STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 54 No. 641 MAY 2000

SOME MORCOVE PERSONALITIES

Miss Somerfield

" Miss Somerfield "—the school all cheer !
The best Headmistress anywhere.
Her kindly rule
Makes Morcove School
The school that is beyond compare.
A Head in whom we put our trust.
A Head who cannot be unjust.

The term is over—last roll-call.
We all assemble in " The Hall."
She speaks that day,
Of work and play
Of triumphs big, of triumphs small,
Tells of the girls who've prizes won,
But ne er a word of what *she's* done !

Ethel Courtway

Ethel Courtway, Head Girl—Hail !
Prominent in Morcove's tale.
Always ready,
Trusty, steady,
Laughs to scorn such words as " fail."
Still, should Fate its smiles refuse her,
Ethel proves a splendid loser.

In her den there hangs a card :
" Play the game and play it hard,
Play it cleanly,
Never meanly,
Make the School your first regard."
Thus she guides our schooldays' whirl,
Just a splendid English girl !

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR
Founded in 1941 by
W.H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST
Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

S.P.C.D. Edited and Published 1959 - January 1987 by Eric Fayne

VOL. 54 | No. 641 | MAY 2000 | PRICE £1.50

The picture on this page conveys the mood of summer relaxation which I wish for you all – long, leisurely sunny days when outdoor reading in the garden, by the river or on the beach is a particular pleasure. Just the time, in fact, to re-read the Water Lily or some other favourite *Magnet, Nelson Lee, Sexton Blake* or *Schoolgirl* series.

Often, of course, the fiction in our papers follows the pattern of the seasons. With this in mind I was intrigued by a suggestion from John Bridgwater, one of our long-standing subscribers. He writes: 'I recently had an idea for Blakiana... For my 80th birthday 2 years ago a friend gave me a copy of *The Times* published on the day I was born. It was very interesting to read. This gave rise to the thought "What was Sexton Blake doing on the day when I was born?" A little research revealed that he was engaged on a rather undistinguished case related to the theft of the proceeds of the sale of war bonds. Not much of a basis for an article after all, but perhaps one of our talented contributors could do better than in my case..."

SPECIAL DAYS

At the end of April I was one of the participants in the annual Richmal Crompton/William Day. As usual it was a lively and stimulating occasion, satisfying at both literary and social levels. Forthcoming one day events celebrating the work of favourite authors include those devoted to Enid Blyton (10th June) and to Anthony Buckeridge and Jennings (17th June). Details can be obtained from Norman Wright, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, Herts, WD1 4JL (Blyton), and Darrell Swift, 37 Tinshill Lane, Leeds, LS16 6BU (Buckeridge).

Happy Browsing.

MARY CADOGAN

****

"Smithy had brought out an old football to punt about in the quad during break"... How many times has an old 'footer' featured in the Greyfriars saga? And how many times was there a handy puddle left behind by the recent rain? The latter served not only to make the football muddy, but also for some unfortunate person to be 'sat' in! Sometimes the rotters and sometimes the good fellows, were the recipients of the muddy ball, and generally their faces were the target; as Frank Richards loved to say - "every bullet has its billet!" If Smithy or one of the members of the several football elevens, kicked the ball there would be a good chance - almost a certainty - that it would hit the right person - but if Bunter or Coker or even Alonzo Todd (whilst he was still at the school) tried, it would be a stone ginger that the wrong person would get the benefit of the misguided kick!

Sometimes of course a skilled soccer player would 'merely' knock the targeted person's hat off. One such person was Gilbert Tracy whose skill with a soccer ball was out of this world. When we first meet Gilbert, he is portrayed as a thoroughly unpleasant character - indeed the first tale to feature him was entitled "The Boy Who Wouldn't be Tamed!" (Magnet 1599). He just doesn't want to knuckle under and go to school - any school! - In view of the fact that his father - Captain Tracy, suffering from an old war wound - is unable to use his parental influence, Gilbert's upbringing was left to his uncle Sir Jiles Cakwood. Because Sir Giles was a neighbour of Colonel Wharton and an old

friend of Mr. Quelch, it seemed logical to see what effect a term at Greyfriars would have on the unruly boy whose only redeeming feature seemed to be his wizardry on the football field.

We are first made aware of his skill when after declining to punt an old footer about with Wharton and 'Inky', he suddenly takes over the ball, and plants it on Colonel Wharton's nose. The Colonel had been watching the boys from the open French windows of the library at Wharton Lodge.

When Harry thinking it was an accident gasped, "You clumsy ass!" Gilbert replies with - "Clumsy?" "Bet you couldn't have done it." And to prove it to the dis-believing duo, Gilbert proceeds to carry out the trick a second and third time, assuring the Colonel that he couldn't help it as he is clumsy with a soccer ball!

If you haven't read this series, beg or borrow it - you will find it very entertaining. It is not before he has created a lot of hassle that Tracy is finally installed at the school.

After he has been there about three weeks, Vernon-Smith bets Tracy he can't tip Coker's hat off in the quad, during morning break. Of course Gilbert hasn't any intention of pulling off this difficult feat. Having noticed that Mr. Quelch was standing at the open window of his study, he repeats the trick he played on Colonel Wharton, and lands the ball on his form master's majestic nose! I should add that owing to an arrangement with Dr. Locke, Gilbert can't be expelled; that would be too easy and just what the young rascal wants. It is very interesting to follow the battle of wits between pupil and master and how Gilbert eventually reforms.

Paradoxically Bunter, unable to take a nap in his study on a cold rainy half holiday, finally comes out to find the passage deserted. (The Removites had been playing passage football and creating a terrible din which like Macbeth had murdered sleep!). Seeing the abandoned ball lying there he gives it an almighty kick and returns to his study. Bunter was unaware that Mr. Quelch had been sighted from afar and was coming up the stairs. By a sheer fluke the ball hits the remove master on his nose and hurls him back down the stairs!

Mr. Quelch not knowing it was an accident and believing only Tracy possessed the necessary skill, marches him off to the headmaster. With rare sagacity Dr. Locke suggests that as nobody actually saw Gilbert, he should be given the benefit of the doubt...

But to return to footer in the quad, when Loder's relative comes to Greyfriars in the guise of a replacement games master (he had been wrongly convicted and sent to prison, Magnet Series 1493-1496), Coker thinks he sees a chance to show the new man his prowess as a footballer. Harry Wharton & Co. were punting an old footer about in the quad before tea. From his window the games master is looking down on them with a smiling face. Vernon-Smith playfully kicks the ball towards Coker, who when attempting to trap it misses it with his foot, but stops it with his nose – loses his balance and sits down! When asked to return the ball, Coker scrambles to his feet and kicks the ball intending to make it strike the bounder, thereby impressing the watching master. A loud yell followed – but not from the 'bounder'. It came from the new games master, who was now clasping one hand to his eye and the other brandished at Coker; and telling him in no certain terms what he thought of the fifth former's soccer expertise! As Frank Richards says in the story, Coker had hoped to catch the new man's eye – he did with a vengeance.

Another case of a football hitting the wrong person may be found in the first number of the Secret Seven series, Magnet 1300 "A Tyrant Rules Greyfriars" Chapter 4 "Goal". Once again we have the Famous Five punting a footer about in the quad, to be joined later by the 'bounder' and several others. With Loder of the Sixth as his target Bob Cherry aims a tremendous kick at the bullying prefect. Unfortunately Loder's friend Walker calls to him. This causes Loder to stop and turn his head. Missing Loder the ball whizzes past him through Mr. Prout's open window hitting the master in the back of his head. Prout pitches over, taking with him Coker whom he had been lecturing. "Bless my soul!" gasped Prout.

He resumed the perpendicular. He groped at the back of his neck, where the mysterious something had struck him. His plump fingers came away wet with mud. He stared dizzily at those muddy fingers, and then at the footer on his carpet...

****

PUTTING A FACE ON IT: A tribute to the Master Mummer by J.E.M.

Why are we so fascinated by disguise? Is it because, secretly, we sometimes wish to be someone else? Or is it simply that we all do have to wear disguises from time to time – to put on a cheerful, eager expression when in fact we are bored, or to look cool and confident when we are actually nervous and apprehensive? At all events disguise is inseparable from acting; and this is where we are reminded of those truly great performers with a thousand faces – thespians like the great Lon Chaney of silent film fame or, closer to Blakian ears, characters like Leon Kestrel the Master Mummer.

