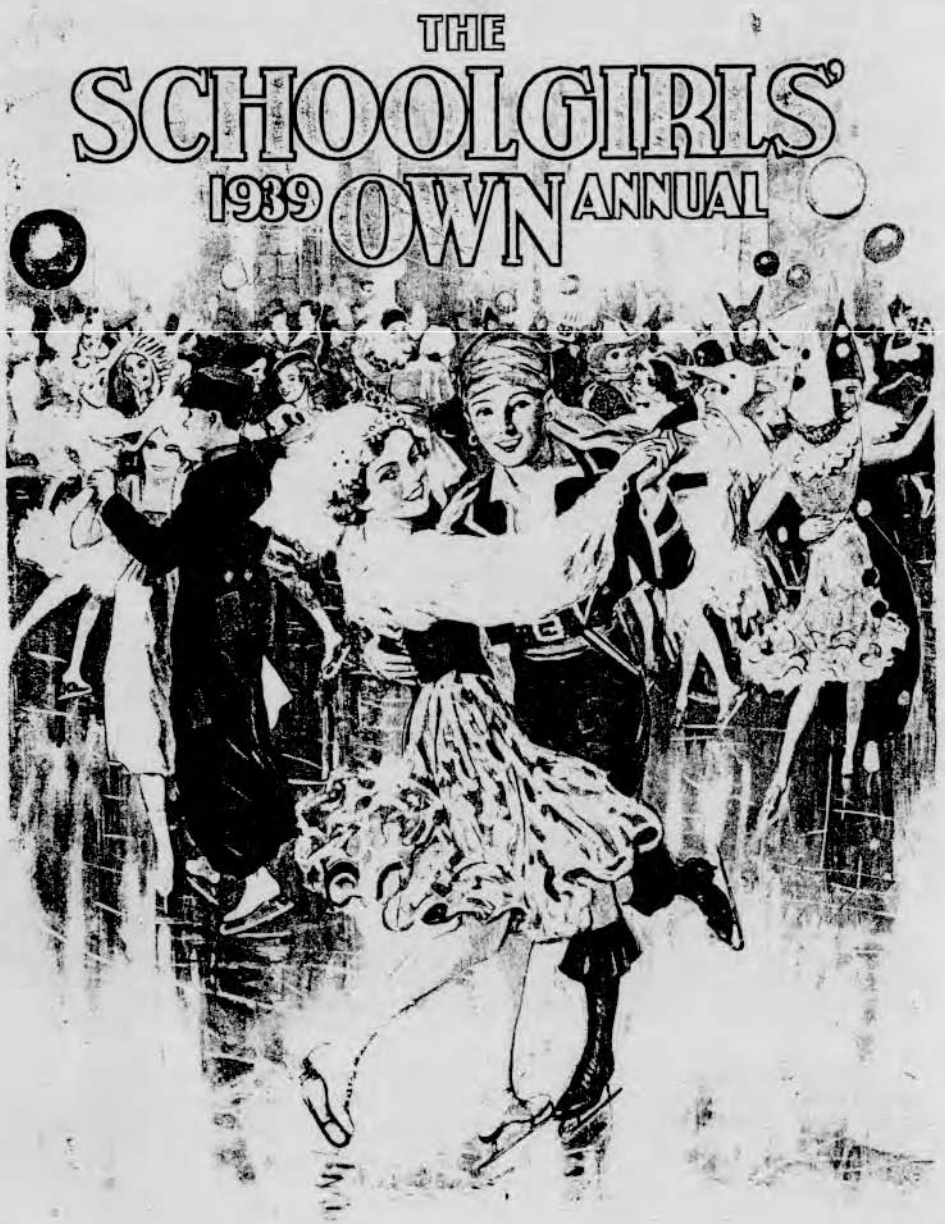
STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST
VOL. 55 No. 650 JUNE 2001



GEMS OF HAMILTONIA from Pete Hanger

"Well, look here!" said Johnny Bull. "If you want to run on, don't talk footer, but give us a Shakespeare recitation!"

"What?" yelled Wibley.

"Good egg!" said Harry Wharton heartily. "That's a thing you understand, Wib. We'll listen to that with pleasure.

"The pleasurefulness will be terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a nod of his dusky head. "Get onfully with esteemed and ridiculous Shakespeare!"

William Wibley seemed at a loss for words. He gazed, he stared, and he glared at the five cheery juniors sitting at the tea-table.

Generally, it was hardly safe to ask Wib to recite. He was only too likely to do it!

Now, however, he was clearly in no mood for recitation, even from the divine, immortal, and long-winded Bard of Avon.

Football filled his mind, for the moment, to the exclusion even from the divine matters, in which Wib generally lived, and moved, and had his being.

"You – you – you silly asses!" gasped Wibley at last. "You – you gabbling ganders! You jabbering jabberwocks! You chortling chumps! You benighted blithering boobies!"

"Go it! said Johnny. "Which play is that from?"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I don't seem to remember those lines; but, of course, you know Shakespeare better than I do!" said Johnny affably. "Is it Hamlet?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the other four members of the Co., quite entertained by the expression on Wibley's face.

Wibley gasped

"You – you – you idiot!" he gasped. "Did you think I was reciting Shakespeare?"

"Weren't you?" asked Johnny innocently.

"Ass! Fathead! Chump!"

"You're getting excited, old chap!" said Harry Wharton soothingly. "Look here, why not chuck it, and sit down and have tea? We've got toast, and poached eggs, and cake, and a new pot of tea all ready. You can pour out the tea. You can do that better than you can play footer." MAGNET 1498

Even the news that Mr. Capper had a very rare stamp to show them – a stamp which was supposed to have only one fellow in the wide world – did not make them enthusiastic.

An 1856 One-Cent British Guiana was no more to the average junior than the common or garden stamp bearing the effigy of His Majesty King George the Fifth, and sold at all Post Offices for one penny.

Mr. Capper's stamp might be – and doubtless was – worth a fabulous sum, and might be a most remarkable thing for a Form-master to possess; but the juniors would rather have played cricket.

Which would have been quite incomprehensible to Mr. Capper.

Mr. Capper had shown that wonderful One Cent to several fellows interested in philately. Newland and Banthorpe, of the Remove, had almost wept over it. Gadsby of the Shell, was said to have offered Mr. Capper five pounds for it. This was taken by the fellows as clear proof that Gadsby of the Shell, was off his rocker. Newland, who knew as much about stamps as Bob Cherry knew about cricket, declared that the stamp was worth hundreds of pounds.

And still the juniors would rather have played cricket! MAGNET 233

"I feel that it's up to me!"

Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars, made that remark in a thoughtful sort of way.

Coker and Potter and Greene were adorning the School House steps with their persons. Potter and Green were glancing occasionally in the direction of the school shop across the Close. They, too, felt that it was up to Coker – for it was getting near tea-time, and Coker was in funds, and they weren't.

MAGNET 375

It was pretty sickening, Bunter thought, for a fellow to make such a fuss about a cake. How many cakes Bunter had snaffled in his fat career as a grub raider, he could not have counted without going into very high figures. Smithy's cake was to Bunter, a mere trifling item on a very long list. MAGNET 1516

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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THE EDITOR'S CHAT

Here we are with our second quarterly issue, which again is larger than promised because of the generosity of our advertisers. I have received many letters from readers expressing warm appreciation of the March C.D. our first quarterly number. I am happy to see that this seems to have struck the right note: the general opinion is that the bumper editions are well worth waiting for.

The extra size, of course, makes possible the inclusion of longer articles which can explore aspects of our hobby in greater depth. I join readers in welcoming such features but I would like to stress that *short* articles are still most welcome, as these enhance the range, variety and vitality of the magazine.

Summer is now with us, bringing images of long, leisurely bouts of deck-chair reading in our gardens or on the beach. With this in mind I am glad to be

able to include this month a large section of reviews of hobby-related and other nostalgic books.

Happy reading.

MARY CADOGAN

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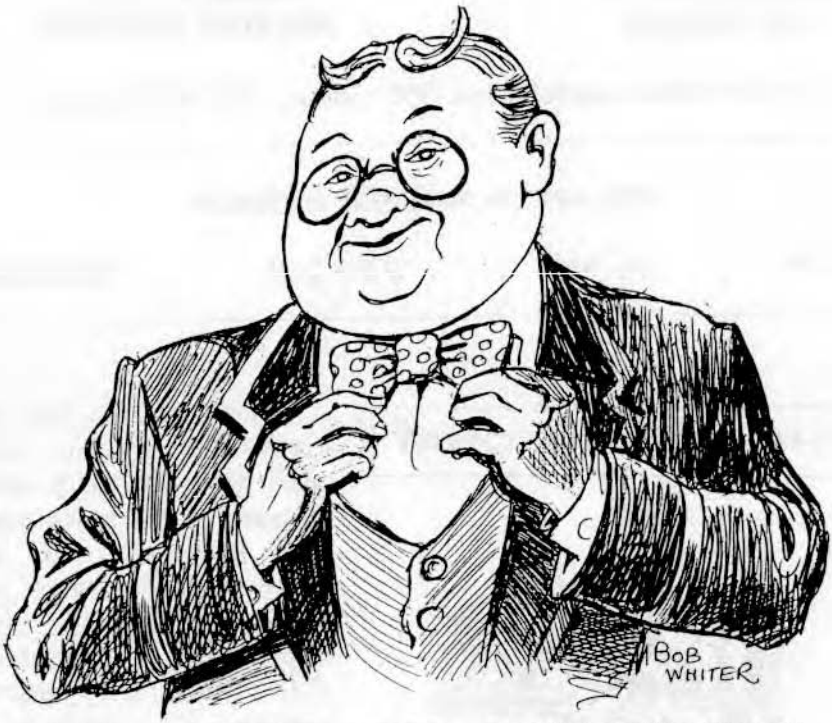

BILLY BUNTER BLINKED AT HIS REFLECTION IN A TALL PIER-GLASS AND SMILED COMPLACENTLY, WHAT HE SAW WAS A HANDSOME, WELL-SET-UP FELLOW - WHOSE SPECTACLES RATHER ADDED TO HIS DISTINGUISHED APPEARANCE
JAMES, IN FACT, SAW A FAT, SELF-SATISFIED FELLOW, WITH A CONCEITED SMIRK ON HIS PODGY FACE.

