

# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 54

No. 642

JUNE 2000

FIREWORK 'FUN FOR EVERYONE

# HAPPY DAYS

2<sup>nd</sup> EVERY MONDAY

No. 5

AT CHIMPO'S CIRCUS

November 5, 1938



1. This is Chimpo's fireworks again! I always think November the 5th is one of those special Happy Days, don't you? But we all forget to remember the guy 'Silly man's' is!



2. "We shall use no aids to collect any money for fireworks now," replied Jim. "There along comes Hugh Hoppa. "Try a stop, boys!" said he, teasing me to us. "Very kind of you!" I cried.



3. But before I could catch the five gu's, my general old line, the they-remember. "Ide! This is a fine catch!" he laughed, catching the eye. "How you boys can watch any smoke!"



4. "Och, I shall report you, Lee!" piped Crutch. "But just then that dog made a loud report about the fellow! You, he was a trick fireworks-bug, you see. And Hugh Hoppa's face just had melted."



5. "Och!" cried Lee as the big dog roared his hat and gave him a black line. And down he ran to our sunny guy's cart, which was roaring just behind him.



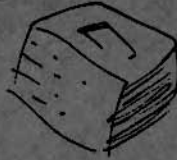
6. "There is a sunny guy for you!" chuckled Ann. "Come on, down. Pick a collection!" "Yes, but Good thing!" I said. And everybody thought our cart, guy was a nice little one of Lee!



7. And didn't we buy a grand lot of fireworks with the money? Ka-choo! We let Lee take in the fun, see, after he had washed his face. Don't you think it was a sporting show? Please pop along to our circus next Monday. Yours, CHIMPO



You're a  
brick, Mary!



from  
GMS  
Coffard

Jan 76

# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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W.H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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HERBERT LECKENBY

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## GOODBYE TO AN OLD FRIEND

Many of you will have seen newspaper obituaries of Denis Gifford, the illustrator, writer and broadcaster who did so much to maintain vibrant and widespread interest in our hobby. His interests covered many areas of popular culture, most of all comics and films. His presence at events of nostalgic appeal, and his written and spoken commentaries on comics, story-papers and vintage films will be very much missed.

We have lost a good friend, and this month's C.D. includes a comprehensive obituary/tribute to Denis from Brian Doyle. As a further tribute, our cover shows HAPPY DAYS, the comic with Roy Wilson's illustrations which was Denis's favourite. I have also, as you will see, included a 'self-portrait' of Denis in his own comic-strip style, which he made for me when my first book ('You're a Brick, Angela!', co-authored with Patricia

Craig) was published. Can that really have been in 1976 – almost a quarter of a century ago! I remember Denis drawing the picture as if it were yesterday...

Another late and much lamented good friend was, of course, Bill Lofts. Following our recent posthumous printing of one of his articles, several readers have written to ask if there are further treasures from him in the C.D.'s unpublished archives. I still have several items from Bill and am happy to include one this month dealing with missing artwork associated with our favourite story papers and comics.

Happy Reading,  
MARY CADOGAN

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## REMEMBERING DENIS GIFFORD

by Brian Doyle

Now that Denis Gifford has died at the age of 72, the world of comics has lost its greatest and most knowledgeable collector and chronicler. Denis drew comics, wrote about them and their creators, collected them and lived them. 'Chips', 'Funny Wonder', 'Beano', 'Dandy', 'Rainbow', 'Tiger Tim', 'Tip Top', 'Knock-out', 'Film Fun', 'Radio Fun', 'Comic Cuts' or 'Ragtime' (this last being his own childhood creation), they were all grist to his mill (or 'gristle to his Max Miller' as he might have put it!)

He had collected comics since the age of 3 and his vast collection, almost literally bursting out of his small home in Sydenham, South London, was probably the biggest, best and most comprehensive (certainly so far as British comics went) in the world.

He wrote many books and articles about his comics and their friendly and funny characters, and lectured on them in London, America and Europe. He and his collection comprised a recognised source of important social history; he was 'Mr. Comics' and the leading and acknowledged expert and authority in the ephemera of our comical and magical yesterdays. He was equally knowledgeable in the fields of cartoons and cartoonists, the cinema, radio, comedy and vocal performers, and entertainers of the World War Two period. He dealt, and buried himself, in popular literary and show business nostalgia. I once told him: 'You should form a company and call it 'Nostalgia Unlimited'. 'It's been done – many years ago...' he sighed nostalgically... He should have been called 'the past-master of his ancient arts...'

I first met Denis in 1970, when we attended a big comics exhibition in London together, having been brought together by that late and great juvenile books and magazines dealer, Norman Shaw, who had felt it was time the two of us should meet. After the exhibition, Denis and I had tea – something of a marathon tea, since we never stopped talking – talking about old comics, boys' papers, films, radio shows, comedians, old movies; it was a 3-hour tea and one I have never forgotten. Everything had to be 'old', as far as Denis was concerned – he wasn't really interested in 'modern' films, radio shows and so on. 'Off with the new, on with the old' was his by-word.

Denis Gifford was born in Forest Hill, South London, on Boxing Day, 1927, and educated at Dulwich College, where a fellow comics-enthusiast was Bob Monkhouse (who remained a life-long friend and sometime colleague). Denis had become a comics collector from the age of 3, and his own first home-made comic, 'Ragtime', was drawn in pencil (both the lead and coloured varieties) and lent to schoolmates at playtime. After a

brief spell as a 'junior cartoonist' on the National Sunday newspaper 'Reynold's News', he was called up into the R.A.F., where he devoted much spare time to drawing a 'super-hero' comic-book called 'Streamline' for a Manchester publisher.

After demob., he set up a small studio with his friend, Bob Monkhouse, producing a few comics for small publishers in the late-1940s. He 'took over' the strips 'Our Ernie' and 'Stonehenge Kit the Ancient Brit' for 'Knockout Comic', and also drew 'Pansy Potter' for the 'Beano; for a time, as well as creating characters of his own (including 'Steadfast McStaunch') for other publications. He later worked for 'Marvelman' comic-books, drew for 'Whizzer and Chips' and also for the satirical 'Telestrip' in the London 'Evening News'.

Denis's own favourite comic-paper, by the way, was the colourful 'Happy Days', (AP) which he once called 'the ultimate in comics – the crown of the Golden Age', and which sadly ran for less than a year (1938-39), a victim of the impending War rather than of its own shortcomings (of which it appeared to have none!).

In the 1950s he wrote comedy scripts for BBC radio shows and comedians (including material for Morecambe and Wise and Derek Roy). He also created and wrote the popular BBC radio series 'Sounds Familiar' which ran from 1967 to 1976; it was succeeded by his TV version of the same game, 'Looks Familiar', which ran from 1971 for several years. He was bitterly disappointed when the show was finally cancelled.

Apart from his numerous TV and radio broadcasts (usually talking about comics), Denis Gifford was probably best-known for his many books – around 35 of them. Early ones included biographies of Boris Karloff and Charlie Chaplin, 'British Cinema' (a Who's Who) (1968), 'The Science Fiction Film' (1971), 'Test Your N.Q. (Nostalgia Quotient) (1972), 'Discovering Comics' and 'Stap Me! The British Newspaper Strip' (both 1971). Later came large-scale, comprehensive reference books such as 'The British Comic Catalogue, 1874-1974', 'The Great Cartoon Stars: a Who's Who', 'The Golden Age of Radio', 'Victorian Comics', 'Happy Days!', 'The International Book of Comics' and the delightful 'Encyclopaedia of Comic Characters' (1200 of them!). His greatest achievement, perhaps, was the monumental 'The British Film Catalogue' 1895-1970', which listed and briefly described every British entertainment film ever made during that period and which took him more than 15 years to compile. He had been working on an up-date of this book at the time of his death; also on a book about the many screen versions of books by Edgar Wallace.