Created by Lewis Jackson, Kestrel is a dangerous criminal with a unique asset: his face, lacking any clearly defined features, is truly protean. It can be moulded into almost any shape and, with the skilful application of make-up and some consummate acting, Kestrel can turn himself into anybody – *anybody at all.*

The first tale of the Master Mummer appeared during World War One (the Sexton Blake Catalogue gives this as *The Case of the Cataleptic*, Union Jack, second series, number 620, while Brian Doyle in his Who's Who of Boy's Writers nominates *The Case of the Chinese Mascot*, Union Jack, second series, Number 641). In the year 1916, ten Kestrel stories appeared in the UJ, roughly one every five weeks; clearly the Master Mummer was a top favourite at this time. During the same period the popular Mlle Yvonne featured in just three issues. However, the following year saw only one Kestrel story when his creator was called up for war service. Returning to his typewriter after WWI, Jackson wrote four Kestrel Tales for the UJ in 1919, half a dozen in 1920 and eleven in the period 1921 to 1924. After that Kestrel appeared only twice more in the UJ

before that paper ceased publication in 1933. But this was not the whole story. In the early post-WW1 period referred to, the Sexton Blake Library was almost as strongly featuring the Master Mummer, thirteen stories being published between 1919 and 1921. We can now see that Kestrel's total contribution to the Blakian saga was a prodigious one, his golden age ending only in the mid-Twenties. But Kestrel and his accomplices, especially the glamorous but deadly Fifette Bierce, were never totally forgotten.

A hint of the Mummer's return was given in the early issues of Detective Weekly, which dealt with Sexton Blake's criminal brother, though a centre-stage appearance of Kestrel himself had to wait for *The Monster of Paris* (DW No. 13) and *The Panic Liner Plot* (DW No. 73). The first of these tales was certainly action-packed. From the early discovery of a murdered Negro outside the private hospital where Nigel Blake is detained, to the final recovery not only of a huge haul of stolen jewels but of the plans for a new war weapon (a submersible flying machine no less!), there is no shortage of incident. An international dimension is provided by hints of Japan's preparations for war with China and by Blake's pursuit of Kestrel to the Continent where we are given a colourful tour of Paris from its bistros to its catacombs. Here we also meet up again with Beaudelaire, the monstrous dwarf who is Blake's French informant – and a far more sinister character than Victor Hugo's Quasimodo from whom he surely derives! Additionally Kestrel's creator expects us not only to have at least a smattering of the French language but also an acquaintance with French writing. Go to the bottom of your form if you don't remember Monsieur Perrichon!

The second of the two DW Kestrel stories, *The Panic Liner Plot*, concerns an elaborate scheme to create such terror on a transatlantic liner that its wealthy passengers will insist on putting all their jewellery and valuables in the purser's safe, after which Kestrel, in the guise of the purser, will collect the lot and, along with Fifette, make his escape by a seaplane carrying the insignia of the New York Police Department. Thanks to Sexton Blake, of course, the theft is foiled, though not before Kestrel has disguised himself as at least three different people, including Blake himself. This takes a bit of swallowing but it does provide, as all Kestrel stories do, some nice surprises; you simply never know who is going to turn out to be who and this is surely what gives yarns about the Master Mummer their appeal.

However, one nagging question constantly presents itself. If Kestrel really could so successfully fool the world with his disguises he would surely not need the elaborate plots and stratagems he deploys to carry out his crimes. Sometimes, Lewis Jackson himself seems to be uneasy about this, often suggesting that it is the battle of wits with Sexton Blake that Kestrel really enjoys rather than his desire for booty. In any case, these stories are superb and memorable hokum to enjoy and it is worth reflecting, when we look at more modern crime fiction with its often sadistic villains and wanton females, that Leon Kestrel abhorred violence while the beautiful Fifette Bierce could entice any male without removing a single garment...

Writing under my initials only, it might be thought that I am myself affecting a sort of disguise. By an absurd inadvertence that is no longer important, my first Digest contribution (made 30 years ago!) appeared under my initials, so thereafter, if not very

logically, I made this my standard practice. As our Editor and a number of correspondents know, my name is James Edward Miller but since this hardly carries any special resonance I will stick to just plain – if now no longer mysterious! – J.E.M.

****

I REMEMBER

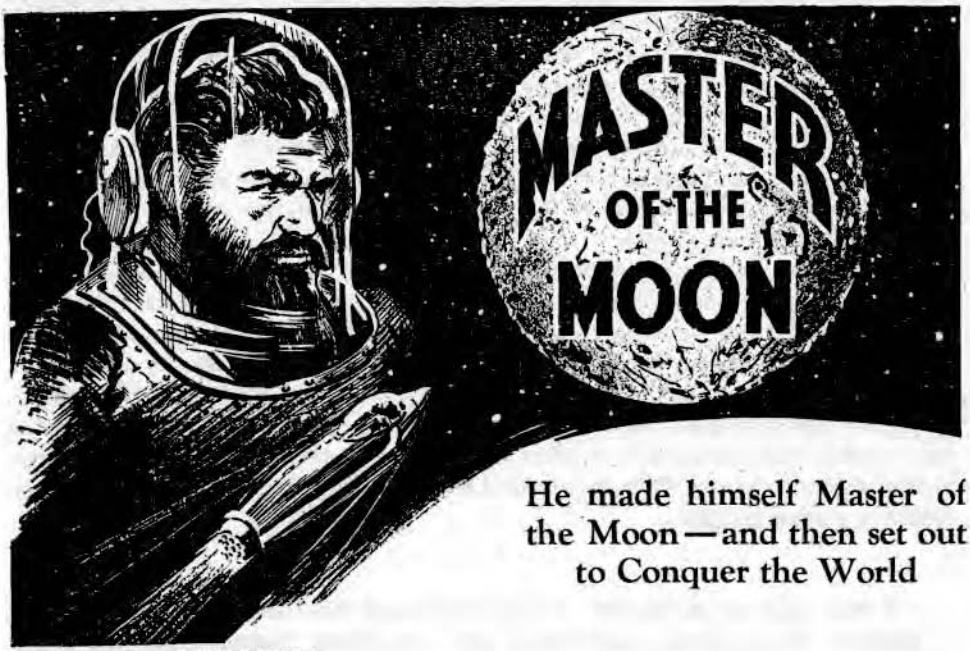
by Bill Bradford

On the 10th February 1934, I purchased the first issue of a new publication entitled SCOOPS. The proprietors, C. Arthur Pearson, claimed it was the story paper of tomorrow and Britain's only weekly science paper. Approximately 12½" x 9" in dimension, the first 10 issues were of 32 pages, thereafter reduced to 28. Available on Thursdays, priced 2d, the current cost then of most weekly boy's (and girl's) papers.

The covers of the first 12 issues were predominantly in black and red and the work of Serge Drigin, a gifted artist who specialised in aerial scenes. He also did many of the black and white illustrations within. Another illustrator was E.P. Kinsella, whom we mainly associate with the SCOUT. No. 1 issue saw the start of 3 serials, authors unknown, as was the case of nearly all the stories throughout the 20 week run.

The first serial, MASTER OF THE MOON, ran for 11 weeks and concerned a discredited scientist who ruled that planet and dragon-like monsters, and also tried to conquer the World. The second serial, THE STRIDING TERROR, features an ailing youth whose father experiments with a new serum which develops the lad into a 50 foot

Startling Wonder Series—Begins to-day



giant. The scene moves from a desert island to England where the giant is captured and held in a circus. Eventually he escapes and is instrumental in saving London from a disaster in the 8th instalment.

The third serial, VOICE FROM THE VOID, takes 12 issues to relate how a crippled survivor from the World War defeats warmongers to preserve peace. This first issue also contained 4 short stories and several scientific articles. This was the average format over the weeks.

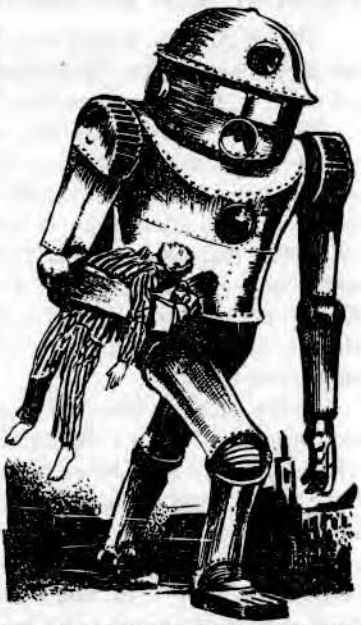
In issues 9-16 we find DEVILMAN OF THE DEEP, in which a voyage to the bottom of the Atlantic reveals a weird world populated with 'fish men' who have arms and legs like tentacles but are able to converse with the explorers. THE BLACK VULTURES, by George E. Rochester, was serialised between number 12-20 and is a tale of aerial pirates within the not too distant future. This story was published in hardback, by John Hamilton in 1938.

In No. 13 and over 6 weeks we find THE POISON BELT by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, a Professor Challenger story in which the World is in a coma for 28 hours as a result of a deadly belt of ether. During this period there are world-wide disasters. This story was published by Hodder and Stoughton in 1913, having previously appeared in the STRAND MAGAZINE.

SPACE, a serial between numbers 2-11, about a floating island in the void, was credited to Professor A.M. Low, a distinguished scientist who is reported to have demonstrated television in 1914. Worthy of mention are 3 short stories by Edwy Searles Brooks, namely NO. 9 SUBMARINE TANK NO 1, No. 10 THE IRON WOMAN, No. 15 THE MARCH OF THE BERSERKS.

