeleine Salvage, and the daughter of an actor and a dress designer. She's now 14 and is amused and honoured to have been the inspiration for a brand-new Alice book. "It's something to tell my grandchildren about" she says.

This new Alice then, has long, straight (but slightly dishevelled) golden hair, and an innocent, open little face, with a cheeky, devil-may-care expression on her pert and pretty features. She exudes a cheeky, so-what and faintly-amused air (and indeed, hair – but can you have amused hair – and can hair, however golden, laugh or even smile? It's one of those crazy little questions that Carroll's Alice is forever asking ....).

Oxenbury's Alice is certainly more lively and cheerful than Tenniel's. She smiles, laughs and looks like a happy, normal little girl – and one who actually enjoys tripping through the magical Wonderland, encountering its astonishing, odd, but strangely likeable creatures and characters, who each seem to combine the qualities of being at once larger and smaller than life (and, as Alice famously put it, 'curiouser and curiouser' ....) as she tries to accept and deal with the logic and logistics of an illogical Wonderland.

Helen Oxenbury's Alice is a child of today, a moppet of the Millennium, modern Elizabethan, rather than old Victorian, who is casually-dressed for a hot summer's day. Did you know, incidentally, that Alice's visit to Wonderland took place on May 4th? She actually mentions this just before, and during the famous tea-party scene. This was the exact date of Alice Liddell's (the 'original' real-life Alice) birthday – she was 7 on May 4th, 1859 – and, as Carroll intimated, that fateful trip to Wonderland happened on May 4th, 1859, on Alice Liddell's 7th birthday. The oft-quoted famous line in the *Star Wars* film is "May the Force be with you". Someone should perhaps have said to Alice, as she set out: "May the Fourth be with you". ....

This new Alice is spirited and personable; a daisy-fresh Alice maybe more 'Milly-Molly-Mandy' than Matilda (that unfortunate little girl in the depressingly-didactic *Struwelpeter*), more 'Hi!' than 'Heidi'.

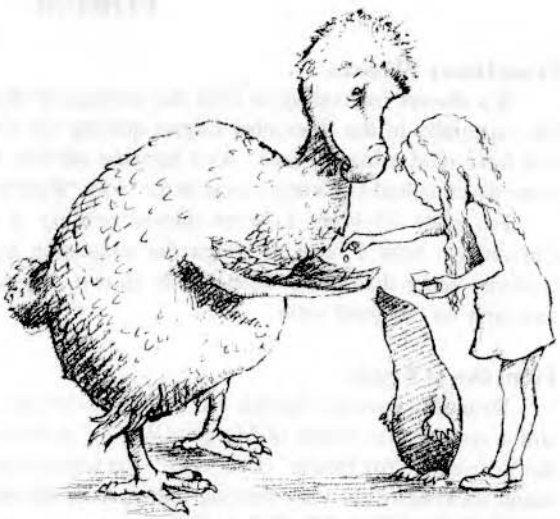
Oxenbury has done 110 illustrations for the new book (60 in full colour, 50 in black-and-white) (Tenniel did only 42 b/w for the original) and her colour pictures include many full-page and double-page spreads, which you can't take your eyes off.

Apart from her unique Alice, Oxenbury's illustrations include a host of other goodies, including a rather Dickensian White Rabbit, complete with pince-nez, and a fetching be-ruffed and polka-dotted jacket, worthy of Beau Brummell himself – all worn, oddly, without trousers (not even a furbelow!)

At the most renowned (and 'Goon-like') tea party of all time, Oxenbury introduces us to a Hatter, the like of which we have never seen before. He's a woebegone, moustachioed little man wearing a brightly-checked jacket (almost a Technicolored Dream-Coat, although his name is not Joseph, so far as we know), a blue waistcoat, pink bow-tie, orange trousers and, not the usual outsized top-hat, but three Panama-type hats,

each sporting what appear to be club cricketing colours. 'The Hatter', by the way, is always referred to thus, and never as 'The Mad Hatter', as most people imagine (this is a common misconception). (Things You Really Didn't Want to Know, No. 2386)!

The March Hare and the Dormouse are also memorably depicted and that lovely line (surely one of the funniest in Eng. Lit.) is there (sadly unillustrated, for some reason): "The last time she (Alice) saw them, they were trying to put the Dormouse in the tea-pot."