In recent years he had written many Obituaries for 'The Independent' newspaper, specialising, as usual, in comics-artists, cartoonists and movie and radio stars. Last year he and Bob Monkhouse co-wrote a two-part BBC radio 2 programme titled 'A Hundred Laughs for a Ha'penny' – a history of (what else!) comic papers. For many years, he had written, edited and published a regular magazine called 'A.C.E.', after the 'club' that he founded – the Association of Comics Enthusiasts. I recall that he was a guest at the London Old Boys' Book Club several years ago (at Beckenham) giving a talk about comics and answering questions on the subject.

Denis and I had another thing in common, incidentally: we both had a daughter named Pandora! His marriage was dissolved some years ago and his Pandora lived in America with her mother. I remember that Denis missed her very much and one learned not to broach that particular subject.

Sadly, Denis and I (who met fairly regularly in the old days and visited one another's current assignments in the film and radio studios) had rather drifted apart in recent years. I still received Christmas cards adorned with his hilarious cartoon drawings and we still swapped occasional bits of research. But he seemed to 'withdraw' somewhat from the

world and stayed more and more in his world of comics in Sydenham and appeared less friendly towards people. He lived by himself too.

Lonely? I don't really think so. How can you be lonely when you're surrounded by such friends as Tiger Tim and the Bruin Boys, Pip, Squeak and Wilfred, Korky the Cat, Peggy (the Pride of the Force), Weary Willie and Tired Tim, Susie Sunshine, and the Bash Street Kids?

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## I REMEMBER

by Bill Bradford

THE BUZZER first appeared on Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> June 1937, published by Newnes priced 2d, sized 12½"x10". It initially contained 32 pages, reduced to 28 from issue No. 25. By this time I was 14 years of age and already buying more weekly and monthly issues than my pocket money really permitted. However, the striking cover by Valda caught my eye. This artist was responsible for most of the covers during the BUZZER's short life, also many of the illustrations within. Valda is probably best remembered for his striking covers for the MONSTER LIBRARY. His work is usually easy to identify, although facial features were never his strong point!

No. 1 contained a free trick water squirt, which I cannot now remember nor have seen in my travels. This first issue contained 8 series stories, starting with the exploits of



Larry and Ray moved out from behind the curtains without a sound, and Wilbur Z. Madison staggered back. On top of this fearful, maddening itching, on top of hearing voices, he was now seeing things!

a British flying ace in World War 1. The second began the adventures of a cockney lad and his maritime adventures. Called 'COCK-EYE THE SAILOR' it was claimed to make you "Larf and larf" Maybe! This was followed by THE INVISIBLE SPEEDMAN. The hero, Larry Cromwell is so nicknamed because of his speedy car, and is the scourge of wrongdoers. This series was in all 36 issues and, thanks to Bob Blythe, we know the author was Edwy Searles Brooks. At one time I had all the original manuscripts, including 2 that were never published, which suggests the sudden demise of the paper was not anticipated.

The third story 'FROZEN GOLD' is a tale of the Yukon. The 2 centre pages were devoted to cartoon stories, including those featuring Claud Dampier and Wee Georgie Wood, both then popular stars of stage and radio. The next story 'SCHOOL ON THE MOON' was a far-fetched account of a Fourth Form astronomy class, plus Master, who are strangely transferred to the Moon. The sixth story 'Pick-em-up-Pete' is about a lame youth who obtains a job as a messenger boy. Rather unlikely you may think! Next, 'THE TIN FISH TRAMPS' concerns an old submarine with a motley crew, in the African rivers. The final tale, 'SLICK the SLEUTH', tells of an apparent dandy who actually works for Scotland Yard and the Secret Service. Most stories were complete and ran for many weeks.

The second issue had another free gift, this time a metal whistle. No. 3 contained a spring gun with 'bullets. By No. 6 I found the stories did not hold me and I ceased to purchase the BUZZER. Fortunately my wife spotted an almost complete run (which I had missed) in an unlikely shop in Isleworth, enabling me to continue my research. A later number saw the start of 'Crasher Barnard', an aerial tramp and test-flier who joins a Flying Circus, also adventures in Africa with characters that might have come from the pages of a Rider Haggard novel. No. 15 presented a Will Hay outfit (mortar board, spectacles and teeth) to THE FIRST 3000 readers to submit their choice of the best four stories in BUZZER.

No. 18 saw the start of a Western series 'Outlaws of the Death Trail', about a youngster who unites with an outlaw to find the killer of his father. Two new series in issue 21, 'Stranger of The Seven Seas', a detective who tackles everything from piracy to shipwrecks, and 'The School on Black Island', a college for unwanted boys with a Headmaster with an eye patch and an iron hook for a left hand! All this plus a free bird warbler. No. 23 gave a 'novelty buzzer that really hums' whatever that was. No. 25 introduces us to 'Castaways of the Clouds' with survivors of a crashed balloon in unexplored Brazil. The next issue starts the 'League of the Crimson Domino', in which a brotherhood of victims of an American crook unite for vengeance.

No. 27 starts another series, about the Black Buckaroo, Western adventures. 'Fifty Fathoms Down' tells of a deep-sea submarine in a strange world in the bowels of the earth and begins in No. 29. At this time, by collecting 4 consecutive tokens, you could qualify for a wooden long distance glider (10"x12"); all this for a postal order for 8d. The Wandering Dude 'Rolling Stone Flinders' commences his adventures in Western American in No. 32 and the last three issues tell how the Fourth Form of Bramstone College moved to haunted Raith Castle.

The Buzzer ended with No. 36 on Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> June 1938. No reference was made to this within and at least two series were far from complete. Most of the series had long



RADIO COMIC  
& STAGE STAR

# Wee Georgie Wood

Plays Father Christmas to  
Ye Merry Night-Watchman!



1—Georgie believes in trying everything once. He's trying a boy cook's job—and trying the patience of the cooks at the same time. He's going to be helpful!



2—The gas stove's delivering water! Rough luck on the chap on his knees. 'Other cook thinks he's done it—Georgie looks far too innocent, bless his heart.



3—One perfectly good Christmas pud going to sad and dreadful waste. The sort of shampoo you'd go ninety-nine miles to avoid. Course, he's got it free.



4—And now Georgie's out of it for a bit. With head-load of toothsome he's got the order to make. Someone's going to welcome a good delivery—perhaps!





runs: 'The Invisible Speedman' and 'Cockeye the Sailor' in every issue, also the picture stories of Claud Dampier and Wee Georgie Wood.

I think the covers of *Buzzer*, as with *Wild West Weekly*, were the most exciting feature. I normally like series or serials but consider several were not good enough to justify their prolonged existence. No authors were credited and we only know about 'The Invisible Speedman' because Bob Blythe obtained the original manuscript from Mrs. Frances Brooks. I do not think *Buzzer* adds much to the history of boys papers or that the largish format helped sales. Similar size publications, *SCOOP*, *WILD WEST WEEKLY* and *BOYS BROADCAST* were all short lived.

Newnes, so successful with *THE CAPTAIN* (1899-1924) failed with *BOYS BEST STORY PAPER* (1911/12), *CRUSOE MAGAZINE* (1924/26), *GOLDEN MAGAZINE* (1926/27), *GOLDEN WEST* (1927) and *NEWSTORY PAPER* (1912) which, collectively, ran for a total of 96 weeks. However, we associate Newnes mainly with the *Libraries* (3d & 4d), many of which were reprints of earlier Aldine publications, their having purchased the copyright.

Copies of *THE BUZZER* are very rare now, either because the weekly print run was small or because it was not a cherished, collectable item. In my youth I rarely abandoned any boys publication, but this was one of them. However, in view of its short life and being unknown to many, I thought it might be worthy of inclusion in my reminiscences.

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## AN UNEASY ALLIANCE

by Ted Baldock

"Now, Bunter ..." said Mr. Quelch.

He swished the cane. "You do not appear to realise the seriousness of what you have done..."

"Oh, Yes, sir, No, sir, M-m-may I go now, sir?"

"You may not, Bunter."

"Oh, lor.."

F. Richards, *Banished of Billy Bunter*

The lives of most of us are, by natural process plus an element of perversity, beset with trials and tribulations. Some lives more so than others. A near perfect example is that of Henry Samuel Quelch M.A. The master of the remove form at Greyfriars school.