Each week page 2 was devoted to new wonders of the world, current or predicted, some of which, written about in 1934, are fascinating and include:
Television and possibilities of viewing current events and talking films
Development of a road rail and aeroplane terminus.
Airliners of tomorrow with 1500 passengers and air speed of 200 MPH.
Harnessing of the sun to provide energy for lighting.
Giant observatories to view the stars.
Space ships driven by rocket propulsion.
An airport platform over the Thames.
Night eyes for the Fleet by Nightovision (Radar).
Car phones, by plugging into telephone poles.
Plans for power from wind and air current.

The 20th and final issue of SCOOPS appeared on 23rd June 1934. Some 20 years ago a complete run could fetch £150 to £200 although I think prices are now more realistic. I suspect prices have been dictated by scarcity rather than contents. I must



The giant Robot stalked through the city of darkness, the helpless figure of Peter Kester held under its great steel arm.

February 10, 1934—SCOOPS

confess that I only, originally, purchased this paper for about the first 6 weeks although 40 years later I obtained a complete set from Norman Shaw. To attempt this report I have waded through every copy. The main themes are adventures in outer space, facing weird monsters or mechanical robots; alternatively there are numerous invasions of Earth (mainly the British Isles) by said undesirables, usually controlled by a mad scientist.

I have never been a great fan of science fiction, although the occasional boys magazines serial made a novel change, but a paper almost entirely devoted to same was not for me at the age of ten. The short life of Scoops does suggest I was not the only reader who thought enough is enough!! Apart from the SCOUT I cannot recall any other publications by Pearson's in the field of weekly papers for boys.

****

UNUSUAL NEW BOYS at ST. FRANKS — by E. Grant-McPherson

One of the most wicked boys and, certainly, one of those having the shortest stay at the old College was the Greek Junior, Titus Alexis. He arrived in No. 221 old series, and left in No. 222, having burned the College house to the ground.

Placed in study M, by Mr. Crowell, the Remove Form Master, he started trouble almost immediately. Every time De Valerie and Somerton, his study mates, entered the room, he had a habit of leaving; the two tried to be pleasant as he was a new boy, and they wanted to be on good terms, so Somerton decided to hold a 'spread in the study. He and De Valerie had been quite busy; they borrowed some extra crockery and laid the table with a new cloth and dainties of all descriptions. They had just left the room, when Alexis came in, a small parcel in his hand. He took one look at the table, shoved all the plates to one end, and rolled back the cloth and proceeded to unpack his parcel, and lay out his own food.

A few minutes later Somerton returned. "So you're here old chap, we have been looking — hey! what's the idea of mucking up the table!" "I share this study" said Alexis, "I have a right to my third of the table, and I have got my own food here." The Duke stared at him in amazement, "But the the table was laid for us all". "I want nothing from you English boys, I eat my own food", said the Greek junior. "When Val. comes in you will probably get a punch on the nose, for saying things like that, he's not as easygoing as I am". "He would not dare to touch me" said Alexis. "Do you think I would allow an English pig-boy to lay hands on me?"

After this amazing threat, he actually tries to attack Somerton with a table knife, fortunately De-Valerie returns just in time to stop any real harm being done. The two juniors decide not to tell the masters about this, but they do ask Mr. Crowell to move him

from the study, which he does, giving him an empty study at the far end of the remove passage.

The Greek junior continues to put everybody's back up, by his arrogance and rudeness, which, needless to say, earn him a great many punches. Then one day, while standing in the Quad, a cricket ball tossed by Chubby Heath, hits him on the leg, he picks up the ball and hurls it at Heath with all his might, striking the unlucky fag on the head, and knocking him unconscious. Nipper sees this and proceeds to give Alexis a real thrashing. Nelson Lee sees this, and starts to tell Nipper off --- just then, one of Heath's chums runs up to Lee, and asks him to come and look at the unconscious fag.

After an enquiry, during which the Greek junior shows no remorse, but again, only insolence, the housemaster gives him a good caning, and Alexis leaves Mr. Lee's study, swearing to be revenged. This he endeavours to accomplish by enlisting the aid of Fullwood and Co., who have no particular love for Nipper, to help him rag him (as they are led to believe). They lure Nipper into the vaults of the Old Monastery Ruins, and there tie him up, and paint his hair and face. Having done this, Alexis leaves with Fullwood and his friends, laughing and saying what a good jape it was.

A little later he returns by himself, and carrying a heavy cane, he proceeds to thrash the bound and helpless removite, until he is almost unconscious, laughing and jeering all the while. Meanwhile Fullwood and Co. pass Watson and Sir Montie, and taunt them, with what they have done to Nipper. The two chums make them tell where they have left the Remove Captain and run to release him. When, accompanied by Handy and his two pals they finally discover the beaten junior, they are appalled at his condition, and try to smuggle him back to the dormitories. On the way, however, they are seen by the Remove Master, who immediately institutes enquiries. When Fullwood is questioned, he swears Nipper was unhurt when they left. Nipper of course corroborates this, and the Greek junior is sent for. He admits that he was to blame, but says he is glad, and that it was deserved.

Mr. Crowell takes Alexis to Dr. Stafford, who cannot believe his ears, and orders that Alexis is to be flogged in front of the whole school the next day. This is duly carried out, with the recipient screaming curses at the Head, and calling him a brutal swine, etc.

That night, Nipper who finds it difficult to sleep because of his bruises, goes to the dorm window, to get a little fresh air, and sees a figure coming out of one of the College house cellars. He goes to find Mr. Lee to tell him, but by the time the detective gets to the window, they see that the building is on fire. The alarm is given, and all the boys and staff are assembled in the Quad, where the roll is called. All are found to be present, with the exception of Alexis. By this time the fire brigade has arrived, and are attacking the flames. Then Alexis is spotted on the roof. He is rescued, and locked in the Ancient House punishment room, until his parents arrive to take him from the old College, much to the relief of the entire school.

COMICAL PARADOX AND TROLL BOGIES by Mark Caldicott

Some of the enjoyable aspects of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter stories are that while they are primarily adventure stories, they are also very funny. Essentially action stories, the humour is woven into the action so as not to detract from it.

This can be seen for example, in the episode which seals the friendship between Harry, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger. Up until this point Hermione has been viewed by Harry and Ron as a priggish swot. While Ron is having trouble making his wand do as he commands, Hermione, having studied the books and practised beforehand, is able to do everything she is asked and is praised in class by the master. This annoys Ron – "It's no wonder no one can stand her', he said to Harry as they pushed their way into the crowded corridor. 'She's a nightmare, honestly'". Hermione has heard Ron and pushes past him in tears, rushing away to lock herself in the girls' lavatories.

There then happens one of the hazards of school life at Hogwarts – the escape of a club-wielding troll, gigantic and dangerous. Pupils are herded off to the safety of the dormitories. Harry realises that Hermione hasn't been warned of the troll, now heading her way. Harry and Ron, not considering their own safety, rush to try to head off the troll. When the evil-smelling giant lumbers into one of the rooms in the corridor, Harry grabs the key, slams the door and locks the troll inside.

> Flushed with their victory they started to run back up the passage, but as they reached the corner they heard something that made their hearts stop – a high, petrified scream – and it was coming from the chamber they'd just locked up.
> "Oh no," said Ron.
> "It's the girls' toilets!" Harry gasped.
> "*Hermione!*" they said together.
> It was the last thing they wanted to do, but what choice did they have? Wheeling around, they sprinted back to the door and turned the key, fumbling in their panic – Harry pulled the door open – they ran inside. ("Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone", 1997)

This certainly marks a departure from any of the old story paper episodes, none of which I can recalled featuring boys in the girls' toilets!

Ron shouts to the troll to attract its attention away from Hermione. When the troll advances on Ron, Harry shows his bravery by jumping up and fastening his arms round the troll's neck from behind. "The troll couldn't feel Harry hanging there, but even a troll will notice if you stick a long bit of wood up its nose – and Harry's wand had still been in his hand when he jumped – it had gone straight up the troll's nostrils." The troll turns in anger and raises his club to deal Harry a terrible blow. At this point at last Ron get the hang of using his wand, and the troll is knocked unconscious by his own club. Harry retrieves his wand from the troll's nose.

> It was covered in what looked like lumpy grey glue
> "Urgh – troll bogies."
> He wiped it on the troll's trousers.

Professor McGonagall arrives and is about to vent her anger on Harry and Ron for staying from the dormitories when Hermione tells a white lie to save them, claiming she had come looking for the troll because she thought she could deal with it and that Harry and Ron had come to rescue her. That Hermione could like to help them out, getting herself into trouble instead, revealed her to Harry and Ron in a new light. Their friendship was cemented. "There are some things you can't share without ending up liking each other, and knocking out a twelve-foot mountain troll is one of them."

This episode is one of action and adventure, of danger and bravery, of rescuing a fellow without thought for self and the cementing of friendship. The error of actually

locking the troll in the same room as Hermione (don't they label the lavatory doors?), the wand in the nose, the troll bogies and the wiping on the troll's trousers – these are touches which at the same time lighten the episode to high comedy.

It is possibly because the stories are so delightfully humorous that those commentators who note the relationship with these stories and the older, more traditional children's stories have also claimed a line of development from Richmal Crompton's William stories or Anthony Buckeridge's Jennings. In fact I would argue that this is one tradition that the stories do not follow. In explaining why this is the case we also uncover another link between the Harry Potter stories and those of St. Frank's.