* *

MORE GREYFRIARS VIGNETTES

by Ted Baldock

MR. QUELCH – EXCELLENTIA

And thus he bore without abuse
The grand old name of gentleman.
Tennyson: In Memoriam

Henry Samuel Quelch M.A. Master of the Remove Form at Greyfriars. A gentleman of indeterminate age which, translated, usually means a state nearer to man's natural majority than perhaps he is prepared to admit. Elderly yes, but still retaining to a remarkable degree all the energy and alertness of a man half his years. (Is not his gimlet eye legendary and are not his powers of perception needle sharp? For confirmation of this one need only apply to Billy Bunter, Vernon Smith or Harold Skinner, all of whom are steeped in first-hand experience of this 'gift' and its consequences.) A lifetime spent in the guidance and instruction of youth may have no small bearing upon this. Sinewy and energetic and still taking those long solitary walks which have been a feature of his existence throughout his life. To see his tall and angular figure, stick in hand, striding with military precision along Friardale Lane, with far horizons in view is to see a gentleman who has accepted, with becoming grace and equanimity, life and all the vicissitudes it can inflict.

Freed – for the moment – from the exacting task of imparting knowledge and discipline to a not always receptive form, his mind is free to range over that great classical period so beloved, when P. Vergilius Maro was a force in the land, and was in the process of producing his imperishable prose – much to the agony and near despair of later generations of schoolboys. Mr. Quelch may be moving along a woodland path in Friardale woods, or a furzy track on breezy Courtfield common, but, in all probability, his mind will be ranging far away – and long ago – to the glories of ancient Greece and Rome.

One of the most enduring and favourite 'images' which springs to mind, one which has made a greater impact than a hundred others, is that of the Remove master, clad in his flowing dressing gown, standing, lamp in hand, in the Remove dormitory doorway, in the

shadows, surveying the sleeping (?) members of his form. Assuring himself that all are present. The hour is late, towards midnight, and Mr. Quelch has been sitting up waiting. He has his suspicions. He is not for a moment deceived by the skilfully simulated figure (composed by pillows) in the bed of Herbert Vernon Smith. 'Smithy' is in the process of being 'caught out' in every sense. A dramatic situation, one which has been enacted not a few times in the long career of Mr. Quelch. The 'Bounder' is playing the 'giddy Ox' once again, and also once again has over estimated his own astuteness. Yet we all know even at this crisis point that the gods of good story telling will conspire and so arrange matters that all is not irreparably lost.

Greyfriars is wrapped in silence and darkness. Corridors, form-rooms, common-rooms and passages are all deserted and in deep shadow. Yet, is the silence complete? The careful listener may catch a low and persistent rumbling as of distant thunder reverberating from the direction of the Remove dormitory. This could well prove a little disconcerting to the uninitiated in the stilly hours. The great building is – it would seem – suspended in time – waiting for the upsurge of life and movement of another day. Mr. Quelch has been sitting up wakefully, although prepared for bed, pondering on how to deal with the recalcitrant member of his form. It is a situation which has endeared the Remove master to us over and over again through the years. We know that he will not exact the full vigour of retribution which is within his power. No, another chance, based mostly likely upon a vague and shadowy instinct – well founded for all that – that there are somewhere deep in Smithy's make-up certain characteristics worth nurturing. We know that Smithy is far from being the 'rotten apple' so often depicted. There are sterling elements in his character of which Mr. Quelch is fully aware. A lifetime spent in dealing with boys, many of whom are quite unpredictable, has deepened his knowledge and understanding to a point of extreme awareness of the degrees and shades of 'being'. Circumstances will conspire in the working out of the plot which will not only vindicate his experience of boys but will also re-establish Vernon Smith as a 'decent fellow' (much to the relief of Tom Redwing, his special chum) and a stalwart member of the Remove.

Ben Jonson's words in approbation of Shakespeare - 'He was not of an age, but for all time' – could well also be applicable to Henry Samuel Quelch, for he has deeply endeared himself to us and, in so doing, has secured a niche in the hall of literary fame, through the genius of Charles Hamilton.

May we hope that the celebrated 'gimlet eye' will continue to gleam and pierce through the mists of ages, and the acid tones continue to echo along the corridors of time. For he was (is) a unique and lovable character – one well worthy of preservation. One to whom it seems obviously right to apply the term – *Nulli Secundis* – with little fear of contradiction. Any gentleman who throughout a long and distinguished scholastic career has managed to retain his equanimity – and indeed his sanity – under the constant inanities of such pupils as Billy Bunter, Harold Skinner and Fisher T. Fish, to mention but three examples is, indeed a very extraordinary mentor. If laurels were still the order of the day, surely Mr. Quelch would qualify for such a tribute.

Henry Samuel Quelch M.A.
The Master of our class
With 'ash' and 'eye' holds fearsome sway
For nothing he lets pass.
As Masters go he was a man
Strict, stern, and oft severe,
His discipline, a well proved plan
One cannot but revere.
A roving eye, a gimlet orb
Much feared among his form
Should he a slacker chance espie
The future is forlorn.
Deeply versed in classic lore,
He rather rattles on,
For his form the prospects poor
when called upon to 'con'.
A Master he of other days
A man of acid wit,
Although eccentric in his ways
Our learning paths he lit.

SUMMER INCIDENT

Shylock: "Is that the law?
Portia: "Thyself shall see the act;
For, as thou urgest justice, be assured
Thou shalt have justice, more than thou desirest."

"A glass of your best lemon squash please Mr. Clegg."
"Yes, Master Bunter".
"And a half dozen of those raspberry tarts".

William George Bunter settled himself comfortably on the high stool placed by Mr. Clegg's counter in his little general store. He beamed with anticipation as his eye ranged lovingly over the tempting array of comestibles displayed upon the surrounding shelves. "This" he murmured to himself "is prime".

It was a warm day for early June, it was excessively warm – and Bunter was thirsty and hungry. The sun blazed down from a cloudless sky flooding the peaceful high street with an almost searing heat. The two old elms outside Uncle Clegg's shop cast a deep and welcome shade. Several Greyfriars fellows were sitting at the small tables refreshing themselves, their blazers draped over the chair-backs. Friardale on this glorious afternoon appeared a haven of peace, being more deserted and 'dead' than usual.

Surrounded by a sea of crumbs, which naturally attracted an appreciative swarm of flies, and grunting with contentment Billy Bunter was about to embark on his fourth raspberry tart when a shadow fell across the threshold of the little shop; to be precise,

three shadows. Thus was it that Cecil Ponsonby and Co. of Highcliff School 'happened'. Seeing the fat Owl seated at the counter and, more importantly, observing that he was alone, the cheery Pon cast a swift glance round to make doubly sure that the coast was clear and then proceeded to be his usual pleasant and bantering self.

"I say Cleggy" he exclaimed, "I'd no idea that you entertained porkers in your shop".

Bunter turned sharply, almost toppling from his perch. "I say, look here Ponsonby you beast, I'm expected Bob Cherry at any moment so you'd better watch out – he will jolly well punch your head". It was the best he could think of on the spur of the moment. The Owl, never by any stretch of the imagination a paragon of the truth, felt that some form of deferment of action was called for, and was soon conjuring up allies.

Thereafter events moved swiftly. Pon and Co., unsure whether Bunter was speaking with strict veracity (they should have known the Owl better), decided upon swift action, followed by a hasty retreat. Pon hooked his foot round the leg of Bunter's stool and jerked vigorously. There was a howl, and down came Bunter clutching wildly en route at a pyramid of canned fruit which, being somewhat precariously balanced, came crashing down with him.

That which followed was like a horrible dream. Bunter roared and spun backwards, crashing into another large pyramid of carefully stacked tins of peaches. He finished by collapsing ignominiously in a crate of eggs on display by the counter. The resulting aroma suggested strongly that these were, to say the least, a little past their early freshness. The result was cataclysmic. For a few hectic moments chaos reigned supreme, voices were raised in anger and protest. Ponsonby and Co., seeing the magnitude of the disaster thus created, stood not upon the order of their going. They disappeared through the doorway and vanished down the village street like ghosts at cockcrow.

Friardale village high street was a rustic and normally a peaceful thoroughfare. Little in any way unusual ever happened from one long month to another. Police Constable Tozer, the local arm of the law spent his long and tedious duty hours longing and hoping for something – anything – to occur which would break the tedium and enable him to assert himself in his official capacity, even in the smallest way. His official notebook and pencil were ever ready, residing in the close-buttoned pocket of his uniform. They seldom saw service even of the simplest nature.

POLICE CONSTABLE TOZER

His long held dreams of promotion seemed likely to remain for ever the fleeting figment of a hope. Friardale lay well off the map so far as excitement was concerned. It was a backwater of the remotest kind, a charming and in many ways a delectable retreat for those seeking solitude and quiet. The younger element of the village found it boring to distraction as they yearned for the excitement and fleshpots of Courtfield – or even more distant Canterbury.

But today something appeared to be afoot. Unwonted sounds, yells and crashes permeated the peace of the afternoon. They appeared to be emanating from the direction of Uncle Clegg's little shop. Fellows who a moment before had been lounging and

enjoying the shady coolness were seen hurriedly to push back their chairs and rise. From the shop doorway three boys were rushing forth. Something was obviously amiss. This was a flagrant disturbance of the peace – and this was where P.C. Tozer came in.

The noise from Uncle Clegg's little shop caused by the collapse of the pyramid of tins, plus the howls of Billy Bunter, brought the policeman to a halt on the far side of the village street. He could scarcely believe the evidence of eyes and ears at the unprecedented disruption of the Friardale peace which was held by himself almost as a sacred trust. Long training made him react immediately – more or less. He swiftly adjusted his helmet, felt beneath his tunic to assure himself that his truncheon, his staff of office, was in its correct position, and proceeded ponderously across the street to enquire into this outrageous incident, this unwonted breach of the peace – and to see if he needed to make an arrest.

It may be mentioned that in his progress towards the scene of the 'crime' he did not fail to loosen the button of his tunic pocket containing his official notebook and a stub of pencil. P.C. Tozer was nothing if not efficient in his approach, as could be confirmed by many of the youth of Friardale to their cost.