If and when you see this stunning book, take a close look at the Queen of Hearts (portrayed several times). It can't be, can it? Is it really a close and somewhat cheeky (but affectionate) depiction of our own dear Queen Elizabeth II ....? ('Off with Miss Oxenbury's head ....!).

Miss O. has illustrated many children's books and won many Awards during her distinguished career, but this must surely be her masterpiece. Rush out to Wonderland and buy your copy now!

And let us hope that Helen Oxenbury completes 'the double' by making her next major assignment the illustration of *Through the Looking-Glass* ....

*(Editor's Note: Since Brian wrote this review, the book has won the Kurt Maschler Award.)*

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# FORUM

**From Harry Blawers:**

It's always interesting to read the writings of Brian Doyle. He brings memories to life especially in the December Digest quoting the *Christmas Carol.* As he says, many will have read it many times. As a ten-year-old boy I was given a copy. Reading it my heart was touched as Bunter's was in the story "Bunter the Benevolent".

For over 70 years I never missed reading *A Christmas Carol* some time over Christmas. Now I have to watch the adaptation by video with Alistair Sim's acting certainly better than some the BBC has shown. Anyway, thanks for the memories Brian, and carry on the good work.

**From Des O'Leary:**

Strangely enough, though not a fervent devotee of girls' stories, as you know, but still a sympathetic reader of Margery Woods' articles on Cliff House, it was her "Round the Year with Cliff House" (December CD) which struck me most forcibly in that issue. I found its conclusion very moving and indeed, the most moving moment of Christmas, including our priest's Christmas sermon!

Nice to see Rupert Bear 'starring' again. I also enjoyed the Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee articles.

In the CD Annual I particularly enjoyed Una Hamilton-Wright's "Champagne Charley", a most interesting glimpse of the young 'Frank Richards'. Bill Bradford's "More Chums", helped by the excellent illustrations, was fascinating and Tony Glynn's "Comic Days" made my son laugh out loud when he finally was allowed to get a look at the articles!

Brian Doyle's easy style is always welcome and J.E.M.'s and Derek Hinrich's "Sexton Blake" articles, again with outstanding illustrations, were particularly gripping and Frank Richards' letter to the Rev. Jack Hughes was really most touching. My old friend, Donald Campbell, is another hobbyist who always expresses himself clearly and gracefully and, apart from his strange addiction to *Children's Hour* instead of, like me, going straight to the cinema right after school (there were three cinemas within 100 yards of our house) is not really such a bad chap! My wireless days were *ITMA* and *Happidrome* and, later, *Dick Barton* but, seriously, I recognise that I am the loser, not (so much anyway!) Donald.

Last but not least, Mary, was your feature on *Alice in Wonderland.* I found it scholarly, that's the right word, but not only thought-provoking but sad too in its picture of how the necessary maturing of a child, and for men usually a girl-child, I would say, into an adult leaves fathers, uncles, adults remembering the beautiful little girl who changes before their eyes into that confusing creature – a woman!

*(Editor's Note: An interesting point – but I've never found the process particularly confusing!)*

**From J.E.M.:**

An initial 'flip through' the Annual's pages uncovered those immortal Tenniel drawings so of course I could not resist your article, "Feminine Images ..." This is truly a

delight: vastly entertaining, thought-provoking and – if you'll forgive the ponderous word – scholarly. It deserves an audience in other places.

**From Donald Lang:**

I thought what you said about the Marjorie/Bob/Wharton relationship was spot on ... *(Editor's Note: In a letter I had commented that I thought ultimately Marjorie would have chosen Bob rather than Harry as better husband material because Wharton's moods could be daunting, while Bob would offer constant and serene support and would also be a lively and cheerful companion.)* With a brother like Hazel, she'd need all the light relief she could get. You sense that there's a great mutual respect and loyalty between Bob and Marjorie, which they appreciate in each other. Maybe there's a standing back, too, on Clara Trevlyn's part as there is on Harry's latterly *vis à vis* Bob and Marjorie. However, I'm not that well informed on the subject. Whither Clara with the dancing eyes! She always seemed on the ball in any encounters with the Co.; only Inky seemed to have the wits to subtly parry her verbal sallies, when she threatened to run rings round his pals ... Charles Hamilton seemed to have had a question mark about the depicting of his female characters; but Clara Trevlyn seemed reasonably lifelike; certainly for that age group. I wonder if she bears any resemblance to the Miss New York that was all buzz and go; or maybe to younger female members of his family? She does seem to have Bob Cherry's qualities, plus more mental awareness.