Harry Potter is a boy of about the same age as Jennings or William. Nevertheless he is nothing like them. He has the characteristics and thinking patterns of an adult. This quality he has in common with the boys of St. Frank's (and, for that matter the fellows of Greyfriars and Enid Blyton's Famous Five). Adult thinking provides one of the fundamental elements which give the Harry Potter stories the feel of an old fashioned adventure and separates them from the William or Jennings tales.

Harry is always willing to face danger when it is necessary for the achievement of his aims. He and his pals seek out excitement and are enthusiastic for a battle. The St. Frank's Remove likewise have this attitude. Harry, in a tight spot, thinks and acts in the same way that he would if he were a grown man. In the same way Nipper, faced with danger, is no different in thought or action from Nelson Lee.

The Jennings or William stories are not primarily adventure stories based on action and heroism. They are comedies, and the humour emerges from the very fact that neither Jennings nor William thinks in the same way as the adults in the stories. It emerges from the operation of a juvenile logic in the world of adults. Humour arises from the way juvenile logic turns the adult world on its head.

Two episodes spring to mind to illustrate this. The first is the incident where Jennings is told, as a punishment, to put his head under a tap. He returns with a dry head, and Mr. Wilkins accuses him of disobeying his orders. Jennings is surprised, and indignantly defends himself. "I did put my head under the tap sir. But you didn't tell me to turn it on."

Or with the William episode where he listens attentively to a homily on honesty and decides to act upon the moralising lady's insistence that he should always tell the truth. This same lady does not take kindly to William's literal interpretation of her instruction when, meeting the lady later on and asked to comment on the lady's look's and attire, he is truthful, though far from flattering.

One could not imagine Harry Potter, Nipper or any of their chums acting in this way, at least not in the literal, innocent way that Jennings or William do. If, then, this is not the source of humour, if Harry Potter's thinking logic is not juvenile logic, then what is the source of the comedy? In describing the possible influences on the development of the Joanne Rowling's Harry Potter stories I have already mentioned Terry Pratchett. The use of a fantasy world to develop comical paradox is the approach which Terry Pratchett has used so successfully. The use of magic to create comical paradox is an art in which Joanne Rowling also excels, and herein lies the source of the comedy in the Harry Potter stories.

Humour arises from the way that the normal and magical world interact, and the way not juvenile logic, but the paradox of magic turns the adult world on its head. The humour in the Harry Potter books comes from the paradoxical view of a world which is a normal everyday (natural) world, but which is overlaid with incidents which do not follow natural laws.

The humour is not in what Harry says or how he acts. It comes when the ordinary is given a bizarre twist, such as, in the above example, the size of a troll's bogies, or, in an example from the third book, the Headmasters announcement: "I am sorry to tell you that Professor Kettleburn, our Care of Magical Creatures teacher, retired at the end of last year in order to spend more time with his remaining limbs".

Brooks' St. Frank's stories do not derive their humour either from the comical paradox of a fantasy world or the juvenile logic of a William. Nor is Brooks a Dickens or a Charles Hamilton where mastery of English allows them to develop comedy through irony and allusion. What they do share with the Harry Potter stories is that comedy is not (at least in the better stories) intended as an end in itself, but is blended into the action like yeast into flour to make the while thing humorous and light-hearted, buoyant and easy-going.

The elaborate speech of Archie Glenthorne and the bone-headedness of Handforth, for instance, flows in and out of the real purpose of the stories – adventure. Occasionally there are sparkling instances of situation comedy in the stories, as, for example, during the Boxing Day celebrations at Handforth Towers when Handforth claims that he will identify Irene Manners at the evening ball despite her fancy dress and mask. Irene challenges him that if he can identify her and kiss her beneath the mistletoe, she will dance with him for the rest of the evening. In order to puncture Handforth's ego, Irene conspires to exchange costumes with Willy Handforth and at the same time to allows Handforth to overhear her conversation about her costume. Handforth duly spots the costume and confidently comments to Church and McClure on "Irene's" well-turned ankles and graceful figure. He grabs Willy and kisses him under the mistletoe, then, to make matters worse, picks an argument with Willie (who is really Irene) and throws her through the window into a snow drift. This incident is indeed very funny. However, when Brooks was required by his more misguided editors to write comedy as an end in itself these stories were not so successful.

I would like to conclude this "guest appearance" of Harry Potter in the *St. Frank's – and ESB* column with an observation. We can all, I think, share the view that there is no experience quite like getting totally lost in a book. Unfortunately, in this sound-byte age when children's entertainment is engineered towards a short attention span, it is an experience which seems to be happening less and less. It says a great deal, then, that on our recent overland trip to the middle of France the back of the car (occupied, as usual, by Thomas and Eleanor) was unusually quiet. Games Boys and Walkmans (or is that Walkmen?) and complaints of boredom were abandoned; no one seemed to be bothered if we were nearly there yet. Instead, Harry Potter books were being read. It takes a great deal of skill for a writer to beat the technological competition and absorb young readers in old fashioned adventure yarns. Joanne Rowlands seems to be one of the few to have that skill and I think we should applaud her.

****

WANTED: All pre-war *Sexton Blake Libraries*. All *Boys Friend Libraries*. All comics/papers etc with stories by W.E. Johns, Leslie Charteris & Enid Blyton. Original artwork from *Magnet, Gem, Sexton Blake Library* etc. also wanted. I will pay £150.00 for original *Magnet* cover artwork, £75.00 for original *Sexton Blake Library* cover artwork. NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 EASTBURY ROAD, WATFORD, WD1 4JL.
Tel: 01923-232383.

****

FOR SALE: Many Hamiltonia/Baker Magnet, Gem vols, Holiday Annuals, in dust jackets. Museum Press, also original Holiday Annuals. C.D. Magazines, some 1970s, 1980s, Jennings, Mandeville, Cassell, Hawk. This England magazines, mint some 19080s, This England Index and one binder. Also Skipper, Rover, Lion, Eagle, Knockout, Film Fun Annuals, Tom Merry's Own, School Friends Annuals. All items reasonable price. S.a.e. please

WANTED: Girl's Own Annuals, except the years 1928, 1931, 1933, 1937. Also pre-1940 Golden Annuals for Girls; 'The Celebrated Cases of Dick Tracy' and pre-1950 Dick Tracy comics/strips. Also 'Archie and Jug Head comics'. Please write to J. Houghton, 93 Enfield Street, Pemberton, Wigan, WN5 8DJ.

****

COLIN CREWE CATALOGUETTE . NUMBER 5.
BOYS' AND GIRLS' STORYPAPERS, COMICS AND BOOKS,
THE SECRETS OF THE SHELVES AND BOXES REVEALED
MONTHLY IN STORYPAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST.
12B WESTWOOD ROAD, CANVEY ISLAND, ESSEX SS8 0ED
TELEPHONE: 01268-693735. 9AM - 9PM DAILY

THE MAGNIFICENT MAGNET-GEM and MISCELLANEOUS VOLUMES OF WILLIAM HOWARD BAKER. All volumes are in at least very good condition with dustwrappers. 10% DISCOUNT ON ORDERS OF 3 OR MORE BOOKS. Alternative choice of books if possible please.

TERMS: Payment on satisfactory receipt of goods plus postage at cost. Four book rooms of stock. Visitors welcome by appointment. Come and see me soon.
Happy Reading, Colin.

MAGNET OMNIBUS VOLUMES

Vol. 1 Billy Bunter in the Land of the Pyramids £20
Vol. 2 The Rebellion of Harry Wharton £25
Vol. 3 Billy Bunter of Bunter Court £12.50
Vol. 4 Billy Bunter and the Terror of the Form £12.50
Vol. 5 Billy Bunter and the Courtfield Cracksman £25
Vol. 5a Billy Bunter and the Courtfield Cracksman £35
Vol. 6 The Downfall of Harry Wharton £22
Vol. 7 Billy Bunter and the Greyfriars Pretender £22
Vol. 8 The Mystery of Wharton Lodge £30
Vol. 9 The Scheme of the Remove £18
Vol. 10 Billy Bunter and the Greyfriers Mutiny £18
Vol. 11 Six Boys in a Boat £25
Vol. 12 The Greyfriars Adventurers £18
Vol. 13 Bunter the Ventriloquist £20
Vol. 14 My Lord Bunter £25
Vol. 15 Calling Mr. Quelch £30
Vol. 16 Harry Wharton's Enemy £35
Vol. 17 The Black Sheep of Greyfriars £35
Vol. 18 The Stacey Series Special (Greyfriars Double) £150
Vol. 19 The Greyfriars Hikers £25
Vol. 20 Alonzo the Great £20
Vol. 21 The Tyrant of Greyfriars £25
Vol. 22 Billy Bunter's Christmas £35
Vol. 23 The Joker of Greyfriars £25
Vol. 24 The Kidnapped Schoolboys and the Terror of the Tong £35
Vol. 24a The Mysterious Mr Krantz £80
Vol. 25 Billy Bunter in China £35
Vol. 25a Greyfriars Chums in China £200
Vol. 26 A Bargain for Bunter £35
Vol. 27 The Shadow Over Harry Wharton £28
Vol. 28 Billy Bunter's Circus £18
Vol. 29 The Mystery of the Moat House £35
Vol. 30 The Burglar of Greyfriars £35
Vol. 31 Billy Bunter's Hat Trick £25
Vol. 32 The Greyfriars Cowboys £12.50
Vol. 33 The Sleuth of Greyfriars £25
Vol. 34 Bunter's Seaside Caper £22
Vol. 35 The Sit-in Strike at Greyfriars £25
Vol. 36 Bob Cherry's Big Bargain £25
Vol. 37 Billy Bunter's Lucky Day £25
Vol. 38 Bunter Tells the Truth £25
Vol. 39 The Ghost of Polpelly £35
Vol. 40 Billy Bunter's Coronation Party £25
Vol. 41 Billy Bunter's Hair Raid £18
Vol. 42 The Greyfriars Secret Society £30
Vol. 43 The Dictator of Greyfriars £30
Vol. 44 Billy Bunter in Brazil £14
Vol. 45 Gunmen at Greyfriars £12.50
Vol. 46 The Popper Island Rebels £14
Vol. 47 The Schoolboy Smuggler £12.50
Vol. 48 Bunter's Christmas Party £22
Vol. 49 The Mystery Man of Greyfriars £14
Vol. 50 Billy Bunter's Easter Trip £12.50
Vol. 51 The Bounder's Rebellion £20
Vol. 52 Bunter the Hypnotist £20
Vol. 53 Billy Bunter's Banknote £18