Not only has he a lively, not to say rumbustious, form with which to deal: as if this were not more than enough for an elderly gentleman of a somewhat acid temperament, there is a major daily tribulation in the fat person of William George Bunter. Surely the gods from whom such things are ordained might have been a trifle more tolerant in their dispensation than to saddle such a burden upon Quelch's scholastic shoulders.

The old man of the sea weighed down for eternity by the albatross slung round his neck could not have been more unfortunate. The dismal fact remains: Quelch had Bunter – and Bunter had Quelch. Disastrous for them perhaps, but pure joy for us, the attentive

followers of the unfolding epic of Greyfriars. The flying gown of the one, and the loud check trousers of the other are integral parts of the Greyfriars scene and are as familiar to us as our own faces in a mirror.

Surely Billy Bunter would whiten the hairs of anyone not possessed with the strongest and most resilient constitution! Even such privileged souls would, one feels, survive but a short period of contact with him. Perhaps only a saint, a veritable St. George in shining armour could emerge unscathed. Thus it is little short of miraculous that his form master, Mr. Quelch, has over the years retained his equilibrium to such a degree as to enable him to entertain even yet some miniscule hopes that he may one day make something passably acceptable of this fat member of his form.

Mr. Quelch's hairs are sparse – which is not surprising – but his will and his wrist are exceedingly strong. Bunter has had much experience of both during his career at Greyfriars. The sharp edge of the remove master's tongue has splintered and broken upon Bunter's dense mentality countless times. His sinewy wrist has wielded a cane to some purpose on many occasions. Far from splintering, this has impressed the Owl singularly for a short period, at least until the physical effects have subsided and he is able to sit down, albeit gingerly once more.

Oddly enough the remove master is reluctant to listen to or tolerate any criticism relating to his 'boys', who naturally include William George Bunter. The slightest murmur from Mr. Prout or any other member of the teaching staff directed against the remove acts as a signal for Quelch to don the full armour of righteous indignation and proceed to war – verbally in his sharpest manner – against those misguided enough to attempt such an outrage.

Thus Quelch is, despite his undoubted acidity, a staunch champion of the remove fellows, a fact which Billy Bunter finds very difficult to understand.

The relationship between Mr. Quelch and Bunter is often tenuous, which is not surprising considering the temperaments involved. Quelch with his meticulous and perfectly organised mind, disciplined in every gesture and thought. Bunter, the personification of careless and far from hygienic habits (i.e. a marked aversion to soap and water) with an easy conscience concerning the property of his fellows and, perhaps most irritating to Quelch, with total disregard for factual truth.

To Billy Bunter, Quelch seems to be a beast who does not, or will not, try to understand a fellow. To Quelch, Bunter is an incorrigible stumbling block for any attempts to instil even a modicum of knowledge. Not a happy or hopeful liaison. But each is saddled with the other for the long term of Bunters sojourn in the remove.

As Greyfriars exists in a suspended world of its own, that tenure seems likely to be timeless, and the clash of personalities, of authority and pupil, will continue with whackings, impositions and wiggings stewn liberally along the way.

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## WAKING DREAMS

by Ted Baldock

My dreams were always beautiful,  
My thoughts were high and fine;  
No life was ever lived on earth  
To match those dreams of mine.

H.Van Dyke. *Another chance*

The summer sun is shining,  
The countryside is still,  
At east I am reclining  
Upon this gentle hill.  
My 'Magnet' lies beside me  
forgotten as I doze,  
The world is mine and I am free  
thus, happy I repose.  
The 'Famous Five' have worked their spell  
And Bunter has been chased.  
Old Coker's had another spill  
But can he be replaced?  
Schooldays now seem far away  
As I lay dreaming here,  
A fact I view with some dismay,  
I'm growing old I fear.  
The heart within me is still young,  
Adventure lies ahead,  
There's many a saga yet unsung  
If I but grasp the thread.  
Athwart the shadow of my dreams  
The Greyfriars fellows drift.  
All are there, the same old scenes  
Seen clearly through the mist.



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## WINGED POISON

by Reg Hardinge

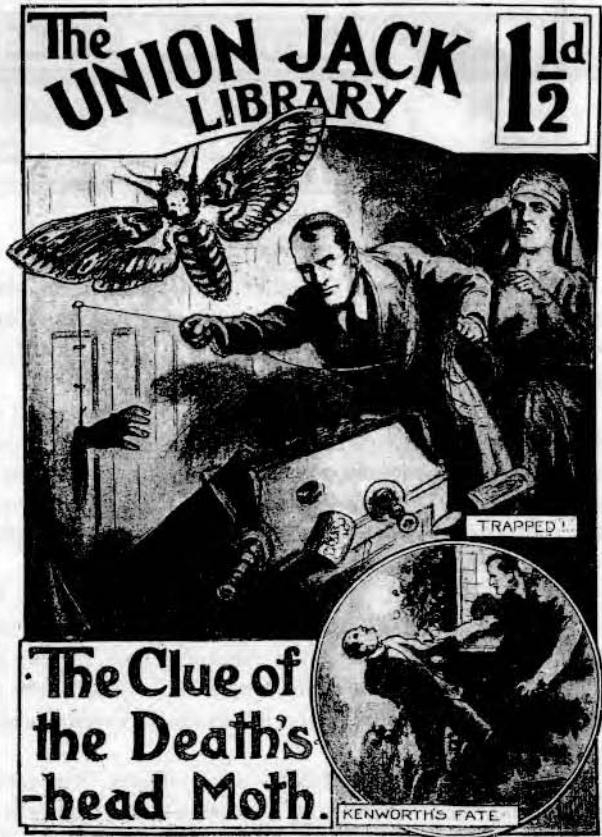
One of Sexton Blake's ,pest bizarre cases was 'The Clue of The Death's Head Moth' (UJ No. 879). Blake and a Japanese named Moshara Togosaki had been coached in science at Oxford University by John Penfold who was now an eminent professor of chemistry and toxicology, and living in London. Blake and Tinker, as well as Carson Kenworth, a retired King's Counsel, who was a friend of the professor's, had been invited to dine with Penfold at his place. Togosaki, now a brilliant scientist in Japan, had given the professor a sample of a subtle poison acquired from some Tibetan lamas which he wanted analysed. Blake, who had carried out in depth research into little known poisons, would be an invaluable aid to the professor in his task.

Professor Penfold's body was found in his house with his skull crushed in at the temple. The bottle of poison was missing. Blake, with Pedro the bloodhound, searched the ground, and discovered the imprint of a rubber heel outside a French window which led him to believe that Carson Kenworth was involved in the matter. Detective Inspector Rollings of the C.I.D. was in charge of the case.

Blake and Tinker posing as tourists went to Fenbridge in Buckinghamshire where Kenworth lived at the Firs looking after his young nephew, Sir Hilton Kenworth, a Baronet. Sir Hilton, a Captain of the Artillery, returned from World War I suffering from shell-shock, and a nurse was always in attendance on him. Should Sir Hilton die, the Baronetcy and Estate would pass to his Uncle, Carson Kenworth. Blake's probing into the retired K.C.'s affairs revealed that he was in financial difficulties through betting heavily on the turf. Tinker had met Nurse Jowett who had provided him with a Dead Death's-Head Moth which had somehow got into her patient's room. Blake's examination of the specimen showed that its body and wings were saturated with an amber coloured powder, which, when ignited, gave off a deadly nerve gas. Inhaled by Sir Hilton, it would case a deterioration in his condition. Blake obtained the consent of the Harley Street specialist who was treating Sir Hilton to withdraw Nurse Jowett and allow tinker to take her place.