Promotion seemed to have passed old 'Tozy' by in the rustic environment of Friardale. The crime rate had for years been almost non-existent, if one may except a raid or so on the local orchards in the appropriate season by the young elements, and the odd late-night reveller returning from the 'Three Fishers' or the 'Green Man' and exercising his vocal chords, thus awakening the echoes with raucous song at unseemly hours.

"Now what's all this" he exclaimed, coming to a halt and surveying the chaotic scene. It was perfectly obvious what 'all this' was about, but P.C. Tozer felt in honour bound to proceed 'according to the book'. Billy Bunter in his horrid eggy state was less than polite in his reply. "Oh , shut up Tozy, you old ass", he roared, "Get me out of this". Indeed Bunter *was* in a fearful state. A most pungent and unenviable aroma emanated from his person as he squelched and struggled to lever himself from the egg case, upon which was stencilled in large characters, 'Fresh Eggs' – which seemed a gross mockery even to the official nostrils of P.C. Tozer.

"I shall have to take your name and address, Master Bunter", said Tozer producing his notebook. An exasperated, sticky – and malodorous – Bunter glared at him and fairly hooted. "You old image, you know my name, you know that I am up at the school". Tozer's features reddened somewhat. "Look 'ere, you young raskil..." he puffed.

Things were not moving at all smoothly along the official channels. Meanwhile Cecil Ponsonby and Co. had long since disappeared over the horizon and were even then seeking fresh fields wherein to exercise their undoubted talents. It was unfortunate for them, on rounding a corner in Friardale Lane at some speed, to find themselves suddenly in the midst of Harry Wharton and Co., who were strolling sedately along towards the village in search of refreshment.

It was an immemorial custom that, whenever Ponsonby and Co. fell into enemy hands, or when numbers were happily on their side, things happened, usually unpleasant things.

A veil may be discreetly drawn over the proceedings of the next five minutes or so. Sufficient to say that they were rather unhappy minutes for the Highcliff fellows, and

although they may not have smelt quite to offensive as did Bunter they were in an equally sorry state. Justifiable retribution had overtaken them.

As for Billy Bunter, he and ablutions had long been strangers. Never would he admit any affinity with soap and water, being perfectly happy with the briefest of contacts at prolonged intervals with these essential elements. On this occasion, however, quite suddenly they had acquired a new and, indeed, an urgent dimension. Bunter yearned for water, lots of it, hot water – and soap. He desired nothing so much as to immerse his podgy person in a bath for just as long as it would take to dispel the last lingering whiff of superannuated egg, and perhaps a little longer for good measure. This was quite a revolutionary change of policy for the Owl. Such are the imponderables of life.

* *

NELSON LEE'S TWO WARDS

by Betty Hopton

As an enthusiast of the Nelson Lee Library, I have always assumed, as many others have probably done, that Nelson Lee had always had just one ward, the famous Nipper.

However, when reading some of the very early stories, in the Boys' Friend Library, I was intrigued to discover that in the very early days. *Nelson Lee Had A Second Ward* , a lad named **DICK STARLING.**

The story of how Dick Starling becomes Nelson Lee's second ward unfolds in the Boys' Friend Library Number 171 and is entitled "Nipper's Schooldays", it is a really wonderful tale. A self made millionaire named Sir Christopher Syme had made his will, leaving everything to his only living relative, a Major Syme. The Major had a very unsavoury past, having married a chorus girl and then abandoned her, leaving her penniless to starve to death.

The Major did not know that his wife had later given birth to a son, the boy had been adopted by a childless working class couple and was named Dick Starling, Dick later became the stable boy at Sir Christopher's country mansion .

Sir Christopher was in very poor health but he found out everything about Major Syme's past misdeeds, he was so incensed that he cut out the Major from his will, leaving everything to Dick Starling. Major Syme tried every trick in the book to stop the arrival of Sir Christopher's solicitor, but all his schemes failed and the will was changed in Dick's favour . Sir Christopher also appointed Nelson Lee as Dick's guardian, but died shortly afterwards. Nelson Lee then sent Dick to St. Ninian's School, together with Nipper.

Major Syme owed thousands of pounds to an evil moneylender named Paul Zudick. The moneylender was prepared to wait until the Major inherited his fortune. When he heard that the will had been altered, he turned very nasty, making plans to kill Dick Starling.

Paul Zudick instructed Major Syme to go abroad, so that he would not be suspected of being in the plot and he engaged the services of several villains to try to murder Dick, including a master and a porter, on whom he had a hold, at St Ninian's .

Nelson Lee was well aware that Dick's life may be at risk, so he went to St Ninian's, disguised as a school-master, in order to keep an eye on things and any further developments. Many attempts were made on Dick Starling's life, but they all failed and all the villains were finally brought to book, with the exception of one, who fled and was never seen again. The evil moneylender Paul Zudick, unable to bear the strain, died from an apoplectic fit.

Major Syme returned to England, having repented of his folly and Nelson Lee informed the Major that Dick Starling was his son. One of the villains , before fleeing, managed to deal Major Syme a terrific sledge-hammer blow to the head, thus fracturing his skull. The Major lived on for a while and Nelson Lee informed Dick that Major Syme was his father. The father and son were united at the Major's death bed, where the Major begged Dick's forgiveness . Dick with a generous heart readily forgave his father and Dick then returned to St Ninian's , knowing that he would be safe from then on.

Dick and Nipper had become firm friends at St Ninian's and were as close as brothers, with no jealousy at all between them . They were both fond of playing practical jokes, which were harmless enough, but occasionally Nelson Lee would get complaints, from some of their victims. Nipper was also a very good ventriloquist.

In Boys' Friend Library number 530 , "Detective-Warder Nelson Lee" , Dick Starling and Nipper were joined at St Ninian's by a scholarship boy named Bob Unwin. Bob had enemies, including a rascally Uncle, who tried to kill him. Nelson Lee took a job as a warder at the nearby Greystokes Prison, to keep a close watch over any developments. Together with the help of Dick Starling and Nipper, all ended well.

Dick Starling gets a chance to repay Nelson Lee for everything that he has done for him in Boys' Friend Library, number 519. In this marvellous tale entitled "The Black House", Dick was instrumental in saving the life of Nelson Lee. An Australian gentleman had come to England to claim his rightful inheritance, but was kidnapped and kept a prisoner in an old derelict mansion, called "The Black House". His son came over from Australia to seek Nelson Lee's help in finding his father, but the son was also kidnapped, by an international swindler named Basil Jordan and was imprisoned with his father. Nelson Lee eventually found the father and son, but was trapped with them, whilst the Black House was set ablaze, but thanks to the resourcefulness of Dick Starling and Nipper, all three were saved and Basil Jordan, one of the wrongdoers was drowned, whilst attempting to escape.

These superb stories in the Boys' Friend Library were written by that excellent author Maxwell Scott. I have read many stories in the Nelson Lee Library, but so far have not seen the name Dick Starling mentioned anywhere. I can only assume that as the character Dick Starling was created by Maxwell Scott, then Edwy Searles Brooks did not choose to use him as a character in the St Franks' saga .

However I was extremely surprised to discover that way back, in the very beginning

Nelson Lee Had Two Wards

* *

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LIBRARY CHAT

by D. Ford

I have just finished reading Catherine Aird's latest mystery *Little Knell* with the usual pleasure. It features an old favourite, not a body in the library but a body in a mummy case – not the original occupant. A subject that inspired many authors following Howard Carter's discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun in 1922. But there is a word of warning in this book: Be Very Careful, wear mask and gown before taking the mummy from its case. Otherwise the ancient curse of anthrax may lead to your untimely death, as was to befall the murderer in Aird's book, in substituting one body for another.

I think the first case to engage the Baker street pair on this theme, in the *SBL*, was the 1923 *The Affair of the Seven Mummy Cases*. No doubt readers of the *Union Jack* will remember cases and I hope will share them in the pages of the C.D.

The last case of this order was to be chronicled by John Drummond in 1945, in the SBL numbered 100. Predictably called *The Riddle of the Mummy Case*.

Joe Mason, watchman at Mareham Museum, awakens from a (drugged) sleep to find the dead body of Jim Grant in a mummy case and the Arnburg jewels (valued at £150,000) gone from a smashed cased. The burglar alarm is in good order, Joe's fingerprints are found on the murder knife, and he is arrested. Joe's solicitor, George Bryant, asks Blake to investigate but to come as Blake, solicitor, the better for the inquiries. Later, the curator of the museum, Ramsey, calls for his services too. With a chuckle he instructs Tinker: "You are Sexton Blake... You'll have to smoke a pipe, and behave with a little more dignity than usual. You must also try to appear extremely intelligent!".

The sinister Major Wright, who has been looming around the museum from the start, owner of the Arnburg jewels – "stolen from an old temple on the North West frontier originally" – now turns on Joe's family. He wants to evict them because Joe has signed an agreement that if he ever becomes involved with the law on a criminal charge, the agreement would be declared void.

Major Wright's agent, Willow, then catches Mrs. Mason in her back garden chopping wood, tells her that she must leave by Saturday and that all the alterations Joe has made in the house must be cleared and the house put back as it was, or there would be a summons. Hysterically she goes back in the house. Then she is arrested when Willow is found lying in the back garden with the axe in his head.

Tinker on his investigation at the museum notices a big oil radiator, which had been burning at the time of the search for the jewels. He has it drained – "suddenly something flashed in the water" – the collection had been found.

Blake now discloses himself to the curator and the inspector, who says: "I thought that fellow was smart for a lawyer. I told him so, too."

Blake arranges for everyone to meet at the museum. Instructing Inspector Rains to ring Major Wright at eight o'clock to come there. He now discovers that a former museum curator was a Dr. Manning, who was struck off the register, and left for India in a hurry. Hunting in the east wing of the hall, full of the major's animal heads, - "glass eyes blazing at him from the reflection of the torchlight". Then he finds the bound head and shoulders of a mummy – "genuine – curse".

In the secure museum, Blake suddenly appears among the waiting police and witnesses, just after the lights had gone out and come on again. He explains 'You just have to be careful in the museum's transformer room.'