Vol. 54 Vernon-Smith's Rival £12.50
Vol. 55 Bunter the Lion-Tamer £14
Vol. 56 Bunter's Funny Turn £20
Vol. 57 Expelled from Greyfriars £15
Vol. 58 Bunter's Christmas Carol £20
Vol. 59 Bunter's Rich Relation £12.50
Vol. 60 The Greyfriars Impersonator £14
Vol. 61 The Schoolboy Tourists £12.50
Vol. 62 The Big Bang at Greyfriars £12.50
Vol. 63 Bunter's Orders £12.50
Vol. 64 Billionairing with Bunter £12.50
Vol. 65 Greyfriars on Safari £12.50
Vol. 66 Ructions at Greyfriars £12.50
Vol. 67 Bunter at St. Jim's £22
Vol. 68 The Rogue of the Remove £14
Vol. 69 The Bully of Greyfriars £12.50
Vol. 70 Billy Bunter's Convict £12.50
Vol. 71 The Greyfriars Second Eleven £12.50
Vol. 72 The Shylock of Greyfriars £14
Vol. 73 Under Bunter's Thumb £14
Vol. 74 Billy Bunter's Prize £12.50
Vol. 75 The Greyfriars Bounder £14
Vol. 76 Billy Bunter's Blunder £12.50
Vol. 77 Harry Wharton's Feud £12.50
Vol. 78 The Persecution of Billy Bunter £18
Vol. 79 The Odd Fellows of Greyfriars £14
Vol. 80 For Ever Bunter £16
Vol. 81 The Greyfriars Mysteries £14
Vol. 82 Billy Bunter Expelled! £18
Vol. 83 The Greyfriars Rivals £14
Vol. 84 The Greyfriars Actors £14
Vol. 85 Bunter's Postal Order Mystery £12.50
Vol. 86 Bowling Out under £14
Vol. 87 Bunter's Poor Relations £14
Vol. 88 Billy Bunter's Wembley Party £12.50
Vol. 89 The Iron Hand at Greyfriars £12.50
Vol. 90 Wally Bunter at Greyfriars £20
Vol. 91 The Greyfriars Cup £16
Vol. 92 Napoleon of Greyfriars £18
Vol. 93 Bunter the Punter £18
Vol. 94 Bunter's Barring-Out £14
Vol. 95 Detective Bunter! £14
Vol. 96 Mr. Bunter – Form Master £14
Vol. 97 Bunter's Lawsuit £12.50
Vol. 98 The Society for Reforming Billy Bunter £14
Vol. 99 Billy Bunter – Film Star £15
Vol. 100 Goodbye Greyfriars £20

GEM OMNIBUS VOLUMES

No. 1 D'Arcy the Runaway £12.50
Vol. 2 Cardew of St. Jim's £12.50
Vol. 3 The Rebel of St. Jim's £12.50
Vol. 4 Tom Merry and the Night Raiders £12.50
Vol. 5 The Boys of St. Jim's £12.50
Vol. 6 Tom Merry's Holiday £25
Vol. 7 The Spectre of St. Jim's £12.50
Vol. 8 Tom Merry's Best £12.50
Vol. 9 Tom Merry's Party £12.50
Vol. 10 Gay Dogs of St. Jim's £12.50
Vol. 11 D'Arcy Maximus £12.50
Vol. 12 High Jinks at St. Jim's £12.50
Vol. 13 Tom Merry's Enemy £12.50
Vol. 14 The Japers of St. Jim's £12.50
Vol. 15 The Plotters of St. Jim's £12.50
Vol. 16 Tom Merry's Bodyguard £12.50
Vol. 17 A Cockney at St. Jim's £12.50
Vol. 18 Tom Merry's Weekly £12.50
Vol. 19 Tom Merry and Co. on Strike £12.50
Vol. 20 The Mystery of Eastwood House £15

ANNUALS AND COLLECTORS' PIES

The Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1973 £14
The Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1974 £20
The Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1975 £18
The Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1976 £18
The Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1977 £14
The Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1978 £14
The Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1979 £14
The Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1980 £14
The Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1981 £14
The Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1982 £14
The Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1983 £14
The Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1984 £14
The Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1985 £14
The Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1986 £14
The Howard Baker Easter Omnibus £14
The Howard Baker Summer Omnibus £14
The Howard Baker Holiday Annual 1974 £14
Billy Bunter's Own £14
Collectors' Pie No. 1 £14
Collectors' Pie No. 2 £14
Collectors' Pie No. 3 £14
Collectors' Pie No. 4 £14
Collectors' Pie No. 5 £14

KIND, gentle, incapable of spite, is the nature of Marjorie Alice Hazeldene, of Cliff House's Fourth Form. It is no small wonder, therefore, that she has endeared herself to every girl in the school—particularly to the "babies" of the Second Form.

Nobody has ever heard Marjorie breathe a word of jealousy or "cattiness" against another girl. Nobody has ever seen Marjorie lose her temper or has ever heard her utter a bad-tempered word.

Yet for all her quiet and gentle ways Marjorie is not the girl to be "sat on." She has a habit of repaying good for evil, which is even more humiliating to those who would do her harm than any counter-hitting could be.

If she does not believe in running unnecessary risks, she is no "goody-goody." She has plenty of the right sort of pluck when real risks must be faced, and she is never backwards when it comes to taking part in the prankish activities of the Form.

Yet it is strange to find that Marjorie's best chum is headstrong, boisterous Clara Trevlyn, and it is stranger still, perhaps, to learn that the girl Clara admires above all others is this shy, retiring girl whose habits, ideas and methods are so directly opposite the Tomboy's own.

Apart from Clara, Marjorie is fond of her rather wayward cousin, Ralph Lawrence, games captain of Friardale School.

Marjorie has not a great deal of money—indeed, she is one of the poorest girls in the Form. Her father is the rector of a Suffolk parish and much of his money goes to charity.

Yet Marjorie is not envious of other girls' wealth, and has been known on many occasions to give her last penny to a needy girl who in normal circumstances is much better off than herself. For the rest she is a loyal friend, a staunch member of the famous "Co.," and an extremely clever and industrious needlewoman—needlework being her chief hobby.

To help her father, indeed, Marjorie makes many of her own clothes, and her busy needle manufactures many of the useful things which are sold in her father's parish to assist the poor.

She is not a brilliant all-round sportswoman, but can always be relied upon to fill a breach in the tennis or the netball teams.

Though she looks delicate she is one of the school's most healthy girls, and is considered by some to be quite good-looking. She has a rather pale complexion, with brown eyes and brown hair.

Her age is fourteen years and five months, and she was born, where she still lives, in her father's rectory in Suffolk. Though lack of funds prevents her from attending the cinema as often as she would like, she has a warm admiration for Gary Cooper, and admits that her favourite woman star is Elizabeth Allen.

Her favourite colour is pink; her favourite flower the carnation, and the author she loves best is still Charles Dickens.

Her favourite holiday resort is Lyme Regis, though she says she is never happier than when with Babs and Co. Her ambition—to be a hospital nurse, preferably in a children's hospital.

She is very conscientious at lessons, and with Bessie Bunter shares the honours in Domestic Science. Her position in the Form at the end of last term was fourth.

"A COMPLETE SPOOF" by Tony Sims

Cliff House School, Kent
Headmistress
Penelope Primrose

To: Mary Cadogan

From: Margaret Bradshaw, MA, BD

Dear Madam,

I am the only child and married daughter of Marjorie Hazeldene. My present position is that of teacher in charge of religious studies at Cliff House School. The Easter Holidays have just commenced and this is written from my home address on school headed paper.