Hidden in Bentley's Spinney near the Firs, Blake observed Carson Kenworth netting a Death's-Head Moth, confirming his suspicions of the K.C.'s guilt. Blake joined Tinker at the Firs, where, in a uniform bearing the dark blue of a fully qualified sister, and wearing a neat cap, his young assistant had been installed as 'Nurse Jones'. With Sir Hilton highly medicated and sound asleep, Blake made a thorough examination of his room and found a loose panel in the wall. Then he set a trap. He made several holes in

the wall with a gimlet, into which he screwed brass rings. Through the rings he threaded a length of copper wire at the end of which was a running noose, which dangled over the loose panel. After a vigil of some hours the loose panel moved and a hand came through releasing a moth into the room. Blake pulled on the wire and the hand was caught in the noose. The Death's-Head Moth fluttered towards the lamp on the table, was burned, and sank, a charred and writhing mass, exuding a curious luminous vapour which was gone in an instant. Blake hand-cuffed Carson Kenworth, then fired two shots to summon D.K. Rollings and two of his men who were waiting outside. In Kenworth's pocket Blake had found the missing phial containing the poisonous amber coloured powder.



Kenworth eluded justice for the murder of Professor Penfold by plunging through the open window to his death in a 30 foot drop. Sir Hilton made good progress health wise, and Togosaki had agreed to the destruction of the remaining Tibetan poison in his possession.

D.I. Rollings and Blake were firm friends having worked together on several cases. He appeared in 'The Man With the Limp' (UJ No. 1037) and 'The Golden Lotus' (UJ No. 1087) where, in both instances, he was up against that formidable adversary Gunga Dass. In 'The Case of the Stolen Locomotives' (UJ No. 1005) he, Blake and tinker were participants in a palace revolution in a Ruritanian State, situation between Bosnia and Austria. Rollings had the shoulders of a prize-fighter, and the slim but muscular legs of a dancing master. His hair and short-clipped moustache were aggressively red. His pugnacious and abrupt manner concealed a kindly disposition. He had a wife and kids, and smoked vile looking cheroots.

Rollings was the creation of Harry Egbert Hill, whose stories appeared in *The Sexton Blake Library* as well.

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## E.S.B. AND THE H.A. by E. Grant-McPherson

The 'Holiday Annual', excellent book that it is, has always been the organ of Charles Hamilton, and his allies Messrs Richards, Clifford and Conquest, and a very good organ too, as hundreds of readers, young and old, will testify, yours truly being numbered among them.

When I was 8 years old, an uncle of mine presented me with a copy for Christmas, which I read, almost from cover to cover. The few odd stories, other than those of school, never interested me much, with the exception of the motor racing ones that all the earlier annuals, contained. This was always my first read, as even in those far off days I was 'car crazy'. It was years, however, before I really got the hang of the Hamilton trilogy, and how 'Frank Richards' could turn up at Greyfriars etc.

The years passed, and then came 1932. By then the format had changed, the pages were much thicker, and I must confess that I thought the annual had lost a lot of its charm. There was no motor racing story either, but then, turning the pages, I came upon a story by Edwy Searles Brooks, something I had certainly not expected in the stronghold of Bunter. This was entitled "The Rivals of St. Franks" and without further ado, I read it there and then.

Alas, it was not one of Edwy's best efforts. The yarn was of the early 1930s when the poor old *Lee* was struggling. It opens with Handforth receiving a huge hamper from his pater, who is celebrating being made a Privy Councillor. While the removites are carrying the hamper to the school, they are ambushed by the 'Red Hots' led by one Kirby Keeble Parkington, known as K.K. who, with his companions, is a comparative newcomer to St. Franks. During the ensuing battle, the hamper is left at the side of the lane. Hearing the noise, Willy Handforth and some of his chums find it, and promptly cart it off.

Irene Manners, Handy's girl friend, and some of her pals, from "Moor View" school now arrived on the scene, and promptly tell off the removites, for acting like hooligans, and brawling in public. Leaving the boys reeling from the verbal castigation, they walk off with their noses in the air. They have not gone very far when they hear voices in the wood at the side of the lane, and espay Willy and Co. unpacking the hamper. Creeping up on the unsuspecting fags, they, in turn, annex the hamper, and take it back to their own school, where it is rapidly disposed of.

A day or two later, the "River House" school enters the story. Irene and Co. are taking some cakes that they have made, to some of the old folk in the village, when Brewster and some other juniors from the River House school arrive on the scene. Spotting the parcels of food, they tell the girls to hand it over, or they will take it by force.



Through the trees Irene & Co. saw the Third-Formers commence operations on Handforth's big hamper. "My hat!" one tag said. "What a find!"

Just then Nipper and a number of removites appear. The girls of course call for help, but the St. Franks boys just raise their caps politely, and pass by, telling the girls that they are not in the habit of brawling in public.

The River House boys take the food to the old people of Belton, just as Irene and Co. had intended, and the girls and boys all see the funny side of the whole episode, and of course harmony is restored once more.

Needless to say, after this break with tradition, I looked very carefully through the H.A. for 1933, but no story by Edwy appeared, not in fact in '34' or '35', and then when I had almost given up hope, the Holiday Annual for 1936 turned up trumps.

Once again it was a new story entitled "Handforth's Windfall", a much better yarn than that in the '32 annual. It opens in study D, where Handy, as usual, is having a row, this time it is with Bernard Forrest. Although Forrest gets the worst of it, during the scrap, the poor old study suffers most, ending up in a complete shambles. So Handforth writes to his father, Sir Edward, and asks for some more furniture to replace the stuff he has damaged.

A few days later, Forrest is sent on an errand, by his form master Mr. Crowell, which causes him to cross the triangle. Whilst doing so, he spots the carrier's lorry arriving, loaded with cases. Thinking perhaps it is Handy's furniture, he follows the lorry to the back of the school, where, on its being unloaded he sees that, in fact, it is address to Mr. Pycraft. Hurrying back to his study, he quickly makes up some labels with Handforth's name on, and returning to the cases, tacks the new labels over the old ones. On returning to the classroom he is told off, by the master, but says that he had been unable to locate Mr. Stokes whom he had been sent to find.

Some time later, Teddy Long, who had as usual, been prying, comes rushing up to the chums of study D, and tells them that Handy's new furniture has arrived. Most of the removites thank that someone has been pulling his leg, so they all accompany Handy and Co. to the rear of the premises, where, they discover that, in fact, there are some packing



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cases addressed to E.O. Handforth. All the boys immediately begin to unpack the boxes. They find they contain some really expensive goods. There is a very nice roll top desk, a carpet, and some first class chairs and a table. Handy, seeing all this lovely furniture, thinks his Pater has really turned up trumps, and tells the rest of the fellows that if there are any bits of the *old* stuff useful to anyone they are welcome to it. They all return to study D, to clear it out ready for all the new furniture.

Meanwhile Forrest, as soon as they have left, pulls off the labels that he had put on, thus exposing those addressed to Mr. Pyecraft, and goes to find the master, telling him that Handy and Co. have opened all the cases of his furniture.

Hearing this, Mr. Pyecraft dashes off to the yard, just as the removites arrive to carry off the furniture. He starts to berate Handy for interfering with his things, whereupon Handy says they are *his*. Then, when shown the labels actually addressed to Mr. Pyecraft, he does not know what to say. Nipper tells Mr. Pyecraft that he actually saw the labels bearing Handforth's name, and many of the juniors present back him up. Just then someone calls out that there is a case addressed to Handy. All the crowd immediately rush over to him, leaving the master fuming over his opened furniture.

Handy and his chums soon have the new case opened and, much to the disgust of E.O.H., all it contains is one very ancient armchair. The leader of study D is so enraged, that he starts to tear the old chair to pieces, turning it upside down and jumping on it, in his fury. Suddenly there is a tinkling sound, and a coin drops out, he picks it up and examines it, and it turns out to be a gold sovereign. On further searching, they discover 15 of them altogether, so the chums really can refurnish the study after all.

That was the last of the St. Frank's stories in the Holiday Annual, but they were a most welcome relief to me from the established order of things. Uncle James, I quite enjoyed: "Gussy" was quite a character too, and in a lot of ways, a pattern for anyone to look up to, but Tom Merry, I thought, was a little too much like "Eric" in the famous novel, whilst of the "Bunter's Weekly" no comment!