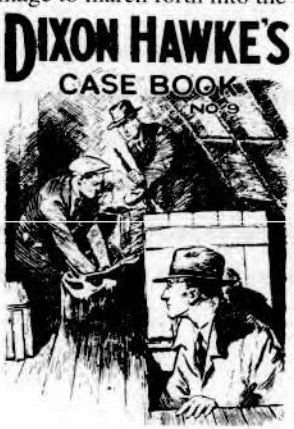
*(Editor's Note: Perhaps Una Hamilton Wright may have some enlightening comments for us on the background to Clara's creation? And I wonder if readers share my views on Marjorie's favouring Bob (in the long run) rather than Harry?)*

**From Ted Baldock:**

Annual received in first class order ... What a wonderful cover illustration! Congratulations on the selection.

Billy Bunter in all his glory. A disdainful and aristocratic Owl. The very manner with which he is drawing on his gloves surely is an indication of the genuine article. Well may the chauffeur stand to attention in the presence of such splendour.

It almost persuades one to think that somewhere there may well be a Bunter Court together with rolling parklands after all. A splendid image to march forth into the twenty-first century.

## BILLY AND BUNNY BOOKS

I wonder how many of your readers will remember the *Billy and Bunny Book*, which was published each year between 1921 and 1949? The annuals were published by the old established Dundee firm of John Leng, who also issued a range of children's books including *The Jolly Jigsaw Book*, *Three Men in a Tub* and *Wendy's Story Book*. Each annual was a fat, chunky volume printed on thick paper containing an illustration on every page and a rhyming caption. They were intended for very young readers and featured the adventures of Billy, a boy who always wore gaiters, shorts and a Scout hat, and Bun, a talking rabbit.

Generations of readers must have thrilled to the adventures of Bill and Bun as they encountered pixies, fairies, giants and witches, travelled to foreign lands, and took part in all manner of daring exploits. I well remember the thrill of receiving my first *Billy and Bun Book* at the tender age of four, and the wonderment with which I turned the pages and gazed at the pictures. One of their adventures particularly sticks in my mind in which the two heroes travel to Holland in a magic suitcase which can fly through the air. All the Dutchmen depicted in the illustrations wear baggy trousers and clogs. For years I was convinced that all Dutch people dress in this manner and that there is a windmill every few yards!

I still have my *Billy and Bunny* annuals and they are among my most cherished possessions. I owe them a debt of gratitude for it was these volumes, together with Kipling's *Just So Stories*, which helped me learn to read. The adventures of Billy and Bunny were so fascinating that the reader identified with them and wanted to keep turning the pages to find out "what happens next"? Do today's children with their computer games and instant access to information still possess that sense of wonder?

JOHN HAMMOND

# GATE-CRASHERS


As they soared along Bun shouted, " We'll get hurt when down we fall.
He was wrong ! They came down gently in front of a great high wall.
Then they scouted all around
Till a funny gate they found.
Books were built up to make pillars, while the gate they saw was made
Like an extra big book-cover, with a nursery rhyme portrayed
On it, in a picture bright.
" Well," said Bill, " we're there all right !"


## SEXTON BLAKE AND JAMES BOND

**by W.O.G. Lofts**

I must confess that I greatly enjoyed the James Bond novels by the creator Ian Fleming. Alas, there were only about a dozen of them, as he died a premature death in 1964. The first in 1953 was entitled *Casino Royal*, when the writer as an ex-MI5 man knew what he was writing about. The films, which curiously did not start until 1963 with *Dr. No* and Sean Connery I also greatly enjoyed, though they are of course more sensationalised than the books. Likewise I liked the later James Bond played by Roger Moore, though I preferred the former. Moore with his greater sense of humour was more suited to the Leslie Charteris *Saint* role.

Of course, I greatly enjoyed the Sexton Blake stories in my younger days, which also gave pleasure to millions in their time. Though today, in doing so much detective work, I can see their limitations of faulty plots and sloppy writing, especially in the period prior to the 'New Look' starting around 1955.

This brings me to the point that, at one period, none other than Ian Fleming was considering writing a Sexton Blake story! For this anecdote I am grateful to M. Howard Baker, who was editor of the 'New Look' *Sexton Blake Library* from around 1955 until the end.