Yesterday I read with extreme interest in C.D. the accounts of my mother's early infatuation with Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton. How she managed to keep them friendly with each other and not deadly rivals for her favours I cannot imagine!

However, her friendships with Bob and Harry are by no means the full story. From talks with her, and from her old diaries, I discovered that she liked several "Greyfriars Men". Vernon Smith with his reckless daredevil ways was once a secret favourite; Mauleverer with his quiet demeanour and loyalty to his friends impressed her greatly. For one whole term a diary is full of his Lordship's quiet escapades.

HRH Hurree Singh has also many mentions during the summer terms when he was busily taking wickets. It seems that my mother loved to watch him bowl. "Poetry in motion," is how she wrote of him in her diary.

Whom did she marry in the end?

Was it any of those mentioned above? Indeed, was it a 'Greyfriars Man" at all?

My father was a gentleman in every sense of the word. At school his tolerance and patience were a byword with all who knew him.

I have signed this letter with my maiden name.

Yours faithfully,

Margaret Redwing

****

UNBOUND MAGNETS WANTED: 64 91 95 110 204 207 215 217 219 220 221 223 227 229 230 231 253

G Good, Greyfriars, 147 Thornes Road, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF2 8QN.
Tel: 01924-378273.

****

FOR SALE: MAGNET 454,456-459,463,464,567,622-624,628,629,632,633,637-640, 644,666 **£3 each.** GEM 1582,1594,1595,1597-1600,1603,1611 **£1 each.** SCHOOLGIRL 182,364,366,389-391,393,394 **£1 each.** DANDY 591,800,1038,1039,1097,1154,1167, 1177-1188,1191 **£3 each.**

Gary Panczyszyn, 24 Poplar Avenue, Spondon, Derby, DE21 7FJ.

****

OCCASIONALLY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT: Some Thoughts on the Life and times of Mycroft Holmes

Part Three (Conclusion) **by Derek Hinrich**

The only systematic secret service work for the greater part of the brothers Holmes's careers lay in Asia in the Great Game with Russia which was the responsibility of the Government of India and would have lain outside any remit of Mycroft Holmes.

Of the 60 fully recorded cases of Sherlock Holmes only four were what might be described as Official Secrets Cases[10]. In one he was engaged by a suspect; in two others by the Prime Minister of the day; and in the fourth by his brother on behalf of HMG.

The last case, chronologically, where Sherlock Holmes acted at the personal request of Mr. Asquith, concerned the activities of the German Secret Service in this country in the years immediately before the First World War and lies outside the scope of this paper as it occurred after Mycroft Holmes retired. The second case in date order, the Naval Treaty in 1888, was, in fact, a case of opportunistic theft where the thief's booty happened to be an Official Secret. Mycroft Holmes was not involved, but the affair demonstrated the laissez-faire attitude to physical security which was apparently characteristic of that more innocent time.

The first and third cases involved professional espionage but not by any foreign power's service. It is, incidentally, a measure of the relative importance attached to these cases that "Lord Bellinger", who in one at least of his incarnations was renowned for his imperturbability, should himself have consulted Sherlock Holmes on the loss of the long thin envelope of pale blue colour with a seal of red wax stamped with a crouching lion, while in the other he sent Mycroft Holmes. When all is said and done and, after all the bother about the Bruce-Partington plans, one thing is certain. That submarine never saw service with the Royal Navy.[11]

In 1886 Sherlock Holmes could list the three principal espionage agents in London extempore – Eduardo Lucas, Louis La Rothiere, and Hugo Oberstein: in 1895, however, he had to apply to his brother for the same information, which Mycroft no doubt in turn obtained from Special Branch via the Home Office – Adolphe Meyer (vice Lucas), La Rothiere and Oberstein again. It is curious that in 1886 Sherlock Holmes should know who were the foremost foreign agents, when he had apparently not previously been engaged on an espionage case, but nine years later he should have to seek the information from another, although of course he had been absent from London for three years and might well be out of touch with that particular field of criminal endeavour.

It is plain from the contexts that all four suspects in the two cases were free-lance agents and that they went about their business in a fairly open manner, with no real attempt to hide their criminal occupation, though this may not have been their only occupation, or indeed their only criminal occupation. Eduardo Lucas, for example, appears to have cut quite a dash in society. One wonders if they carried cards, like Charles Augustus Milverton, describing themselves as "Agents". Perhaps they did. Lucas's business seems to have been conducted on a very similar basis: perhaps that is how they came to Sherlock Holmes's notice.

It was another factor in favour of Lucas, La Rothiere and company that there was no Official Secrets Act in 1886 and that that in force in 1895 had very little teeth since the burden of proof rested with the prosecution.[12]

The 1889 Official Secrets Act had been long in gestation. *The Second Stain* no doubt gave an impetus to its introduction. The two most serious leaks of confidential information prior to Lucas's activities had occurred respectively in 1858 and 1878.

In November 1858 *The Daily News* published two confidential dispatches to the Colonial Office from the High Commissioner for the Ionian Islands, then a British possession. A copy of these papers had been obtained from the Colonial Office Library by a man named Guernsey. He was prosecuted for larceny but as the Crown was unable to prove that he had no intention of returning the papers eventually, the case fell.

In 1878, Charles Marvin, a tenpenny copyer in the Foreign Office (he was also paid fourpence halfpenny a page for copying any document in French), who had journalistic ambitions, revealed details of the Treaty of Berlin before its official publication to *The Globe*. He was charged under the Larceny Act 1861 with theft of the paper on which he had copied out the Treaty details. In fact he had memorised the information and then written it out on his own foolscap in the newspaper offices. Again the prosecution failed.

The High Victorian Age had in fact a very insouciant attitude to espionage. It was taken almost as a matter of course that foreign officers on leave in Britain were engaged in it. "Major-General Sir Alexander Bruce Tulloch later recalled how as an Intelligence Branch Officer in about 1880 he had been engaged in touring the English coastline checking on likely landing sites for a foreign invasion:

'When doing the Yorkshire coast, I heard of a German officer staying at a hotel at Scarborough, which he had made his headquarters while doing work which turned out to be precisely that in which I also was engaged, and my headquarters were close to – viz. at Bridlington Quay. My regret was that I did not hear about my German colleague until my work was just finished: we might have done it together'".[13]

This attitude was mirrored in the fiction of the time. In *Secrets Of The Foreign Office: Describing The Doings Of Duckworth Drew of The Secret Service*[14] the hero attends a meet in the shires and amongst his fellow huntsmen encounters "...someone whom I had had distinct occasion to recollect. At first I failed to recall the man's identity but when I did, a few moments later, I sat regarding his retreating figure like one in a dream. The horseman who rode with such military bearing was none other than the renowned spy, one of the cleverest secret agents in the world; Otto Krempelstein, Chief of the German Secret Service."

A renowned spy! How's that for cover? Lucas and Oberstein were models of discretion in comparison.

Such secret service work as was carried out in Europe in the '80s and '90s was undertaken in the same light-hearted spirit by the officers of the recently formed Intelligence Division of the War Office or by a few venturesome private individuals who spent their holidays sketching forts and indulging in an amateur theatrical passion for disguise and dressing up. It was the Golden Age of Buchaneering.

All this began to change in 1898 with the German Government's decision to undertake a programme of naval expansion which gradually developed into a construction race with Britain, especially after 1906 when the newly launched *HMS Dreadnought*

effectively rendered all previous types of capital ship obsolete. Britain was gradually drawn for the first time since the Napoleonic Wars into a web of alliances with continental powers in first the Entente Cordiale with France, and then the Triple Entente with France and imperial Russia (which effectively marked the end of the Great Game). In this changed and darkening international climate there was indeed a need for someone to play a pivotal role in co-ordinating those measures necessary for the defence of the realm against the threat of possible internal sabotage and subversion, and the activities of a professional government secret service in place of a few dubious free-lances. There could be no question now but that only one man could fill this role. Mycroft Holmes. But this was only in the last decade of his service to his country.

There was much to be done both in the practical field and also in combating the former Gentlemen and Players attitude to spying of the freer Old England which was inimical to the spirit of the coming struggle, for the first breath of the East Wind was rising and the lamps were dimming if not yet going out all over Europe.

It was necessary to keep a cool head, too, for scares and rumours abounded. For instance, in 1908 – the year after Mycroft Holmes retired – Colonel Lockwood, the MP for Reading, alleged in a Commons question that military men from a foreign nation had been "up to no good" in his constituency and that a foreign power had organised a "staff ride" though England[15] (no doubt in a column three abreast in identical rat catcher).

Physical security measures were still lax. As late as 1910, when the First World War was clearly waiting in the wings, a German officer was apprehended sketching the defences of Portsmouth. "Most of his information was obtained from a map on the South Parade Pier, and he had made the drawings of the forts by looking through a large public telescope on the parade". (Was his arrest the first inkling gained by the authorities of the Von Bork ring?). Having been found guilty, he was bound over and discharged[16]. This case led to the 1911 Official Secrets Act.