But, having said that, I am sure that most readers, will, like myself, mourn the passing of the 'Big Four', so more power to the elbows of folk like the late Howard Baker, and the Editors both past and present, of such publications as the C.D. for helping to keep our heroes alive.

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## A GOOD THRASHING by Laurence Price

The illustration that heads this article graphically shows Bunter receiving just one of the many hundreds of 'good thrashings' meted out to him by that 'just beast', Mr. Quelch. The reader usually accepts that these are well deserved and that the Fat Owl is only receiving his just deserts.

Yet one must sometimes question just how just was the 'just beast', even in his dealings with Bunter. In these days the need, or not, for corporal punishment, and its effectiveness, or otherwise, remains a controversial and emotive issue. It can be said with certainty, however, that in the case of Bunter it never seemed to cure his obtuseness or stop his raids on other people's tuck or the numerous other questionable escapades he landed himself in.

In the following extract from 'Bunter's Brainstorm' (1927), Quelch seems to take excessive and extreme measures with Bunter. Were such a scene to be shown on television today it would probably bring screams of protest about 'gratuitous violence'.

'I shall give you twenty strokes for your iniquitous conduct this afternoon. I shall give you ten strokes in addition for having played a further prank and attempted to deceive me.'

'Oh lo!!'

'Bend over that chair, Bunter.'...

Whack, whack, whack!

'Yoooo-ooo-ooooop!'

Whack, whack!

'Yaroooh! Help!'...

The cane was still whacking rhythmically. Billy Bunter's yells rang far and wide. Towards the end of the infliction the strokes fell a little more lightly. Perhaps Mr. Quelch thought Bunter had had enough. If so, for once Bunter was in full agreement with his Form-master. He had had enough and to spare.

'There, Bunter!' gasped Mr. Quelch at last. Vigorous gentleman as he was, he was a little tired, though not so tired as Bunter.

'Yow-ow-ow-ow!'

'You may go!'

In the current litigation conscious mood of the society, I think Greyfriars School would have found itself paying out substantial damages to Bunter and the 'vigorous gentleman' in question would have been beginning a lengthy prison sentence for this particular act of 'abuse' on Bunter!



"Bend over that boat, Bunter!" cried Mr. Quelch angrily. "I—I—I say, sir—" "Bend over!" "Oh orrikey!" Billy Bunter bent over. Three fellows coming down to the boat-house, stared and grinned. Bunter did not grin, he roared. "Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

It has been suggested that, as with the once ritual weekly 'slipperings' Dennis the Menace used to receive in *Beano*, such thrashings should be treated as cartoon humour. Yet this particular beating doesn't seem as funny or as cartoonish as perhaps it was intended. And did such a thrashing have any basis in fact? If so, just how effective was it on the recipient? Did corporal punishment work?

Here was how the great author and creator of Sherlock Holmes, Arthur Conan Doyle, reminisced on his experiences of receiving corporal punishment as a young teenage boy, and as he recounted it in his autobiography, *Memories and Adventures* (1924).

'From Hodder I passed on to Stonyhurst, that grand mediaeval dwelling-house which was left some hundred and fifty years ago to the Jesuits, who brought over their whole teaching staff from some college in Holland in order to carry it on as a public school. The general curriculum, like the building, was mediaeval but sound... It was the usual public school routine of Euclid, algebra and the classics, taught in the usual way, which is calculated to leave a lasting abhorrence of these subjects.

'Corporal punishment was severe, and I can speak with feeling as I think few, if any, boys of my time endured more of it. It was of a peculiar nature, imported also, I fancy, from Holland. The instrument was a piece India-rubber of the size and shape of a thick boot sole. This was called a "Tolley" – why, no one has explained, unless it is a Latin pun on what we had to bear. One blow of the instrument, delivered with intent, would cause the palm of the hand to swell up and change colour. When I say that the usual punishment of the larger boys was nine each hand, and that nine on one hand was the absolute minimum, it will be understood that it was a severe ordeal, and that the sufferer could not, as a rule, turn the handle of the door to get out of the room in which he had suffered. To take twice nine on a cold day was about the extremity of human endurance. I think, however, that it was good for us in the end, for it was a point of honour with many of us not to show that we were hurt, and that is one of the best trainings for a hard life. If I was more beaten than others it was not that I was in any way vicious, but it was that I had a nature which responded eagerly to affectionate kindness (which I never received), but which rebelled against threats and took a perverted pride in showing that it would not be cowed by violence. I went out of my way to do really mischievous and outrageous things simply to show that my spirit was unbroken. An appeal to my better nature and not to my fears would have found an answer at once. I deserved all got for what I did, but I did it because I was mishandled.'

This intensely moving passage surely encapsulates all the arguments and counter-arguments, and contradictions, pertaining to the remote issue of the effectiveness, or otherwise, of corporal punishment.

Later, however, Conan Doyle was able to more happily recount:

'I had another year with the Jesuits (he was now 16) for it was determined that I was still too young to begin any professional studies, and that I should go to Germany to learn German. I was despatched, therefore, to Feldkirch, which is a Jesuit school in the Voralberg province of Austria, to which many better-class German boys are sent. Here the conditions were much more humane and I met with far more human kindness than at Stonyhurst, with the immediate result that I ceased to be a resentful young rebel and became a pillar of law and order.'

By way of comparison, follow the experiences of the chief sub-editor and substitute writer of Greyfriars stories, the late George Richmond Samways. Here is how he recounted his own memoirs of corporal punishment in his autobiography *The Road to Greyfriars* (1984).

'King Edward VI School was founded by Royal Charter in 1553... Shortly after 1860, the boy's School... removed from London to the more spacious environment of Witley, in Surrey.

Pupils were to be instructed in the Christian religion, and in reading, writing, arithmetic, geography and history. Good conduct, diligence and proficiency in learning and handicraft were to be recognised and rewarded. Edward Rudge, a schoolmaster who had taken Holy Orders, was the first Headmaster. The sternest discipline and the closest control were imposed. Corporal punishment in its severest form was inflicted daily. Solitary confinement on a bread-and-water diet was a punishment frequently employed. The stigma of Bridewell, as a House of Correction, (which the school had once been) still remained.

When I arrived at the school with five other new boys, the system had become somewhat more humanised and enlightened, but nevertheless continued to be Spartan and severe. Edward Rudge had retired in 1886... the Headmaster of my day (1905) was the Reverend Charles T. Raynham – a man of stern and forbidding aspect...

Reveille, sounded by the school bugler in the quadrangle, was at six o'clock, winter and summer. It was followed by scenes of frenzied bustle and confusion. There was no hot water system, and in winter it was sometimes necessary to break the ice before we could perform our ablutions. The number of wash basins was limited, and in the stampede the battle was to the strong, whilst the weaker boys shiveringly awaited their turn. Boots had to be cleaned and polished, and there was about a dozen pairs of boot brushes between two hundred and fifty boys. Here, again, the weakest went to the wall, with the painful fore-knowledge that if they appeared on the nine o'clock parade with dirty boots, they would be ordered to fall out from the ranks. A caning inevitably followed.'

Samways goes on to describe the "grim and horrific" nine o'clock parade when boy defaulters were interrogated by the Headmaster and floggings followed. He comments that the words of the school song "Holding boyhood days in fond remembrance" seemed utterly incongruous, and that for years after his schooldays ended he still had nightmares in which his youthful sufferings were re-enacted.

He also mentions that the *Magnet*, then in its early days, was barred from the school and that any boy found with a copy would be flogged. (Apparently one copy *had* previously been found on the school premises which depicted a master being caught in a booby trap, with a bag of soot descending on his head!)

Thrashings, whackings, beatings, call them what you will, at Greyfriars may, on occasion, have been severe yet, somehow, they do not seem to match the horrors that such men as Conan Doyle and Samways encountered in the real world. Those two authors document the horror and brutality of a different age and we would do well to remember them when we wax nostalgically for 'the good old days'.