'Monty' Haydon was not only a Director of Fleetway Publications, but a man full of ideas. It was he who had created the old *Thriller* for The Amalgamated Press way back in 1928. Recently he had met an old friend of his, Ian Fleming, at the Press Club, when they had discussed the possibility of his writing a Sexton Blake story. Whether he would include his famous creation is not known. Anyway the outcome was that Mr Baker phoned Ian Fleming at his Club, but unfortunately such a high fee was required that matters fell through. It must be remembered that there was a tight budget for the payment of stories. This was a pity as it would have been fascinating to have read a Sexton Blake story by such a fine writer. Older readers may recall that once Blake worked alongside Raffles the Gentleman Crook in the 'thirties in the *Sexton Blake Library*.

Sexton Blake and James Bond were of course completely opposite in every respect, though curiously I have noticed a similar pattern in solving cases between Bond and probably a more famous sleuth: the great Sherlock Holmes! Holmes nearly always received a visitor at Baker Street, where he or she poured out their troubles and where after much cogitation Holmes solved the mystery. James Bond likewise always made a visit but in a sort of reversed role. This was at the Headquarters of MI5. (The films show Admiralty Arch off the Mall which leads to Buckingham Palace.) 'M', his chief, then outlines a plot by foreign powers to take over the world, or cause international mayhem, and Bond has to step them and bring the affair to a successful conclusion.

It is also a fact that a number of the old Sexton Blake writers were actually in the British Secret Service – one was parachuted into China. Readers should read S.B.L. No. 130 (Third Series) October 1946 "The Man From Chun King" as well as noticing the author's absence from writing in the Library for a number of years. It's real life adventure!
(Editor's Note: I still have articles in my files from our dear and much missed literary sleuth, Bill Lofts, and I feel sure that readers will enjoy reading again the fruits of his researches.)

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## MORE ABOUT ALAN

(Further information has now been provided by Myra Stewart about her husband, Alan, whose passing we reported in the December CD. I feel that readers and London Club members will be glad to have these extra details about Alan's interesting life and work. M.C.)

*Myra says:*

Alan actually worked for the celebrated dance-band leader Geraldo, who supplied orchestras to Cunard and to hotels. In Alan's early days on the *Queen Mary* and the *Caronia* I think Alan was not the leader: this promotion came later, although it was some years prior to my meeting him in 1962 in Bermuda where I was engaged by a new hotel to set up an accounts system.

Alan became leader of Geraldo's 'London Society Orchestra' and always felt most fortunate to be in a job he loved, making music and entertaining, combined with the opportunity to see a great deal of the world at a time when the cost of travel to faraway places was prohibitive. After we had met and married in Bermuda, Alan bought a small boat and we had an idyllic time on the pretty coral island until the heat and humidity became too much for him.

He had joined the London O.B.B.C. in the early 1950s and, when the *Queen Mary* docked in New York, he had arranged to meet fellow-collector Jimmy Iraldi and they each carried a *Magnet* to identify themselves. He and Jimmy (and Jimmy's wife) became great friends and they entertained us royally on our honeymoon in New York some years later. Then, when Alan's ship went to Japan, he met Les Rowley in Tokyo and I expect that the same identification was carried. The O.B.B.C. truly spread its arms world-wide in those days. Alan's job took him to the U.S.A., South America, the Scandinavian countries, Tristan da Cunha, South Africa, the Caribbean and many other interesting places. Later, as he was approaching retirement, he formed his own small dance group to play in the U.K.

To quote from Ithaca – Alan's life was filled "with adventure and wisdom, laughter and love, gallantry and grace" and it was my good fortune to share that life for 37 years.

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## DENNIS BIRD WRITES:

Brian Doyle's excellent article on "Banning the Reads" showed how absurd are these arbitrary censorships by librarians. Bunter and William and Enid Blyton survive nevertheless, because the authors wrote just what young people most desired. Mr Doyle could have mentioned another misjudged writer – a great favourite of mine when I was twelve or so. This was Hugh Lofting, whose agonised witness of the suffering of Army horses in World War I made him a devoted advocate of animal causes. He invented the loveable, kindly Doctor John Dolittle, who was taught animal languages by the clever talking parrot Polynesia, and devoted the rest of his life to helping the animal kingdom.