But by this time Mycroft Holmes had passed into well-merited retirement. Evidence for the last decade of his service is even scantier than for the earlier years. Much can only be supposition, for these area areas in which our Government has always been notably reticent but it is surely significant that within two years of his retirement Mr. Asquith's government found it necessary to create two separate departments, the SIS and MI5, to fill his place. What finer epitaph could a great public servant desire than this?

Footnotes

10. The only unrecorded case mentioned which appears to be of this type, the affair of the politician, the lighthouse, and the trained cormorant, is of much later date.
11. Presumably the Bruce-Partington submarine was, like many more modern British defence projects (TSR2, Sky Bolt, Blue Streak, etc et alia), aborted for striving after a too-sophisticated technology for the time. The first British submarine, *Holland 1*, did not enter service until 1903 and was built by Vickers, under licence, to a US design by an Irish-American who had previously contemplated building one for the Fenian Brotherhood, one of the fore-runners of the IRA. Incidentally, was Bruce-Partington one man or two?
12. "Under the 1889 Act it was necessary to prove intent to obtain information illegally". The 1911 Act made it "illegal to obtain or communicate any information useful to an enemy as well as approach or enter a 'prohibited place' 'for any purpose prejudicial to the safety or

interests of the State' and placed the onus on the accused to show his actions were innocently intended" – Andrew p107.

13. Andrew pp54-55.
14. By William Le Queux, Hurst & Blackett Ltd., 1903
15. Andrew p85.
16. Andrew pp104-5.

****

BETTY, BUNTER AND GERALD CAMPION

Last October's Frank Richards Day at Broadstairs was graced by the presence of Gerald Campion who, of course, is celebrated as the television programmes' embodiment of Billy Bunter. He provided a fund of anecdotes about the making of the programmes, and one recalled just how expertly he played the part of the Fat Owl. He and his wife stayed at the same hotel as several of us who participated in the meetings and this photograph shows him at breakfast one morning with Betty Hopton – and a balloon-like figure whom you will all quickly recognize!

Brian Sayer, a feature-writer for the *Kent Messenger*, has promised us a fuller "write-up" of the Broadstairs evening which will be published in the C.D. or in the Annual later this year.

(Photograph by Johnny Hopton)

****

NEWS OF THE OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUBS

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

For our April 2000 meeting we gathered at the Willingham village home of Keith Hodkinson.

After our usual short business session Keith, using many video and film extracts, attempted to explain the enduring fascination of the American actor John Wayne [1907-1979]. Maybe lumbered in his early career by his real name (Marion Michael Morrison), in the end he had made more films than any other person. He initially appeared as a character actor in silents (1927) with an entry into cinema history being made in 1933 with a talkie – The Big Trail. The tough, genial leading man became one of the best known and most successful actors in Hollywood. Though always associated with the Western genre, he played many roles outside it. He was just as much the all-action hero of the Forties and Fifties in, for example, comedy, old-time sea sagas and war action films. A rather larger-than-life character with an appealing nickname (Duke), the wide-ranging survey ensured many aspects of Wayne's film career were adequately covered.

Essentially limiting his survey pictorially to the Forties, we saw extracts from the following films: The Big Trail [1933], Stagecoach [1938], Reap the Wild Wind [1942], Fighting Seabees [1944], The Three Godfathers [1948], Red River [1948], True Grit [1969], The Lady Takes a Chance [1943], Fort Apache [1948] and War of the Wildcats [1945].

John Wayne made his last film during 1976. ADRIAN PERKINS

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

A good number at our April meeting and it was good to have Richard Burgon with us during the Easter break at university.

Eight of us would be attending the informal Club Dinner on Saturday evening 15th April at a central Leeds restaurant. These are enjoyable social occasions and it is a pity more do not join us.

An update for our Golden Jubilee Celebrations to be held on 14th October showed that a few people had sent greetings to the Club.

Keith Atkinson gave us a "Walking Tour". With his desire to go walking since he was a young man, Keith also enjoyed books which described landscapes thereby giving the reader a prospect of walking the area. Keith gave excerpts from and described 4 books: Wilkie Collins' "Rambles Beyond Railway" – the beauty and love of Cornwall. Henry Williamson's "One Foot in Devon"; Roger Jones' "Green Road to Land's End".

All books giving the reader a desire to be in the area. Finally, excerpts from Frank Richards' "Hikers' Series" in "The Magnet". As part of his liking for books describing the countryside, he also enjoys searching out the area of homes of the authors he enjoys.

After the break, Geoffrey read an excerpt from "The Magnet" Dr Locke, upset by Bunter's disappearance and his father's insistence that it was the Greyfriars authorities' responsibility to find him, passed on his annoyance to Mr. Quelch, who in turn reprimanded Coker who upset Sammy Bunter. Being of a lower form, Sammy could only pass on his anger to Trotter the page who was very restricted in the way in which he could relieve his anger – but the kitchen cat crossed his path! JOHNNY BULL MINOR

LONDON O.B.B.C.

IA good time was had by all at the April meeting of the London O.B.B.C. in Ealing.

Our esteemed host, Bill Bradford, spoke about American pulp magazines of the Thirties. Bill reminded us of many well-known pulps, such as the hard-boiled detective anthology "Black Mask", and others less well known: anyone remember "Dusty Ayres And His Battle Birds"? A very entertaining presentation.

This was followed by Roger Coombes' interesting and detailed look at the career of the famous "Eagle" space-adventurer, Dan Dare – April 2000 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of the first issue of the much-loved comic in which he featured and Roger presented a fitting tribute. He exhibited various examples of the striking Frank Hampron artwork that gave the strip its distinctive look and also drew attention to the script-writing, which was integral to the creation of a true comic-strip immortal. VIC PRATT

****

FORUM

From Ted Baldock:

It was a great pleasure to see an except from Alfred Noyes' great poem 'The Highwayman' in the February C.D. It is one of my all time favourites. Time was, now sadly passed, when I could recite the whole poem with more or less gusto. Telling as it does such a stirring tale of an adventurous age, the high drama of thundering hooves along a stretch of moonlit highway through the darkening shadows of trees is, for me at least, the very stuff of romance. How unerringly does Alfred Noyes convey the spirit of the time.

From Terry Jones:

I could hardly believe my eyes when I got to page 26 of our February "Digest" Bill and Bun. My goodness, it's the first sight of those two I have seen since my very young childhood. My "Chick's Own" and "Bobby Bear Days"! How grateful I am to John Hammond for his memories and the splendid picture of our two heroes.

Also what a pleasant time I had reading once more some articles by our very own dear friend Bill Lofts. I do hope a regular feature in forthcoming issues of our magazine will be something by the man who "knew it all". Shake out the files and let us all enjoy his literary masterpieces.

I met Bill several times at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Salisbury and Tim and had many a long chat with him at our Weston-Super-Mare Book Club meetings. He is sadly missed.

From Colin Partis:

I thought it would be of interest to C.D. readers to know that a new Sexton Blake short story has just been published.

"Sherlock Holmes, The Detective Magazine" which is published every other month always contains a short detective story, usually a Sherlock Holmes pastiche, but also quite a few others. This month, John Hall, a regular contributor and author of quite a few Sherlock Holmes pastiche novels, has written a sexton Blake story. It is set in 1921 and titled "Sexton Blake and the White Fairy". This is issue no. 36.

Incidentally they have a regular article called "The Other Detectives", and issue 19 featured a long article on Sexton Blake.

Thank you for such a great magazine, keep up the good work.

From Betty Hopton:

In the March *C.D.* I particularly enjoyed Bob Whiter's excellent article, "Forever Hamiltonia". What an absolutely gorgeous photograph of Bob Whiter, he is Bob Cherry to the very life, he is exactly as I would have imagined Bob Cherry to be. And what a gifted artist Bob is too.

From Mark Taha:

A few comments, if I may, on March's CD.

In reply to J.E.M. surely Tinker's being a boy assistant was due to Blake's being the "office boy's Sherlock Holmes"; that is, a character in a boy's paper. Tinker was obviously someone for his readers to identify with and even imagine themselves in the place of – and, if Blake was derived from Holmes, surely he and Tinker inspired the likes of Nelson Lee and Nipper and Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake?

In reply to Derek Hinrich, Myrcroft Holmes has often appeared in Holmes pastiches, even being the hero of several of them. Looking back over the original stories, two thoughts occur to me. One – that Mycroft started out as a simple auditor but grew with the years, so to speak, as those in authority noticed his talents. Sherlock himself admitted to Watson that he hadn't known him well enough to provide full details about his brother when he'd first introduced them. Two – isn't it highly probably that Mycroft's job was just a "cover story" for his real one? It's surely obvious that he was in the Secret Service. Incidentally, I'd always understood Lord Bellinger to be Lord Salisbury and Trelawney Hope, the government Minister in one of the "Doyle Mycroft" stories, to be Lord Randolph Churchill; June Thomson (I think) surmised that he was Joseph Chamberlain.

In reply to Larry Morley – I remember a still from the film "Jack, Sam and Pete" in the "Guinness Book of Film Facts and Feats". It said that it was made in 1919, not 1925. Were there perhaps two films? The 1919 one had Pete played by Ernest Trimmingham.