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## THAT OLD ART-WORK

by W.O.G. Lofts

Several readers have asked what happens to original art work for the story papers and comics. Art work usually went to the printers three weeks before publication date. When finished with, it was returned to the editor's office. He had the authority to dispose with it, how he thought fit. In the early days sometimes it was given away to readers in competition prizes. Sometimes given back to the artists if they requested it. Often the editor, sub-editors, or other contributors took it home. For instance H.W. Twyman, editor of the old *Union Jack* and *Detective Weekly*, thought so much of Eric Parker's work that he took much of it home and stored it in his attic in a house in the Thames Estuary. During the Second World War the roof was set alight by a flying bomb, and all destroyed.

After a period, art-work that was cluttering up the editorial offices was removed to the basements – or vaults in the case of the old Amalgamated Press, to be stored in case it would be used again at a later date. Unfortunately Fleetway House was built over the old River Fleet and had a damp atmosphere (as well as several floods) so consequently old art-work was completely ruined by damp and mildew, and simply thrown away.

Certainly as far as the Companion Papers were concerned the most sought after was the *Gem* original covers drawn by Warwick Reynolds during the First World War. C.M. Down, the *Magnet* editor, told me he had several 'somewhere in the house'. H.W. Twyman also had a number once shown to me, explaining how Reynolds had slipped up drawing some instrument. C.H. Chapman, the *Magnet* artist also told me he had some material: "I was drawn to his artwork like a Magnet", (excuse the pun!, he said. Most surprising, C.H. Chapman's, Leonard Shields', R.J. McDonald's original artwork never had the fascination of Warwick Reynolds', at least in the early days.

Regarding other publishers, Oldhams old artwork was thrown away being ruined by damp not all that long ago – with all their fine artists in adult magazines such as Gilbert Wilkinson etc. George Newnes artwork, which included the famous Richmal Crompton's 'William' in *Happy Magazine*, drawn by Thomas Henry, was likewise all destroyed.

On the other hand the market is almost flooded with original *Eagle* artwork which started in the fifties, especially work done by Frank Hampson. It must be remembered that in pre-war days artwork was simply not collected, only having a curiosity value. Certainly most artists (like those in the comic field) were not regarded as having any real merit in the work of art at all, however much they are revered today.

Original artwork often appears on the market at auctions when descendants of former artists/editors etc. have realised the value today placed on what was once regarded as 'worthless value' material. Only a year ago an original *Rupert Annual* cover, drawn by Alfred Bestall, raised several thousand pounds at auction, but this is an exception to the rule.

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## FORUM

**From STEVE HOLLAND:** I was particularly interested in Bill Bradford's memories of *Scoops* since it was an interest in early British science fiction that really sparked my interest in researching old magazines and authors and brought me in touch with people like Bill Lofts and Derek Adley. Bill, of course, receives a mention in the letters page of the same issue (641, May), and Bill's and Derek's past research reveals some of the names of the anonymous contributors to *Scoops*.

The paper was edited by F. Haydn Dimmock, better known as the editor of *Scout* (which would explain the use of *Scout* illustrator E.P. Kinsella, mentioned in the feature), although there is a chance that the bulk of the editorial duty was performed by Bernard Buley, then working for the publishers (C. Arthur Pearson) but also a prolific writer. It was Buley who penned the opening serial of *Scoops*, "Master of the Moon", and he went on to write many other stories in the 1930s. Buley was the son of Ernest Charles Buley (1869-1933), the one-time editor of *Reynolds News*; a prolific contributor to *Aldine* in the 1920s, he was still writing in the early 1960s, but I've not been able to trace any further information about him.

"The Striding Terror" was the work of Reginald Thomas (1899-1956), whose place in boys' story paper history is usually confined to being the writer of many 'Red Circle' yarns for *Hotspur*, although he was extraordinarily prolific for many different papers.

The authorship of "Voice from the Void" remains a mystery, but "Devilman of the Deep" was written by Stuart Martin (1882-?), about whom nothing is known (by me, at least. I hope someone will prove me wrong!).

Amongst the anonymous short stories were a number of contributions by Edwy Searles Brooks, and among the later stories (which were credited) one or two authors who went on to better things: *Scoops*' regular "To the Planets" columnist P.E. Cleator was the co-founder of the British Interplanetary Society and an expert on rocketry, and John Russell Fearn went on to become one of the best pulp SF writers in the UK, probably most fondly remembered for his 'Golden Amazon' series about super-woman Violet Ray, and as Vargo Statten, the author of 50 colourful paperback SF novels in the early 1950s.

**TONY GLYNN writes:** Probably someone closer to the Eagle Society than myself has told you that Southport now has a bust of Dan Dare in the town centre, marking the fact that it was in Southport that Frank Hampson and his team created Dan Dare, working in a studio created from an old bakehouse on the outskirts of town.

The *Eagle*, of course, was the brainchild of the Rev. Marcus Morris, then Vicar of St. James's Church in the town. I wasn't at the unveiling of the bust but it was civic occasion with the Mayor and Mayoress present. At the same time, an exhibition devoted to the *Eagle*, with the emphasis on Dan Dare, was opened at the art gallery which is close to the location of the bust. Much original artwork is on view and it is proving a very popular attraction.

Memories of *The Scout*? Yes, I have a few. They are chiefly of a bland war-time production, short on page-count because of the paper shortage and containing almost nothing memorable.

I joined the scout movement in 1942 and took the magazine every week from that date and, I think, well into 1943 out of what I suppose was a sense of duty. Looking back on it, I think it was beaten only by the ghastly *Children's Newspaper* which bored one to tears the moment one picked it up. In those war-time days, it was a short of uninspired company magazine with reports on the doings of various scout troops. There were a couple of serial stories and one always seemed to be by F Haydn Dimmock who, if I remember aright, edited the paper. I cannot recall any details of these stories because after trying them briefly I found them just as bland as almost everything else in the magazine. There was nothing in *The Scout* of the vigour and fun of the Charles Hamilton school of fiction or the general adventure and sheer far-fetched ness to be found in the various publications of the Amalgamated Press and D.C. Thomson. The war-time complexion of *The Scout* was stiff and staid and, to this schoolboy at least, it had nothing to attract the schoolboy appetite. I cannot remember that any of my schoolmates, many of whom were scouts, ever read the magazine.

Only one feature from *The Scout* of that time stands out: the regular recordings of the antics of a scout troop in Heckmondwike by a scoutmaster named Jack Blunt who illustrated his articles with his own cartoons. This was the only offering which could cause me to chuckle and I believed the whole saga was imaginary because I thought Heckmondwike was a music-hall joke kind of name like Gillie Potter's Hogsnoorton. Long afterwards, I learned that there is a genuine Heckmondwike in Yorkshire and that Jack Blunt was a genuine scouter there.

To boys who waited with bated breath for the doings – then appearing fortnightly – of the likes of the Iron Teacher, Strang the Terrible and the astonishing William Wilson, the war-time version of *The Scout* seemed to be an un-noticed also-ran.

Much later in my schooldays, I was astonished when I came by a pre-war number of *The Scout*, dating from the thirties. It had a vitality quite lacking in the wartime version, with a coloured pictorial cover where the war-time version had only unattractive columns of type. It contained a selection of stories, illustrations and cartoons which made it a worthwhile boys' magazine, something the war-time publication certainly was not. Finding that pre-war edition with its satisfyingly substantial page-count tempered my rather jaundiced view of *The Scout*. It was obviously a jolly good read in its heyday, I thought.

My misfortune was to know it at first hand only in abnormal times when it was a mere shadow of its former self. I cannot imagine that it had a large circulation at that time and, possibly, it was kept going only by a sense of duty to scouting, my own motivation for parting with precious pocket-money for a publication which never gripped my imagination. I was keen on scouting but never keen about *The Scout*.