Then Blake tells of the blackmailer, Jim Grant, meeting Dr. Manning that fatal night. Flinging a mummy case open, "Gentlemen, meet Major Wright," and Blake rips the winding cloth down with his knife.

The lights fail again and Dr. Manning hustles Blake into the boardroom, with a gun in his side. "You shall tell me all you know about this case, and if I don't care for your story I shall kill you." Blake tells him of his imposture of Major Wright.

"The Doctor's finger tightened on the trigger, Blake's foot came up like lightning, and as the shot spat in the muzzle, the doctor's arm was jerked upwards. Plaster showered down from the ceiling" and a battle royal takes up the next two pages.

Manning escapes to the clangour of the alarm bells, Tinker fires after him, then the police fall upon him.

Blake finally explains the mummy at the hall, taken from a case at the museum to substitute for the "mummy" of Grant's wife. And the next-of-kin of Major Wright was Joe Mason.

I wonder if Catherine Aird ever knew that mummies were once broken up for their bituminous extract. How in artists' colourmen's shop windows were once displayed scraps of an actual mummy, still in shreds of its wrapping, advertising a well-known firm's production of this pigment.

John Drummon was, of course, the pen-name of John Newton Chance. A discovery I made and reported in the C.D. when I compared the 1949 SBL *The Secret of the Living Skeleton* with *Murder in Oils* from the Cherry Tree Books. In the latter the substitute was Anthony Hood. There was also a 1948 Chance in the CTB – *Death of an Innocence* – and I have often wondered whether this was a substitute too. Chance also created Jonathan Blake for the publishers Hale, I think only to buy a new pot for his boiler!

SEXTON REDUX

by Derek Hinrich

Sherlock Holmes The Detective Magazine is a bi-monthly publication generally available only on subscription, though there are a few over-the-counter outlets, at such specialist shops as *Murder One* and *Crime in Store*. It features news of Sherlockian and other societies devoted to crime fiction, articles on authors and series characters, reviews of the latest crime and detective fiction, and at least one short story per issue. Recent ones have contained short stories featuring Sexton Blake by John Addy, published "with the kind permission of IPC Syndication".

As these are the first new Sexton Blake stories to be published for over thirty years they are worthy of comment. They are in a way a rather strange hybrid but, as so many

authors wrote Blake stories over the years, I suppose one cannot really describe them as pastiches.

They are both set in Blake's Golden Age of the 'twenties and thirties of last century (I still find that a difficult phrase to use!): specifically in 1921 and 1926.

The first point to note is that in both stories. Tinker is called Edward Carter, the "real name" invented for him by Anthony Parsons and used throughout the fourth and fifth series of the *SBL*. I'm not sure when Parsons introduced this name but it presumably must have been in one of the last *SBLs* he contributed to the saga (his last was *SBL3/357, Hotel Homicide*, and the "fourth series" of course began with SBL3/359 *The Frightened Lady).* The name, "Carter" was, presumably, an editorial decision in preparation for the "New Look" Blake. In the Golden Age, however, Tinker was Tinker (though his creator, W.J. Lomax, told us at one stage that he was Blake's adopted son - so he should presumably have taken the name Blake - and in *SBL3/77, The Case of the Five Fugitives,* Lewis Jackson told us that he was "Tinker Smith"). Consistency was, perhaps, not until latterly the Sexton Blake industry's strong point.

Addy's first story, "Sexton Blake and the White Fairy", is concerned with the burgeoning drugs trade. Blake is approached by Sir Curtis Brown, an Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police who is concerned that his daughter is running with too fast a set of "Bright Young Things", frequenting too many dubious night clubs, and fears she may be experimenting with drugs. Sir Curtis, wishing to avoid scandal and the heavy-handedness of using the Yard in the affair, appeals to Blake to act on his behalf in this very delicate matter. ("Curtis Brown" is an interesting choice of name: is it a Freudian echo of the name of the inter-war annexe to old New Scotland Yard, the "Curtis Green Building"?) And Tinker is said to have just attained his nineteenth birthday before this case commences - more of this later.

The first great drugs scandal in the UK arose from the death from an overdose of the actress Billie Carleton following the Victory Ball in 1919, so the date of 1921 is quite timeous ("The White Fairy" - "La Fee Blanche" - is apparently French slang for cocaine, a nice touch and a neat title). The principal villain of the piece is our old friend, The Sinister Celestial, a Chinese personage similar in antecedents to Prince Wu Ling of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Beetle, but in this case apparently intent on purely criminal ends and lacking the Prince's geo-political ambitions. This Chinaman, Sen (and isn't that the name of Wu Ling's most loyal ally? Well, well) is involved in a turf war with a Monocled Hun, Baron von Seydlitz, for control of the drugs trade in the West End (it seems a sad commentary on the state of criminal enterprise in this country at that time that no British Mastermind is involved in this internecine struggle). In the end the Chinaman's car crashes and bursts into flames as Blake pursues him in the latest version of the Grey Panther. There are, however, indications that Sen, like many another major foe of Sexton Blake, has escaped to fight another day.

George Marsden Plummer, for instance, having perished from his own death ray in a story in *UJ/1093* by Walter Shute, bounced back a few weeks later in a story from the pen of another author (G H Teed, who then added Plummer to his repertory of villains) and earlier, in May 1914, Blake himself strangled Prince Wu Ling in hand-to-hand combat in *UJ552, The Pirated Cargo,* only for him to reappear in three months' time in *UJ579, A Voice from the Dead (*these were of course also Teed stories) - to continue to bedevil

Blake for nearly another twenty years, rather in the way in one Hammer film Dracula was reduced by sunlight to dust, only to be reconstituted, like - wartime powdered egg with water - in the next of the series by drops of blood dripping on the detritus.

The second story, "Sexton Blake and The Curse of Ozymandias" is a version of that seasonal staple of *The Union Jack*, the Christmas crime story.

It is now the Christmas season of 1926. Tinker we are told is 23, and longing to go away for the holiday. Blake tells him that his wish has been granted as they have both been invited to join the Christmas house party being organised by a distinguished amateur Egyptologist, the Earl of Knightsbridge, at his country seat in Oxfordshire (the Earl's team in Egypt has recently discovered a hitherto unknown tomb, with its treasure still intact, a find comparable to that in 1922 of the tomb of Tut'ankhamun by Howard Carter and the Earl of Carnarvon). The house party will include Knightsbridge's niece, Lady Jane Felsham and her husband Monty; an elderly married couple, Sir James and Lady Muldoon; Knightsbridge's professional partner in the discovery, Dr Ronald Hayter; and Cyrus Charlesworth, a rich fellow-dilettante of Egyptology and rival of Knightsbridge in the financing of excavations.

Knightsbridge has an ulterior motive in inviting Blake and Tinker for Christmas. He has found himself to be suffering strange lapses of memory and has come to fear that he is the subject of some plot in which drugs or poison have been administered to him by someone by some subtle means. Blake has accepted the commission of a watching brief during the house party.

At least this is straightforward. I have often wondered how anyone in their right mind could ever bring themselves invite a famous private detective to stay for a few days. It is an inescapable invitation for murder to be committed on or near the premises - but then why do people hold house parties where all the guests loath them to the point of potential homicide?

And presently, murder is done, but it is not the Earl who is the victim, and a wide range of speculation is offered to the reader. Sexton Blake triumphs in due course but, to the true aficionado, there are problems, quite apart from my feeling that these stories are, in comparison with those produced at the time in which they are set, as thin as workhouse gruel.

Quite simply, someone else got there first. For Gwyn Evans has assured us that Sexton Blake spent Christmas 1926 involved in the affair of *Mrs Bardell's Christmas Eve (UJ1210)* and, after the satisfactory settlement of that matter, Tinker, Mrs Bardell, Inspector Coutts, "Splash" Page and he, Blake, spent the rest of the holiday at Goreham Grange as the guests of Viscount Rockcliff - and he couldn't be in two places at once, could he?

There is another point, too, which occurs to me. This is the question of Tinker (and for that matter, Blake) and the ageing process. Tinker was introduced to us in 1904 when he was seventeen years' old. He last appeared (if one ignores the apochryphal *Sexton Blake and the Demon God*) in 1968, when in the ordinary course of things he should have been 81. Of course the ordinary rules do not apply to the Tinkers of this world but if he was 17 in 1904 and 19 in 1921, then the progression to 23 in 1926 seems to be a sudden spurt dangerously close to approaching real time. He really shouldn't live at such a headlong rate.

* *

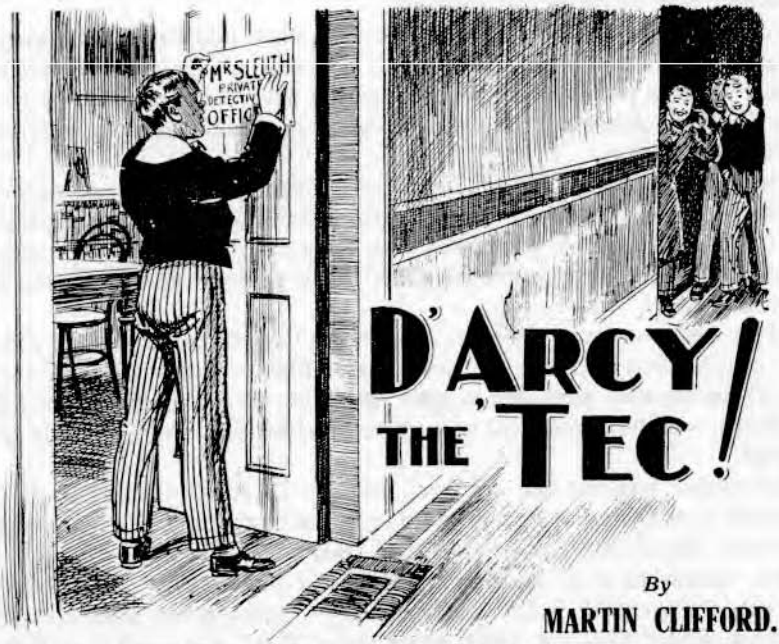
MR. SLEUTH

by Reg Hardinge

The letter with the crest on the envelope which Blagg, the Rylcombe postman delivered to Gussy was from the Earl, his Pater. The swell of St. Jim's was stony broke, having spent twenty-seven-and-six on a new topper, and it was with eager anticipation that he opened the letter, expecting it to contain the usual £5 allowance that his Governor was in the habit of sending him. But Gussy groaned in despair as he read the stern message that it contained. Admonishing his son for his profligacy with money, the Earl announced that he was stopping his allowance pro tem to teach him a useful lesson.