There are twelve Dolittle books, and his travels took him to Africa and even to the moon. He befriended Prince Bumpo of the Joliginki tribe in Africa; the Prince later came to England to study at Oxford (or was it Cambridge?) University, and in order to fit in better with his fellow undergraduates he painted his face white. This is supposed to be offensive to present-day multi-racial readers – but in the context of Lofting's times (the 1930s) this was the mildest of jokes. And Bumpo features in only a very few pages of that substantial dozen of tomes. Far more important, and relevant to today, is John Dolittle's friendliness, and love of his fellow creatures. The Retired Cab and Wagon Horses' Association, the Rat and Mouse Club, the Canary Opera – what charming creations!

Another author who, if never banned, has been criticised for the wrong reasons, is Arthur Ransome. "Too middle-class!" sniff the pundits. True, the Swallows are the children of a Commander in the Royal Navy – but what is wrong with that? They are brought up to be self-reliant, truthful, and adventurous – valuable attributes! And Ransome had a sure touch with his working-class characters such as the old seaman Peter Duck, the charcoal-burners, the wherrymen, and above all the three boatbuilders' sons Joe, Bill, and Pete, who converse in convincing Norfolk dialect.

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## MORE GEMS OF HAMILTONIA — from Pete Hanger

Tea was on the table. But the Famous Five forgot tea, in the excitement of the latest news. They rushed down the stairs to look at the notice-board in the midst of a crowd of other fellows equally interested.

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked Bunter. "What about tea?"

He was not heeded. The chums of the Remove disappeared – forgetting tea. But it was not wholly forgotten. Billy Bunter looked after that little matter in their absence.

*Magnet* 1511

The train was not booked to start yet. The hidden Owl waited impatiently. It was rather dusty and far from comfortable under the seat, neither was there ample room for Bunter's unusual circumference. The railway company had taken no trouble whatever to make things comfortable for bilks.

*Magnet* 1510

"Oh!" roared Coker.

The Bull of Bashan, celebrated for his roaring, might have roared like that – but only in his more strenuous moments. *Magnet* 1503

"Good!" said Coker. "Where did you see him, Bunter? We're after that chap!"

"Oh, dear! I fuf-fuf-feel fuf-fuf-faint!" stuttered the Owl of the Remove. "That awful ruffian; he came for me with a club. I knocked him down - "

"Gammon!" said Potter.

"I mean I was going to knock him down, only – only - "

"Only you ran away instead," grinned Potter. *Magnet* 429

"And what were you doing in the box in the first place?" demanded Wharton.

Temple grinned faintly.

"Collaring it" he replied. "You owe us a feed. Sauce for the gander you know. Go and eat coke!"

"I say, you fellows, bump the rotters!"

"Good idea! Bump 'em!"

"The esteemed Temple must learn that he must not be saucy to the gander," said Hurree Singh solemnly. *Magnet* 415

Billy Bunter snorted. As a matter of fact, Bunter was not, for once, after a feed. He had tea'd with Peter Todd, in his own study, early; he had tea'd with Lord Mauleverer, in Study No. 12, later; and he had dropped into Study No. 3, to help Ogilvy and Russell dispose of some doughnuts. After which, even William George Bunter was feeling as if he could hold out till supper. *Magnet* 1516

"I say, Peter, how many s's do you put in disappointed?" he asked.

"As a rule," answered Peter, "only one. It saves ink."

"Well, you can't spell, old chap," said Bunter. "I thought there were two, and that settles it. I'll put in two."

"Put in three if you like," suggested Peter. "Or why not four? After all, ink's cheap. Besides, it's supplied by the school." *Magnet* 1521

"Shift, fathead!" said Bob Cherry. "Can't walk round you. We don't want to tire ourselves out before we start!" *Magnet* 1518

. . . . It was a lavish spread, a gorgeous spread – and Billy Bunter wrapped himself round it so extensively that he found it rather laborious work to get back to Greyfriars afterwards. *Magnet* 1521

People came hundreds of miles to view the picture gallery at Trant Elms on special days when the public were admitted to the same. Billy Bunter, however, would not have travelled a hundred inches for that purpose. *Magnet* 1526

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EXTRACT FROM *THE HIGHWAYMAN* BY ALFRED NOYES
ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES KEEPING (O.U.P. EDITION)

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees,
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas.
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,
And the highwayman came riding—
Riding—riding—
The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.

He'd a French cocked-hat on his forehead, a bunch of lace at his chin,
A coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of brown doe-skin.
They fitted with never a wrinkle. His boots were up to the thigh.
And he rode with a jewelled twinkle,
His pistol butts a-twinkle,
His rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jewelled sky.


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