**From DEREK FORD:** DOTCOM... Very old boys would have been interested in a lot at Bonham's in March. It was the autograph dummy for the unrealised first issue of Ballantyne's Magazine for Young People, running to around 100 pages and including seven finished articles by Robert Ballantyne, the author of *Coral Island*. Though the dummy was detailed and carefully presented, along with suggestions for other articles and a business plan, the project was turned down by publishers Edminston & Douglas. It sold for £2,500... At Sotheby's in February an autograph letter of June 1897 in which Conan



Doyle defends himself against a claim made by B. Fletcher Robinson (in 'Literary World') that he had helped write *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, made £11,250: "I wrote every word of the book. We talked over some points of the plot, the original idea of a haunted family came from him." ...Following the announcement that there were plans to make a series of blockbuster films about Biggles, there was some correspondence in the *Times* about the model. It was concluded that Captain W.E. Johns had based his famous airman on Sub-Lieutenant (later Air Commodore) Arthur Wellesley Bigsforth... A Saturday *Telegraph* "personal" announced: "Campion, Albert, b.May 20, 1900. Felicitations on your century. The Margery Allingham Society". Allingham (1904-66) contributed to many A.P. papers. Campion first appeared in "The Crime at Black Dudley" in 1928. This was later published as number 15 in the *Thriller Library* in 1934. Re-titled as "The Black Dudley Murder" it appeared in Broadsheet Novels, of which there were only six numbers, in 1936... The editor of a new comics price guide comments on the Nelson Lee Library: "All were published by the A.P. between 1915 and 1933 and are virtually unsaleable today. "Oh dear... A permanent Eagle-Dan Dare exhibition opened at Whitstable Museum, Kent, in March. It contains the original dummy copy by the Rev. Marcus Morris and artist Frank Hampson, who were more lucky than Robert Ballantyne above.

**From JOHN BRIDGWATER:** I thoroughly enjoyed Derek Hinrich's article on Mycroft Holmes in March *Digest* and look forward to the further instalments. J.E.M.'s Blakiana was good too. Really splendid issue with so many good things.

The C.D. Annual was a cracker. I particularly liked Donald Campbell's "Children's Hour" article. It so interested me that I got my second-hand book dealer to find a copy of Wallace Grevatt's *History*. It took him half an hour from receiving my 'phone call to ring back and say it was on the way!! He goes straight on to the Internet with his computer and sets the supply in motion within minutes. This last six months he has supplied 3 of my wants within minutes. The longest part of the process is getting the books through the post. Second-hand appears as quickly as newly published. I am very impressed. No longer the long trek round second-hand bookshops. Just a phone call and the speed of supply is unbelievable.

However, to the article. Donald stirred my memory of a strong early influence which I am sure shaped my reading for the rest of my life. I was a keen *Children's Hour* listener. The things I most vividly remember are readings of 'The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's', Tennyson's "Enid and Geraint", Macaulay's *Lay of Ancient Rome* about brave Horatius holding the bridge, animal stories by H. Mortimer Batten and current affairs talks by Stephen King-Hall. A big favourite was Toytown and later Norman and Henry Bones, also Jennings's playlets. Aunts and Uncles remembered with affection are Uncle Mac, Sophie on the piano and Wunkle (Wicked Uncle). I am sure it was the influence of those wonderful people that started my love of classical music. I still clearly remember my disappointment at a very early age being missed off the birthday list which was read daily at that time with instructions to follow the string, or look behind the clock etc. to find birthday presents. They made up for it, however, by including me a couple of days later. I have very happy memories of *Children's Hour*.

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## Real-life wartime exploits of Biggles

From *Squadron Leader*  
Dennis L. Bird, RAF (retd)

Sir, Mr Michael Vaisey (letter, May 17) suggests that Richard Shuttleworth of Old Warden aerodrome was the model for Captain W. E. Johns's famous airman "Biggles" (*Squadron Leader James Bigglesworth*).

As those of us will recall who were at the Royal Air Force Club on February 6, 1993, for the Johns Centenary luncheon, there is a much more convincing candidate. Sir Peter Masefield, former chief executive of British European Airways, said at that lunch that as a young man he had known Johns and had discussed the matter with him. Johns told him Biggles was a compendium of a number of people, but the real model was Sub-Lieutenant (later Air Commodore) Arthur Wellesley Bigsforth.

Johns first met him in the Air Ministry in 1922, and was so struck by two of Bigsforth's real-life exploits (the first man to drop a bomb on to a Zeppelin in flight and the first to sink a submarine from the air) that these featured in two of Johns's early books: *Biggles Goes to War* and *Biggles of the Camel Squadron*.

Jenny Schofield (letter, same day) tells the story in the Johns biography she and Peter Berresford Ellis published in 1993.

Yours sincerely,  
DENNIS L. BIRD,  
37 The Avenue,  
Shoreham-by-Sea BN43 5GJ.  
May 17.

*The Times*, Saturday, May 20, 2000

## Biggles takes to the big screen

From *Mrs Jennifer Schofield*

Sir, I was delighted to read about the plans for a new film about Biggles (report, "Film moguls to make a new man of Biggles", May 12), but dismayed that the original stories are labelled indiscriminately as politically incorrect.

Captain James Bigglesworth, RFC, was created in 1932 by Captain W. J. Johns, RFC, to tell the truth about flying in World War I. So popular were the stories, based on the author's own experiences, that they were followed by tales of Biggles's adventures in the interwar period, in the RAF in World War 2, and in the Air Police, postwar. This series reached the amazing total of 97 titles, ending only when Captain W. E. Johns died in 1968.

Inevitably, the books reflect the decades in which they were written, and in some of the earlier tales there are, very occasionally, words and passages that are unacceptable today; but the ethos in this amazing series remains constant. Far from being racist, Johns's brave, charismatic, compassionate and amusing air ace is always on the side of right and justice, and people in trouble, whoever they may be. Let Biggles speak for himself. In the RAF tale *Biggles Delivers the Goods* published in 1946, Air Commodore Raymond, of Air Intelligence, remarks disparagingly that the airman has some odd friends scattered about the globe.

"While men are decent to me I try to be decent to them, regardless of race, colour, politics, creed or anything else," asserted Biggles curtly. "I've travelled a bit, and taking the world by and large, it's my experience that with a few exceptions there's nothing wrong with the people on it, if only there were left alone to live as they want to live."

"All right, all right," said the Air Commodore soothingly.

Yours faithfully,  
JENNIFER SCHOFIELD  
(Editor, *Biggles Flies Again*,  
*The Captain W. E. Johns Magazine*),  
Canna, West Drive,  
Bracklesham,  
Chichester,  
West Sussex PO20 8PF  
May 12.

*The Times*, May 17, 2000



## NEWS OF THE OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUBS

### CAMBRIDGE CLUB

For our May 2000 meeting we gathered at the Cherry Hinton home of Adrian Perkins. After our usual short business session we were once again treated to a themed film presentation from Keith Hodkinson. We watched excerpts from feature films having an aviation content so that we could ascertain just how they saw the early days of flying.

Keith provided a running commentary and a brief analysis of each film shown, and these included: Those Magnificent Men In Their Flying Machines (1965), Hell's Angels (1930), Dirigible (1931), The Great Waldo Pepper (1975), Aces High (1971) and Hindenberg (1975).

ADRIAN PERKINS

### LONDON O.B.B.C.

Len Cooper's house in Newport Pagnell proved to be a popular new venue for the April meeting of the London O.B.B.C. It was hard work squeezing everybody in, but it was managed somehow. It was a good job that the servants of Cooper Court were on holiday: there wouldn't have been room for them!

Len gave an entertaining talk on Hugh Lofting, the creator of Doctor Dolittle. Bob Whiter, all the way from Los Angeles, presented a wide-ranging quiz on story papers and comics and gave some of his renowned Greyfriars cut-outs as prizes. Roger Coombes evoked nostalgic memories with two quizzes which featured audio extracts of the celebrities of yesteryear. Alan Pratt, latter-day author of Dixon Hawke stories for D.C. Thomson, brought sad news of that 'tec's demise: he is to be retired from duty very soon. Mary Cadogan spoke enthusiastically about the Scarlet Pimpernel in a fascinating presentation about Baroness Orczy's immortal creation.

VIC PRATT

### NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

We were delighted to welcome at our May meeting, Keith Normington on holiday from Thailand, visiting friends in England and Wales.