Others in the School House were in equally straitened circumstances. The Terrible Three's plans for attending the matinee at the Theatre Royal, Wayland, had had to be shelved for lack of funds. Herries had nothing left for biscuits for Towser, and Bernard Glyn, the millionaire's son, had spent all his cash making a telephone.

THE SCHOOLBOY DETECTIVE WHOSE FIRST CASE WAS ALSO HIS LAST!—



Arthur Augustus proudly pinned up the notice announcing that his study was the office of Mr. Sleuth, the detective. Had he looked down the passage his suspicions might have been aroused by three juniors, one of whom was putting on false whiskers!

Gussy pondered over his predicament and concluded that he would have to earn a living. When Ferrers Locke, the Detective, had been at St. Jim's looking for the cracksman who turned out to be Mellish's cousin, D'Arcy had had the honour of helping him. That was it, he would set up as a Private Detective. His methods of deduction would be based on those of both Ferrers Locke and the great Sexton Blake. So off to Rylcombe he went on his bicycle, to hand to Mr. Tiper, the proprietor of the *Rylcombe*

Gazette, an appropriate advertisement describing the service he could provide for insertion in his paper.

Next came the question of an office from which to conduct his business. Study No. 6 would do nicely from five to half-past six of an evening, and so Mr. Sleuth's premises were established. Gussy endured much ragging about his chosen profession, but pressed on regardless.

His first client was a person in a motor coat with a soft hat, a youthful face and grey whiskers who introduced himself as Colonel Pipkin. His mother had been kidnapped, and he had that morning received an anonymous letter stating that she was being held prisoner in the crypt under the ruined chapel in a famous school in Sussex. Col. Pipkin agreed to pay Gussy his fee of a hundred guineas for rescuing his mother. Their conversation was rudely interrupted by a crowd of juniors including Tom Merry, Blake, Digby and Lowther, bringing rounds of hot, buttered toast, a tin of sardines and jam. "We've brought you some tea", explained Blake. Col. Pipkin made a sudden rush for the door, but was stopped by the Juniors who tugged off his whiskers to reveal the face of Figgins of the New House grinning sheepishly. Gussy, highly indignant at being duped, wrathfully squared up to Figgins saying "I'm going to give you a fearful thwasin' you wottah!" But Tom Merry and Co had other ideas. Trussed up in the coat which belonged to the Head's chauffeur, his face daubed with red and blue paint, a notice attached to his hat saying "This end up with care", and another on his chest saying "Returned to New House with thanks", Figgins was lowered on a rope through the window to his unhappy friends Kerr and Fatty Wynn below.

A letter from Wayland, the market town some distance from St. Jim's, and signed by John Jowes, provided the first step in Gussy's next case.

Mr. Sleuth's services were required by him. All would be explained at a Rendezvous by the stile in Rylcombe Lane at three o'clock that afternoon. He was asked to bring his revolver with him, something which he did not possess. Gussy felt that like the famous Sexton Blake, having a bloodhound like Pedro would be a great asset. The Bulldog Towser, owned by Herries, was the next best thing. But Herries would not allow Towser out of his sight, so that was that. Armed only with a cane, Gussy set off for his appointment.

Mr. John Jones turned out to be a small man with ginger-coloured whiskers and eyebrows, wearing a black overcoat, grey trousers, a silk topper and a pair of spectacles. He seemed greatly agitated. "My enemies are near. They have dogged me from Wayland", he explained to Mr. Sleuth in a wheezy voice. He had declined to subscribe a million pounds towards the funds of an organisation calling itself The Brotherhood of blood and bones. Two members lurking in the woods were after him. Jones promised the amateur detective a fee of £10,000 if he arrested the two villains and handed them over to the police. Hidden in a thicket, he waited while D'Arcy went after the two stalkers, but the hunt proved fruitless and after an interval Gussy returned to the thicket to hear a deep groan come from within it. John Jones was lying on his back, his cheeks, white collar and ginger whiskers stained crimson. His client appeared to be on his last legs.

Suddenly two swarthy desperadoes with black moustaches bounded out of the bushes and attacked Gussy. A sharp struggle ensued, but soon both were on the ground, all resistance gone. In next to no time Mr. Sleuth had secured their hands and wrists with

cord and they were his prisoners. He started marching the two off to the Police Station, leaving Jones to be picked up by stretcher later. En route Gussy encountered, first a group of Fourth Form Rylcombe Grammar School boys led by Gordon Gay, and then, from the direction of St. Jim's half-a-dozen Juniors headed by Tom Merry & Co. All was made clear when Gordon Gay drew from his pocket Mr. Jones's ginger-coloured whiskers stained with red ink, and the two prisoners were identified as Rylcombe Grammar fourth Formers too. The jape was perpetrated after Gussy's advertisement had appeared in the *Rylcombe Gazette*. Much laughter arose and Gussy was thoroughly humiliated at having been duped for a second time.

Tom Merry jerked away the whiskers of Colonel Pipkin, and the grinning face of Figgins was revealed. Arthur Augustus stared blankly. "Gweat Scott!" he gasped. "Bai Jove, you awful wottah! You fwightful spoofah!" Detective D'Arcy's first client was none other than a japer!

An apology from Jack Blake on behalf of the St. Jim's Juniors for having ridiculed him did restore some of the swell of St. Jim's dignity. But what sent his spirits soaring was the letter that Blake handed to him. It was from his Pater who had heard from Wally D'Arcy of Gussy's pecuniary difficulties. He thought that a hard lesson had been learned and was resuming his allowance, the crisp £5 note enclosed was spent in a great celebration in study no. 6, to which Figgins & Co were invited, to mark the end of D'Arcy's career as a Private Detective, and the close of the woeful period of hard times at St. Jim's.

* *

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A SURVEY OF THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN ANNUAL
by Margery Woods

Part 2 The Later Years

The following three years continued to present and build on the success of the initial format---and 1924 did include a Christmas story: *The Ghost of Dellbrooke Hall* by Adrian Home. It had most of the standard ingredients, including an orphan who must always wear a golden key, without knowledge of what or where it fitted, a ghostly white lady and the requisite gaunt old manor left to the care of owls and rats until the missing heir turns up to enter the Heir's Door, which is firmly closed and has neither lock nor handle. An intriguing theme with scope for lots of spookiness as the orphan spends Christmas with a school chum who lives nearby. It is a foregone conclusion that she will enter the Heir's Door, meet the ghostly old lady in white, open a casket with her golden key to discover the deeds to her inheritance and discover the ghostly lady in white to be her heartbroken grandmother, repenting her harshness many years previously in banishing her only son from her life and his inheritance. Spooky and mysterious, but not at all Christmassy. Nor were the others which followed in the annuals for 1926 and 1928. True, Morcove did put on a pantomime in 1926---*When Morcove Made Merry*---and an hilarious affair it was despite the inevitable machinations against its success and the strangely out of character behaviour of Miss Redgrave, the Fourth's mistress. So the eager cast of *Cinderella* had to sort that one out as well as deal with the unspeakable Cora Grandways. A great story, but one which anchored the girls firmly at school. When Cliff House departed from the Annual to claim its own special Annual in 1927 it seemed that the long story space vacated in Morcove's own would have allowed a long Christmas adventure for them. But that was not to be. For some reason the 1920s remained weak on the Christmas angle, Strong on spooky and mystery, and scrupulously fair in remembering stories to show that

Which all Schoolgirls would love to attend.

loyal readers in far-flung parts of the Empire were not forgotten.

Features and articles about the girls and the school remained, as did the hints of the domestic variety---*How To Whitewash a Ceiling:* (Just the job for Bessie Bunter), put a washer on a tap, mend a broken window. Guaranteed to bring a smile to any adult readers, if not the parents of the youthful D.I.Yers.

One thing the Annual got round to in 1925 was an index of stories, articles and the colour plates. (Making life a bit easier for researchers in years to come.) That year the Editor's letter cites the thousands of letters he has received from enthusiastic readers which have encouraged him to make even greater efforts on THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN ANNUAL Vol, 5 than on vols. 1 and 2. He sounds positively smug as he tells of all the pains he has not spared in selecting the very best---literary and artistic---knowing that only the very best will satisfy his readers. He asks for their opinions again because their criticisms of the previous two years have been of the greatest assistance and it is not a little due to his readers' discriminating comments that such great success has crowned his efforts. So why didn't they ask for a super long story of the Morcove girls' Christmas adventures away from school? For even the Cliff House girls were not depicted in a Christmas setting during the early years of THE SCHOOL FRIEND ANNUAL. It was not until 1931 that the newer annual included two Christmas stories, neither of them featuring Barbara Redfern and Co. It seems surprising that this omission continued in both annuals in view of the fact that the word 'annual' suggests the covering of a year as well as an annual event and that publication was invariably in September in good time for the Christmas market when so many children looked forward eagerly to finding one amid their gifts on Christmas morning. Perhaps A.P. decided that the scope for a special Christmas story was best reserved for the Christmas numbers of the weeklies. For even THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL held very little of Christmas interest.

For many years Frank Richards reigned supreme with his wonderful Christmas stories in THE MAGNET and THE GEM. While the girls' Christmas stories were always appealing, with humour and warmth as well as drama, and the best of them succeeded in adding a tender appeal that could bring a lump to the throat as the identification ploy worked its spell, it was not until the 1930s that an author emerged who could, on behalf of the girls, respond to the challenge of Frank Richards' great skill in making Christmas very special for the readers. This author was John Wheway who took over the Cliff House saga when THE SCHOOLGIRL revived Cliff House as its lead story in 1932. His Christmas series of 1932 to 1936 were spectacular in all respects, and if Christmas settled down to a somewhat less theatrical vein at Cliff House in later years it was none the less appealing. (See the C.D. December 93 for a survey of Wheway's Christmas series, and also the book FROM WHARTON LODGE TO LINTON HALL by Mary Cadogan and Tommy Keen for an extremely comprehensive survey of the principal Christmas series in the major storypapers.)