In reply to Brian Doyle – if I remember rightly, the 1940 "Billy Bunter Club" was the circulation-boosting gimmick that the "Magnet" editor was on the verge of announcing in the last issue. It seems that the "Magnet" was "on probation" until July anyway, if I remember Lofts and Adley rightly. And I surmise that, if J.S. Butcher (who exactly was he, by the way?) had lived on, he'd had been swamped with letters of complaint about his "Greyfriars School – A Prospectus". It seems that, unfortunately, he got most of his facts,

especially concerning Greyfriars pupils, from the "Holiday Annual" lists and "trivia" compiled by substitute writers!

Finally – would the people who claim that Frank Richards was obsessed with names beginning with J care to be more specific? The Greyfriars Js – Christian names. Joseph[or George?] Mimble among the staff. James Walker of the Sixth. Horace James Coker of the Fifth. James Hobson of the Shell. James Scott of the Fourth. Jimmy Vivian and Honny Bull of the Remove. Joey Banks the bookie, along with a tramp called Jimmy Judson in the book "Bunter the Ventriloquist".

Surnames – the Joyce brothers, woodcutter and head keeper at Popper Court. Mr. Jones of the boatyard. Mention of a Jones major of the Fifth in the postwar book "Billy Bunter's Benefit". Can't think of any others. Hardly an obsession!

From John Geal:

Thank you for a splendid year of the C.D. Year by year the high standard is continued – I like the articles on lesser known magazines by Bill Bradford. Brings back many memories. More please!

From Des O'Leary:

Another enjoyable issue of C.D. for April with a wonderful contrast in front and back covers.

The Marjorie Hazeldene 'Man that I marry' article was fun and I'm glad you reprinted it. The Sexton Blake one, too, was very interesting. The "Miss Death" character always intrigued me since reading about her many years ago, perhaps in Boys Will Be Boys. Always a pleasure to read Una Hamilton-Wright. on her uncle. It's so important, I think, to learn from and about the family side of our favourite authors while it is possible.

But for me the high-light (or is it 'hi-lite'?) of the issue was Mark Caldicott's piece on fantasy and science fiction. As a devotee in my youth of lost 'genres' I felt that the distinction was reasonably clear. Science-fiction was the epitome of 'what-if?' fiction. If man could build space-ships what would we find in our neighbouring planets? or what could happen after a nuclear holocaust? Fantasy counted magic as a normal part, and an important one, of everyday life. So my favourite 'lost race' story 'Allen Quatermain', is definitely not fantasy but believable in the context of its period and its geographical knowledge. As our study of history and geography progress, we see that there was never a lost continent of Atlantis, that the centre of Africa and South America are not full of lost races, still less Antarctica... And, a blow to my favourite science-fiction author, Venus is not a rain-drenched jungle plant but hot, dry and poisonous!

I think Mr. Caldicott has a strong point in his suggestion that computer games play an important part. As do TV and films, of course.

What is intriguing to me is the success of the Harry Potter books in their popularity with both old and young readers. Like the old fairy tales that Marina Warner writes about so superbly.

****

FOR SALE: Stacks of Dandys, Beanos, Beezers, circa 1970-80, all in nice condition. 25p each. L. Morley, 76 St. Margaret's Road, Hanwell, London, W7 2HF. Tel.020- 8-579-3143.

****

EMBERS

by Ted Baldock

The projection of a dream into the semblance of reality is by any standards one may apply a somewhat difficult assignment. Yet this 'miracle' has been accomplished in the world of Greyfriars; the imagined world has been established with such a degree of solidity among its faithful adherents that it has become truly a 'reality', keeping countless numbers of Greyfriars fellows, (as such do we term ourselves) buoyed and youthful through the many vicissitudes of adult life. We possess that enviable ability to 'switch off' at any time and return to that magic world of Greyfriars.

A little world suspended in time, with its many long established patterns and routines, which we find irresistible. Mr. Quelch continues to administer the statutory 'six' with unabated vigour and skill and, as Bunter's trousers are thus "dusted", may the voice of the 'Owl' never cease to reverberate through this – for us – Arcadian world. This is the kingdom in which Dr. Locke M.A. reigns supreme, surrounded and ably supported by his trusty lieutenants who, although at times a trifle out of tune with each other (shades of Henry Samuel Quelch and Paul Pontifex Prout) upon minor points of procedure, are never-the-less a loyal and dependable staff. When trouble looms, as so often it does it amounts to little more than a few acid exchanges – "Possibly one of your boys, my dear Quelch..." or "A most unruly form, the Fifth if I may say so Mr. Prout, really Sir..." The interchanges are timeless and delightful, classic and enduring.

The old grey clock tower of Greyfriars has, within living memory, re-echoed to the crash and boom of heavy artillery in two world wars, and to the roar and scream of winged fighters far above the fair landscape of Kent. Stolidly has the old school stood. These momentous events, however, comprised but a passing phase in its long and distinguished history. Throughout this it has continued to produce a stream of Greyfriars fellows – a rather particular breed. If the playing fields of Eton produced the decisive result at Waterloo (as we are so assured) what victories may not be attributed to 'Big-Side' at Greyfriars? In fact, military records inform us that present at Wellington's famous victory in 1815 was a certain Cornet G. Nugent, a youth of some eighteen summers, a Captain W. Wharton, and a Captain R. Bull. Who is to say that these gentlemen were not forbears of the more recent Greyfriars fellows bearing similar names. Has not Harry Wharton's family, for instance, a long military connection, and is not 'our' Wharton of the Remove destined for the army to carry on the tradition set by his Uncle and other forbears? Perhaps one may also visualise a young and red-faced Private Gosling in one of the line regiments, marching along the dusty roads of Belgium, musket on shoulder, approaching Cherleroi or La Haye Sainte in that fateful year of 1815. We may hear him grousing with an intensity of feeling and language with his comrades in the time honoured tradition of the British Army. The great Napoleon, together with his young and his old guard may do their worst (or best); it will make little material difference in the general demeanour of our particular Gosling. It is a pleasant and amusing thought upon which to ponder...

It would be pleasant also to think, and better yet to know, that the name of 'Coker' (for example) had occupied an honoured and responsible place in some high civil or military capacity in the great days of empire. The familiar characteristics of 'our'

Horace's nature would surely be evident, and would have played no small part in the maintaining of law and order in some far-flung outpost. One may almost see, with a little imagination a ruddy-faced Coker, during some passing irritating incident, fulminating beneath a large solar topee asserting that he has a 'short way' with the offending 'underlings'!

These are but dreams indulged by the evening fireside, the embers of which instigate many similar trains of thought to pass an idle hour. As Henry Van Dyke has so neatly stated: "My dreams were always beautiful, my thoughts were high and fine; no life was ever lived on earth to match those dreams of mine". May not this be said of our own dreams?

It is possible that in the glowing embers George Wingate may be seen completing a brilliant solo run and scoring a magnificent goal in the closing minutes of the game; or that Vernon Smith, by closing the box-room window silently just one second before Gerald Loder opens the door, once again saves his career (and our continued enjoyment) at Greyfriars; or that Billy Bunter again snaffles someone else's tuck, and then has to put up with the consequences. Happily when the embers finally expire and ashes alone remain, the dream lives on – and on – and on.

****

WANTED: Pocket Libraries (BFL, SOL, Nugget, Diamond etc.) – school story issues only. Also wanted: school stories by Charles Turley and Desmond Coke, and any copies of "Eric, or Little by Little" by Farrar. My Summer Term catalogue of boys' and adult school fiction is out now – over 400 items.

Also, I am trying to track down copies of the following obscure piece of Hamiltonia: De mortus nel nisi bonum – written by Arthur Edwards and published by the Friars Library in 1985. Devotion, Emotion, Religion and Death, by Tommy Keen and Graham McDermott (1983). Who's Who in the Skilton Books by (?) Burrell, published in 1986.

If anyone has spare copies I could purchase, or if I could borrow copies, or if anyone can provide photocopies (I will pay all expenses) I would very much appreciate it.

Did the Friars Library publish anything else?

Please write to: Robert Kirkpatrick, 6 Osterley Park View Road, London W7 2HH. Tel. 020 8567 4521.

****

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.

****

THE

Magnet

1d. 2

No. 17. LIBRARY Vol. 1.

COMPLETE STORY FOR ALL.

GRAND SCHOOL TALE.

By FRANK RICHARDS

BILLY TRIES TO FLY.

No. 488. Vol. 20. EVERY TUESDAY. Week Ending May 5th, 1934.

The TRIUMPH

THE BOYS' BEST STORY PAPER

2D

MEET THE INVISIBLE SCHOOLBOY INSIDE

CAPTURING THE ENEMY'S SPECIAL TRAIN

Read inside about the daring war-time exploits of Swift of the Secret Service.

The BRITISH GIRL'S ANNUAL

Edited by
H. DARKIN WILLIAMS

THE AMALGAMATED PRESS LTD.
THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, LONDON, E.C.4

Editor: Mary Cadogan, 46 Overbury Avenue, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 6PY
Printed by Quacks Printers, 7 Grape Lane, Petergate, York, YO1 7HU. Tel. 01904-635967