We all read an article published in the local evening paper, concerning the selling by auction of Regina Glick's large collection of books by various authors including rare copies of Dorita Fairlie Bruce. Seemingly, some lots brought much higher prices than expected but one cannot always believe what newspapers say- especially when they

referred to Regina as "Miss" and "a spinster" when she was very much a loving mother in a very close knit family. We miss Regina at our meetings.

Mark reported on someone who had contacted him via e-mail – apparently a relative of Edwy Searles Brooks. It would be good to hear more from him. Joan spoke about the very successful "William Meeting" near Rugby and a progress report was given concerning the "Jennings Meeting" to be held on 17<sup>th</sup> June, in Lewes, Sussex. A number of people are now booking in for lunch at our Golden Jubilee Celebrations Day on 14<sup>th</sup> October. We will be delighted to welcome members from other clubs.

The theme for the evening was "The Dickens Project". Mark gave us a fascinating and extremely interesting talk on Dickens, from his birth in Portsmouth in 1802 to his success as an author after being editor of various magazines. The original title of "Barnaby Rudge" had lain dormant for a number of years, before it was finally published. Mark continued his fine talk after refreshments and, to round it off, Geoffrey read beautifully from "Nicholas Nickleby". We shall all wait to hear a follow up talk by Mark in the future!

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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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. Tel: 01923-232383.

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**UNBOUND MAGNETS WANTED:** 64 91 95 110 204 207 215 217 219 220 221 223 227 229 230 231 253  
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**It helps the C.D. if you advertise your "For Sales" and Wants in it.** The rates are: 4p per word, £5 for a quarter page, £10 for a half page and £20 for a whole page.

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# SCRAPBOOK

## Swanlake

BY Madge  
Minden



*A Privileged Peep into the Stately Home of Pam Willoughby, of Morcove.*



Four Prominent Fourth Formers—(left to right) Naomer, Polly, Betty and Paula.

Articles  
Needed—



Send for  
Sexton  
Blake!

BW

## GEMS OF HAMILTONIA from Pete Hanger

Coker was going to thrash the pair of them. That, Coker felt, was the very least he could do. But Coker, hefty as he was, was hardly a match for Potter and Greene together.

He landed many punches. He received twice as many. Then, suddenly uprooted from the floor, Coker was hurled over, crashing.

He hit the floor with a mighty bump. Breathlessly, he rolled and spluttered.

Potter lingered a moment, to jam the wastepaper-basket on his head. Then he left the study with Greene.

Coker, gasping, was left struggling to get the wastepaper-basket off.

Potter and Greene went down to Hall to tea. Obviously there was going to be no spread for Potter and Greene in Coker's study. *MAGNET 1516*

... It was tea-time, and he had been disappointed about a postal order. So far Bunter had only had tea in Hall, and Study No. 7. If there was tea going in any other study, Bunter was ready. *MAGNET 1519*

"Just listen!" grunted Coker. "I suppose you'd like to earn a pound or two? You look as if you could do with them."

"I believe you!" assented Juggins

Had he been able to handle Horace Coker he would have earned a pound or two on the spot.

*MAGNET 1516*

Cecil Reginald Temple winked at Dabney and Fry.

"Watches were made to go, you chaps," he remarked. "Funny thing is that in the Remove watch chains do the same thing."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chortled Dabney and Fry.

"The best thing you can do with a watch chain," went on Temple, who seemed to be quite brilliant this afternoon, "is to keep a watch on it."

"Oh, rather!" chuckled Dabney.

"Or it might be removed!" explained Temple – which appeared to be a pun on the name of Quelch's Form. *MAGNET 1519*

Mr. Higgins kindly showed the juniors over the farm. Fernford Farm was extensive and the showing round included a very long walk, which made Bunter puff and gasp. Lord Mauleverer shuddered a little as the party stopped to view the pigs, whose name seemed to be legion. There was an aroma about the pigsties which did not seem to agree with his Lordship. Mr. Higgins did not seem to notice that, however.

"Fond of animals – what?" he asked addressing himself particularly to Lord Mauleverer, who seemed to have taken his fancy.

"Oh, yans," said Mauleverer faintly.

"Good! You shall have the job of feeding the pigs."

"Oh, begad!"

"George will show you how to make the hogwash," said Mr. Higgins, beaming.

"Help!"

"You'll grow very fond of them in the long run," said Mr. Higgins – "that fond of 'em that you'll feel quite cut up when you have to stick 'em."

Lord Mauleverer turned pale

"Stick 'em!" he said, faintly.

Mr. Higgins nodded.

"Do you mean kill 'em sir?"

"Yes, You see," explained Mr. Higgins, "a pig has to be killed before it can be turned into bacon. Otherwise, the Society for the prevention of cruelty to Animals would raise objections. *MAGNET 441*

"Whether you are making a foolish mistake, Bunter, or whether you are slandering this gentleman intentionally I do not know. But I must impress upon you, Bunter, that you cannot make such wicked statements with impunity. Hold out your hand." "M – m – murn – my hand, sir!" stammered Bunter, in dismay.

He seemed as surprised as if Mr. Quelch had told him to hold out his foot. *MAGNET 526*

"He ought to be put to the torture!" declared Vernon-Smith. "We'll read out to him a dozen eloquent speeches from the last House of Commons' debate. We can take on the job in turns, so that we don't perish too." *MAGNET 541*



## POINTED PARS ABOUT CLIFF HOUSE

**T**HERE are several special rooms at the School for subjects, such as the model kitchen, the library, the needlework room, the chemical laboratory, the studio, the gymnasium, and the languages room.

The needlework-room is used for lessons, and may be "borrowed" of an evening for special work.

The studio is full of casts and busts for drawing. Since Dolly Jobling took to using the place several more have been cast and bust.

The library is a room of silence, and is frequently used by small girls who are being "pursued" by someone else, and wish to reach a safe sanctuary.

We must not forget the music-room, which is very frequently used at night by girls learning music, especially their scales. Girls passing the door often express their satisfaction that members of the Third Form have only five fingers on each hand.

Great Hall is the pride of all at Cliff House, and is always the first to be shown to visitors. They cannot help admiring its lofty dimensions and fine old panelled walls.

Lower, or dining-hall, is immediately beneath Great Hall, and it is here that all scholars partake of all meals except tea. Tea is served for those who are temporarily hard-up, but most girls prefer to draw their "ration" and supplement it in their studies.

Rising-bell rings at 7.15 a.m., but the time at which girls turn out depends on whether there are any cold sponges about.

Breakfast at Cliff House is served at 7.50, and Bessie Bunter once created a record by rising at 7.45 and being down in time to start level with the others.

Third-Formers go to bed at 9.0 o'clock, Fourth-Formers at 9.30, and Fifth-Formers at 9.45, with the consequence that pillow-fights usually take place at 9.45 or 10—on those evenings when Miss Bullivant is off duty.

There are a number of Cliff House societies, chief of which is the Junior Debating Society. The Fifth will tell you that the Senior Debating Society is more important, but that is because they are interested in it themselves.

Another flourishing society is that called the Amateur Dramatic. Its members meet at frequent intervals and rehearse plays, in which Bessie Bunter is always left out of the title rôle through jealousy. (Or so Bessie says.)

Pets are allowed to be kept at Cliff House, providing they are "approved" pets. Babs has a marmoset, sometimes referred to by Miss Bullivant as a detestable little ape. Clara Trevlyn has a hedgehog. Bessie Bunter has a famous—or infamous—parrot.

Bessie Bunter's pet is the only one allowed to be kept in the school itself, Bessie's excuse being that her bird is delicate and suffers from asthma, rheumatism, and lumbago, unless kept in a nice warm study and well cared for.

Second-Formers sometimes keep caterpillars, but quite unofficially, as the members of the crawling tribe are not approved by Miss Primrose. The caterpillars frequently escape, and fresh supplies have to be obtained.

"School outings" take place in the form of "nature rambles," when a pleasant hour is spent in the woods.

Other outings taken are to special objects of interest, to such travelling shows as circuses or good waxworks, and to the cinema to see specially approved films.

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