While there are many ploys---and tricks---used in popular fiction to convey effect, as well as stock lists of ingredients, plots and sub-plots and the importance of introducing conflict into situations, this is not so coldly mechanical as it may seem when coldly listed. Technique alone can not make a story into a compulsive page-turner. Another element is needed, that of ambience as related to the setting, and even more vital, the atmosphere of what is happening to the characters. To be able to capture in words on the page something

as evanescent as atmosphere so that the reader is there with the characters, experiencing their reactions and emotions, is not so easily achieved by the mechanical form of technique alone. It is a gift, and not all authors have it. It is this gift that divides the born writer from the one who has mastered the mechanics of story-telling but not the giving of the spirit. Frank Richards possessed this gift in abundance, as well as the facility known and envied by many writers as compulsive writing. It makes an awesome combination, and is why he is still loved and revered by all who read him.

By its nature, an annual or book of short stories by several writers will tend to reveal the competent, the clever, and the gifted, but there is always the unknown quantity; the reader. One will adore a particular story while another will find the same story uninteresting, and so the unpredictable element arises, the author's emotional transference to the page will bring instant response from one reader yet escape another. Certainly a great deal of editorial care (and his pains) went into the selection of the stories chosen for THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN ANNUAL. Some may seem unusual to today's reader but were fashionable at the time of publication. One, for instance, is the gipsy theme. These were found regularly throughout the storypapers as well as the annuals---especially if they had stolen babies or played the violin in a mysterious manner.

Another favourite theme was the circus. It was this theme which could hold the danger of stretching the bounds of credibility to breaking point. Of the several examples in the Annuals most were carried off convincingly with the settings within the circus community. One, however, took a schoolgirl rider and the wild New Forest pony she was training straight into a circus performance with only a short period of preparation, a surrounding so alien to a wild forest pony that it is difficult imagine how success was achieved, although this point was skilfully brushed in. Another story, *Queen of the Ring*, by Elise Probyn, an experienced A.P. author, also stretched probability a bit. A schoolgirl rider, unjustly expelled, witnesses an accident in which the star rider of the visiting circus is injured and takes her place in the ring at the last minute.

Of course show business abounds with tales of unknowns who take over the starring role when the star breaks her ankle, or something, just before the performance. But in real life the unknown is usually part of the company, has understudied the role, and is not some stranger pulled in off the street. But, as many teenagers go through a spell of intense horse love, readers would swallow stories like these without a second thought. As far as circus improbability goes, one sinner was none other than John Wheway himself, reputedly a conscientious and thorough researcher of backgrounds, when during a circus series in THE SCHOOLGIRL he put Barbara Redfern into the lions' cage, to be carried round by Apollo, largest and fiercest of the lions. Even the most well-trained of wild animals hold the potential for turning untrustworthy, which Apollo does in part of the act. Trainers can recognise the signs and sense any possibility of trouble; but a schoolgirl... (My apologies to the memory of Wheway if he was not the author of that particular story. And you can see Babs in action on the cover of THE SCHOOLGIRL Feb 24th, 1934, number 239.)

Themes of show business and the film world were often featured, as were the burning sands of the desert, possibly inspired by the hit musical, THE DESERT SONG, which kept its popularity for many years. Joan Inglesant excelled at desert stories, as 'she' did in other themes. Mysterious highwaymen, disguised, legendary or otherwise, and

Cavaliers had their following, as did the sea, islands, smugglers and camping. But the top place of all in the popularity polls surely went to the ghost story.

Every issue of the Annual carried at least one ghostly mystery, sometimes two, and no matter how often the same tried and tested plot was used somehow the A.P. team managed to imbue it with fresh life time after time, although in all probability they could have written the old plot in their sleep. The ingredients were always the same: there had to be an old mansion, someone with a grudge or money motive, a legend of haunting to supply provenence for the impersonations by the villain, and a victim, usually the young heroine. Again, Joan Inglesant (Draycott M Dell) injected much atmosphere into this theme, one of her best being her Christmas ghost story in the 1929 Annual; *The Spectre of Garston Castle*. This adventure culminated in the discovery of the long lost Garston fortune, a cache of valuable old paintings, including a Rubens, hidden for three centuries under the stone floor of a hidden room. One enjoys this story so much it hardly seems fair to speculate on the state of rolled up canvases, Rubens or no, after three centuries under a half ruined old castle. The illustrations were by T.E. Laidler, including an impressive full page b/w line view of the battlements and surrounding area with two girls who bear a remarkable resemblance to Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn.

And so back to Christmas.

The Morcove fans had to wait ten years (grown-up by then?) before Betty Barton and Co. were able to escape from school and enjoy all the traditional Christmas atmosphere and trimmings so loved by the readers of the weeklies. Spiced of course with lots of intrigue and adventure amid the carols and feasting and mince pies and skylarking.

In *Morcove's Merriest Christmas* (1936) Marjorie Stanton (Horace Phillips) brings off the classic frame, by the inevitable nasty cousin, but surrounded by the classic Christmas style to make an enchanting experience of the visit to Cromlech Manor of the Morcove chums and their friends from Grangemoor. On the way they meet wealthy Peter Jethro, elderly and amiable, who takes a liking to the poor girl from the cottage at the

manor gates, all marred by the spite of the inevitable spiteful cousin. But Christmas has to end happily...

1937 followed with *The Morcove Masquerader*, who was artist Tess Trelawney and unable to join the chums at Judy Cardew's home, Priors Wold, for Christmas. But Tess found a way, in the guise of a new maidservant, until the troublemaker who was the cause of it all was exposed. The new maidservant gave in her notice and departed--- to arrive back as Tess, full of joy for a truly jolly Morcove Christmas.

In the 1938 Annual the chums of Morcove joined Pam Willoughby at her gracious home, Swanlake, for more festivities with a dash of mystery.

1939 begins with *Morcove's Big Bang*, which as its title suggests kicks off with Fifth of November celebrations. Polly is the victim this time when her cousin Clarice ruins the extravagant display of fireworks planned by the Fifth Form. This happens to coincide with a spell of feuding between Fourth and Fifth, and Polly has crept out the night before to add her own cheeky decoration to the Fifth Form's guy. Unfortunately she is seen and blamed for the disaster caused by her cousin. Polly is punished at school and also punished by her Aunt Em, Clarice's mother, who is in charge at Linton Hall while Polly's parents are away. Aunt Em says Polly will receive no Christmas presents because the £7 cost of the ruined fireworks will have to paid back to the Fifth Form. Nor will Polly be

allowed to bring her friends to spend Christmas at Linton Hall. Aunt Em is not pleased as she gives the £7 to Clarice with instructions to give it to Connie, the Fifth Form captain. Clarice, however, has no hesitation in passing on only £3 to Connie and pocketing the remaining £4 herself.

Meanwhile Polly attempts to find the culprit for the damage and insists that her friends must come to Linton Hall as arranged, by which time she hopes to have proved her innocence. But another blow falls: Ethel Courtney, Morcove's Head Girl, summons Polly to show her a gold cigarette case initialled with L. Polly recognises it as belonging to the Hall but is unable to give any explanation, bar a firm denial that neither she nor her brother Jack smoked cigarettes on Guy Fawkes night. The case has been found among the box of firework debris.

Ethel believes her, then unexpectedly the coin of luck flips Polly's way. Connie of the Fifth calls her on the eve of breaking-up day and says she feels Polly has been treated very unfairly, being punished both at school and at home, and the form has decided that they should give back the refunded money to Polly herself. She hands over the £3 to a touched and grateful Polly. Arriving home, Polly is greeted by another tirade from Aunt Em, complaining about the £7 she has had to send to the Fifth. When she remembers who was entrusted with the money, Polly realises the truth. Having long suspected her cousin, Polly challenges Clarice and demands that she confess, or Polly will telephone Connie and ask her to phone Aunt Em about the actual amount Clarice handed over. Clarice will then be branded as a thief.

Clarice caves in, with tears and temper. Betty and Co arrive. Mr and Mrs Linton return earlier than expected, Aunt Em decides to show a little sweetness and light, and a glorious Christmas begins for all---except Clarice, who is sulking in her room. Then Polly goes quietly upstairs for the Christmas forgiveness and healing that brings peace and friendship at last between the two cousins. Now nothing can mar a wonderful last chapter of Christmas joy.

Perhaps this story might have been entitled *Goodbye Morcove*, for this was the final story of Morcove. The Annual lasted three more years and change began to rustle through the pages. The broad mix of stories remained, though a little less traditional in their tone, and the authors names changed---perhaps new pseudonyms for the old team. Like the true professionals they were they had realised they would have to adapt to a changing order. The second world war wreaked change in society as well as in people's lives. There were shortages of most commodities, not least paper. The weekly *Schoolgirls' Own* had ceased in 1936 with Morcove serials appearing in THE SCHOOLGIRL, which ended in 1940, as did THE MAGNET, along with other much loved magazines and comics. It marked the end of the golden age of children's fiction.

Fashions change in fiction as in most other things and after the war it became sadly apparent that the place in children's fiction for the boarding school story was diminishing. The pop scene and permissiveness overtook youth, and the so-called age of innocence ebbed lower each successive year.

But the boarding school may yet win back its place in children's hearts. A recent report told of parents whose offspring were actually demanding to be sent to boarding school! And some of those institutions reported that they had indeed received many more applications for places than usual.

Of course it remains to be seen how real boarding schools would measure up to Hogwarts; the purists may decry this possibility but, after all, if the wizardry business is stripped away the moral tone remains at Hogwarts, as good fights evil, and the basics are not such a long throw away from Greyfriars.

Perhaps Harry Potter may yet touch his wand to the good old school story and lead to our beloved old favourites returning to enchant yet another new generation of youngsters. For truly, the pen is mightier than the sword.

Footnote: A juxtaposition in the contents list of the 1940 SCHOOLGIRLS OWN ANNUAL is humorous at first glance. But was it an omen? Page 204 *She Shall Have Music.* Page 215 *Out of Tune!*

* *

CHELTENHAM BY PROXY

by Una Hamilton Wright

I have with me a document entitled *"General Knowledge Paper on the Manners and Customs of Girls' Public Schools"*. This is a photocopy of an actual questionnaire which my Uncle, Charles Hamilton, sent me to answer for him when I was at Cheltenham Ladies' College.

I was just completing five years of high-pressure, extremely concentrated education. The war was into its second year, Uncle had been ordered off the Kent coast and had settled in the Hampstead Garden Suburb. The MAGNET had ceased publication, as had the GEM and the other papers he wrote for.

What was the author to do? He had to live. School stories were his speciality and he was keen to try his hand again at a series based on a girls' school. And so he wrote to me enclosing this questionnaire. It was twenty years or more since he had launched a girls' school (Cliff House) and he thought his niece, who was attending a well-known girls' public school, was just the person to help him bring his ideas up to date, even though she was a day-girl, not a boarder. Uncle always took great trouble with his backgrounds. Accuracy was all important to him.

I thought it would be fun how to go through the questions and my answers. He kept this document on his desk for reference along with all the other school lists of characters and topography. His agent found it when she went to his house soon after his death to collect his papers, and she sent it to me.

Uncle's schools and Cheltenham had certain elements in common: the discipline, the school rules and petty restrictions. There was even a list of rules for Day Girls' parents to follow. We had no corporal punishment, as in a boys' school, but there were emotional blackmail and detentions.

The atmosphere was not the female equivalent of one of Uncle's boys' schools. We were much more engulfed in our work than his boys ever were. Neither did Cheltenham recall Cliff House; the cosiness was missing. The Christian and moral ethos was similar and there was an atmosphere of kindness, but not of understanding. There was no cattiness, everyone was friendly, we had to be: we were all in the same lifeboat. The regime was aimed at University entrance and filling the oak wallboards displayed in the hall with the successful candidates' names painted on them in black.

My parents and Uncle regarded Cheltenham as the absolute best among girls' schools. They all cared very much for education and wanted me to have the best available. They were very pleased when I passed the entrance exam. Uncle acted as referee for me and wrote to the Principal stressing my prowess at Latin, knowing how essential the subject was at public schools in those days. This was wishful thinking on his part, devoted as he was to the language. He inspired me to make up a Latin Crossword Puzzle (with his help) which was published in the MODERN BOY under his name, but for which I got the credit and the payment. This was mentioned in Uncle's letter. at the entrance exam I was asked by the Head of Classics whether the paper was *hard* enough (I could scarcely believe my ears, Latin to me was *always* hard) and then I was congratulated on the Crossword Puzzle. I was placed in the second highest set for Latin for my year. I stayed in the second highest set for the year as I moved up annually during my five years at Cheltenham. Latin never became any less hard. I could cope with the grammar, the irregular verbs, I could just about translate *into* Latin but translating out of it, unseen, was always beyond me and still is. It was the syntax that ditched me. One hour's homework took two hours; I was set an extra hour's prep to help me improve; that took four hours every Saturday afternoon. It was assumed that my weak Latin was due to laziness.

I have dwelt at some length on my struggles with Latin, which I had to win in order to go to University and gain an Honours Degree and thereby satisfy family honour. But there was a consequence which I find amusing. If you look, you will not see much influence on Uncle's writing of Cheltenham via the questionnaire, but you *will* find the influence of Greyfriars manifesting itself in the actions of the author's innocent niece: the MAGNET lived again at Cheltenham!

In my first term I was caught dashing upstairs by a College Prefect: "Daygirl, why are you going upstairs two at a time?" "Because I am in a hurry." "But it is against the rules. Report to your Housemistress and your house will receive a deportment mark." "But I'm *new* this term and anyway to err is Human and to forgive Divine." (One of Uncle's favourite quotes from Pope.) The Prefect looked surprised but repeated "Report to your House-mistress".

Once, when I was sixteen, the History Class, taken by a weak disciplinarian, dissolved into uproar as good as any produced by the Remove at Greyfriars. I was sitting in the centre of the front row. At the end of the period the teacher gave the class a homily. I meekly went up to her and apologised for my part in the ructions. She looked a bit puzzled but thanked me for my apology – the only one.

On both these occasions I felt that Greyfriars would have approved, and that made me happy. When bored, Uncle used to go over famous chess openings in his head while apparently giving the speaker his earnest attention. He did this when he had to listen to long outpourings from some of his pompous editors. I thought it a good idea and copied him when we had lectures in Hall on Saturday mornings, only I memorised music – the piano pieces I was learning at the time. And so, the tables were gradually turned, Greyfriars arrived at Cheltenham to upset things in a most tactful and diplomatic way. How much of Cheltenham travelled the other way and influenced Greyfriars and the rest I've no idea.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE PAPER
On the Manners and Customs of Girls' Schools

QUESTION	ANSWER
1. Are the Forms at C. numbered as in a boys' school, Fourth Form, Fifth Form, Sixth etc?	No, but they are in most Girls' Public Schools.
2. Is the 'set system used?	Yes
3. If so, what subjects are taken in Form?	English, Scripture, History, Geography, Science, Art, Gym
4. And what subjects in sets?	French, German, Latin, Greek, Maths (Any language)
5. Average number of girls in a form?	Between 20 and 30 50 in University entrance form, but they all divide into very small sets
6. Do the Senior girls have studies? This refers to boarders, of course.	Yes in the Senior House, age 17 or 18 (Study-Bedrooms)
7. If so, how many to a Study?	1, sometimes 2
8. Are the studies used as dormitories at night, as in boys' schools?	Yes. But they are not called dormitories
9. Do the junior girls have dormitories?	Yes, 4 or 5 in a room, partitioned by curtains which are drawn back for air
10. If so, on average how many to a dorm?	- ditto –
11. If several girls share a study, are they referred to as study-mates, study-friends, or what, if anything?	Room-mates if anything. But usually they say "Sally, who sleeps in my room"
12. Is there a prefect system?	Yes
13. If so, what are they called – prefects or monitors, or monitresses, or what?	College Prefects, House Prefects, Sub-Prefects
14. Is there a captain of the school, or captains of forms, or what if anything?	Senior Prefect, Captains of teams, Heads of Houses, Heads of forms.
15. Is there a captain of Games or Head of the Games?	Not one specific Head but Captains of different teams
16. Are the school rooms called form-rooms or class-rooms or what?	Both equally
17. What games are played?	Hockey – Autumn, La Crosse – Spring, Tennis, Cricket, Swimming – Summer (Juniors aged 12 play Netball)
18. Is there a games-master or games-mistress, and is he or she an important person?	There are 6 games staff. The Head of them is an uninspiring person. A tough, thin, leather-faced female.
19. Is there a fag system?	No

QUESTION	ANSWER
20. Is the word 'fag' used at all?	No
21. If the senior girls have studies, do they tea in them, and may they boil eggs and make toffee and so on?	I think they can have tea in them, but I don't think they can cook in them. I'll try and find out more.
22. If there are studies, what forms have them?	The 3 post-school certificate years (17,18,19) Preference according to age.
23. Is there a Staff Common-Room and what is it called?	Staff-room
24. Is there a room for girls like the day-room at a boys' school? If so, what is it called - day-room, or common-room, or by any slang name	Senior & Junior Common Room in each House. Day Girls' Common Room. Also Day Girls' dining room.
25. Do the boarders breakfast and dine in hall, or dining-room or what?	House dining-room
26. What time 'lights out' at night?	8.30, 9.00, 9.30, 10.00, according to age and class
27. What time rising-bell, if any?	7.00 a.m.
28. What time break in morning, and for how long?	11.20-11.40 (3 x 40 minute periods before and after)
29. Are the girls allowed to use the telephone?	Only for emergencies and with permission
30. Where are the letters put for them to take, or are they handed out?	There's probably a letter-rack in the the Hall
31. Does a lesson mean an hour?	No, 40 minutes
32. When does school end?	1 p.m. then afternoons 4.30 p.m.
33. Is there a bicycle-house and do the girls have bicycles?	Yes, yes
34. Do the form-mistresses call girls by their Christian names?	Yes
35. If not, do they say "Hughes" or "Smithson" as with boys? Or what?	No
36. Or do they say "Jane Jones" and "Mary Yates" and so on?	No, just "Jane " or "Mary, unless 2 girls with same Christian name such as Mary Smith and Mary Jones.

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THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

The history of the picture strip in D.C. Thomson's 'Big Five'

Part 2 - The Skipper and the Wizard

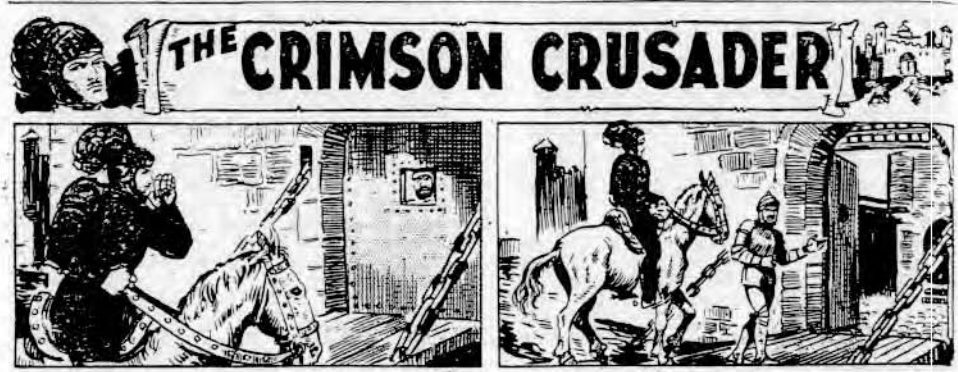
by Ray Moore

Today the least well remembered of D.C. Thomson's 'Big Five' boys' story papers is the 'Skipper' and, by the publishers own exacting standards, it was certainly the "wheezy boy" of their boys" paper team. It had been born in Sept 1930 but barely saw out the decade before falling victim to its own relative lack of popularity and the wartime paper shortages, after 544 issues, in Feb 1941. And even though, at the end, in an attempt to allay the fears of its diminishing band of loyal readers an editorial promise was given that 'Skipper' would return in due course it never did, except in the form of an annual later that year and a curious single post war annual for 1948.

Like its four companion papers 'Skipper' had contained the classic mix of war, sport and adventure stories considered *de riguer* for boys' papers of the period with the blend of fun and thrills given that particular Thomson editorial spin. Its contents being farther enhanced by being laid out behind a host of beautiful single picture covers many drawn by the now legendary and, at the time, seemingly inexhaustible Dudley Watkins.

So what went wrong for 'Skipper'? Well, sadly, what 'Skipper' didn't have nor ever managed to achieve was the creation of at least one truly telling character. A hero who could return, with much anticipation, in series after series and guarantee sales from week to week and from year to year. Precisely the sort of hero who could have saved the paper from the predicament it found itself in Feb 1941.

Overall 'Skippers' most popular character was probably the peripatetic, mystery solving schoolmaster 'Mustard Smith' and quite simply the adventures of a single schoolmaster, however interesting, were no match for the massed comings and goings of the staff and pupils of the 'Hotspurs' Red Circle School. Smuggy, Dead-Wide Dick et al certainly helped to save 'Hotspur' but Mustard Smith alone, or in tandem with a bunch of other heroic 'nearly men', could not save the 'Skipper'.



And what of the 'nearly men'? In its eleven year run it wasn't that 'Skipper' hadn't tried to establish other popular heroes. Naturally it had. For instance there was the mysterious western lawman 'Leatherface', the great African athlete 'Black Lighting' and the unorthodox crimefighter with the electrified metal gauntlet 'Karga the Clutcher'. All of these would return in more than one series and even be resurrected in other titles after 'Skippers' demise. But even if they managed to save themselves they couldn't manage to save the 'Skipper'. And neither could the 'Crimson Crusader'! The valiant knight so named because of his suit of blood red armour who would also feature in 'Skipper' several times and who in 1938, was to have the honour of starring in the paper's one and only picture strip. The first adventure strip to appear in any of the 'Big Five' and the only one to appear pre-war.

Appearing in issues 418-433 (but excluding 432) and drawn by George 'Dod' Anderson this strip was printed on the back cover where the two colour printing process allowed readers to see the Crusaders blood red armour in 'glorious Technicolor'. Its storyline being a rather simplistic affair when compared with the Crusaders earlier text outings which had begun way back in 'Skipper' No 19 in Jan 1931 when, complete with his warhorse Firebrand and his two-handed broadsword 'The Carver' he had stayed behind in Turkey after the Crusades to rescue his younger brother from the clutches of an evil Turkish Emir. The artwork to accompany the earlier text outings having been of superior quality too, it having been provided by William McCail who had a consummate talent for drawing horses and was therefore often employed in illustrating stories where they played a significant part.

The 'Skipper' would be nothing more than a distant memory for a generation of grown-up boys when the' Wizard' became the last of the 'Big Five' to entertain an adventure strip within its pages and then, throwing caution to the winds, it decided to publish two at the same time. Both 'The Truth about Wilson' and 'Limp Along Leslie' first appearing in picture form in 'Wizard' No 1492 (18/9/54) with the first instalments of the two strips having appeared in the free 'Wizard Midget Comic' given away the week before.

Both characters were, of course, already well established 'Wizard' story paper heroes with wonder athlete Wilson having first appeared in the 'Wizard' in July 1943 (1029) and footballing hero 'Limp Along' Leslie Tomson in Jan 1951 (1302), with these picture strips being only adaptations of text stories that had previously been published. In fact, such was the desire not to offend the sensibilities of well established 'Wizard' readers, who preferred their heroes' adventures in the traditional format that, even as these picture serials were running, both Wilson and Leslie were also starring in text stories in the selfsame issues. Wilson in the cricketing yarn 'Wilson Did It!' (1491-1517) and Limp Along Leslie in 'He Never Said a Word' (1490-1509) in which Leslie gives over centre stage to Darbury Rangers most enigmatic signing Ishmael the Gypsy.

Confusingly the picture strip 'The Truth about Wilson' (1492-1500) drawn by James 'Peem' Walker was a cut down retelling of the original prose story 'The Further Truth about Wilson' (1049-1473) illustrated by Jack Glass in which we learnt of Wilson's early life from his birth in 1795 while, more simply, the 'Limp Along Leslie' strip (1492-1499) drawn by Ron Smith drew for its scripts on parts of the first Leslie series from 1951 (1302-1319), as illustrated by Pete Sutherland in which we were introduced to the lame

young orphaned farm lad who shares his time between training his sheepdog Pal for sheepdog trials and proving, despite his physical handicap, that he has inherited some of his late father's legendary football skills.

After the run of the Ron Smith 'Limp Along Leslie' strip was completed in No 1499 Leslie then returned in four one-off strips printed in colour on the front and back pages in issue Nos 1501, 1504, 1507 and 1517 with artwork this time by Jack Gordon. These strips again owing their origins to incidents that had occurred in the first series in 1951 with the first three being devoted to tales of Leslie and his sheepdog Pal rather than to his footballing exploits. After these completes had been published there would be no more Leslie picture strips forthcoming in the 'Wizard' although, in time, he would have most of his 'Wizard' prose tales retold in picture strip form in the 'New Hotspur'/'Hotspur' in the 1960's with artwork variously provided by Bert Vandeput and Jim Bleach.

Similarly, after a one week break following the end of 'The Truth about Wilson' the great athlete returned in another picture strip drawn by James 'Peem' Walker and this time titled 'The Further Truth about Wilson' (1502-1516). In the event it will probably come as no surprise to learn that this series was in fact a picture version of the very first Wilson series from 1943 'The Truth about Wilson', with original artwork by Jack Glass, in which sports journalist W.S.K. Webb first encounters the man in black at the British Summer Championships. The first two Wilson series having had their titles reversed in the picture serials in order to present Wilson's story as a simple chronological progression.

After a further weeks break between serials Wilson again returned in what would be the last 'Wizard' adventure strip of the 1950's 'The Black Olympic Games' (1518-1535) again drawn by James 'Peem' Walker. This strip being an abridged version of the text series of the same name that had been illustrated by Jack Glass in 1948 (1169-1185). Wilson and other white athletes being kidnapped and taken to Africa where they are forced to compete in sporting events against the warrior athletes of Chaka the Zulu king. The price for defeat being enslavement. When 'The Black Olympic Games' came to an end so did the ' Wizards' ten month experiment with the picture serial. The format having been deemed a failure and its further use gladly shelved by, not only the current 'Wizard'

editor Norman Fowler, but also by his editorial superior, and one time editor of the 'Wizard' himself, William Blain.

By the time the' Wizard' next featured a picture strip it was April 1961 and the Thomson story papers en masse had been having a hard time. Both 'Adventure' and 'Hotspur', in its original incarnation at least, were both gone and reluctantly a few changes in the overall look of the 'Wizard' were now also considered appropriate. Picture feature pages and an array of new logos became commonplace and once again, and for the last time, Wilson return to the pages of 'Wizard' as a picture strip hero in ' The Summer of the Shattered Stumps'(1837-1848). Drawn by Bert Vandeput this was the story of how Wilson helped the England cricket team to regain the Ashes from Australia which itself was a reworking of the text series form 1953 'The Year of the Shattered Stumps' illustrated by Fred Sturrock. In both instances this series had been printed to coincide with the Australian cricket tour of England just as a reprint of this Bert Vandeput picture strip would be when published in the 'Rover and Wizard' in 1964 under the title 'Wilson Did It!' (See article last issue)

Although 'The Summer of the Shattered Stumps' would see the end of Wilson's picture strip career in the 'Wizard' it was just on the verge of beginning elsewhere. Firstly in the 'Hornet' and then the 'Hotspur' drawn by Spanish artist Juan Ripoll and later in 'Spike ' drawn by Neville Wilson.

The thrilling picture story of the war plane that fought its greatest fight—on the ground!

After Wilson departed in 'Wizard' No 1848 the next two issues featured a couple of picture strip completes set during WWII. First up in No 1849 came 'Fight 'Till You Drop' a story of the British war in Burma against the Japanese drawn by Bert Holroyd and then in No 1850 came the story of how a Spitfire pilot ends up having to tackle a lion when he bales out over a zoo. Titled 'Boomerang Benson - he always comes back!' this was drawn by Ian Mackay.

Then just when it seemed that the picture strip was about to become a regular feature once again in the 'Wizard' not another one appeared till No 1865 in Nov 1961 and this was only another single WWII complete about the RAF in North Africa drawn by Bert Holroyd and titled 'Gunfight at Airfield 5'. It seemed neither the diehard 'Wizard' readers nor the 'Wizard' editorial department could take to the 'invasion' of the paper by the adventure strip for long and in the last two years of the' Wizards' life only three more picture completes would be published.

The last three completes consisting of 'Flarepath of Fear' (1890) drawn by Ian Mackay in which a grounded pilot proves his courage during an enemy raid on an RAF airfield, the seasonal wartime yarn 'It's an old Christmas Custom' (1924) illustrated by George Ramsbottom in which a British Naval officer stationed in the Mediterranean outwits a Nazi raiding party and lastly the football story 'The Scarlet Hawks' (1965) with artwork by Tony Speer in which a young coalminer signs for a First Division club only to be trapped in a colliery rock fall before his first big game.

Six weeks later and the 'Wizard' had merged with 'Rover' after 1970 issues and, despite a couple of promising false starts, the adventure strip had never sat easily within its pages. An ironic circumstance given that in 1970 when the decision was taken to revive the 'Wizard' it would be revived as, of all things, a picture paper!

(Illustrations copyright D.C. Thomson)

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I wonder how many of our fraternity, even think of how much we have been influenced in the descriptions of our favourite characters, by the artist? A case in point, of course, was Sherlock Holmes. Nowhere in the canon does Conan Doyle mention a deerstalker hat by name. Possibly the nearest will be found in 'Silver Blaze' "... Sherlock Holmes, with his sharp, eager face framed in his ear-flapped travelling-cap...". Likewise Sherlock's pipes – you can search as long as you like for either Calabash or meerschaum in the stories, but will only find clay, briar or cherry wood mentioned.

Winifred Paget, daughter of Sidney Paget, the artist who made Holmes such a familiar figure, tells how when her father was living in the country, he wore a deerstalker. He found it so comfortable that it inspired him to depict the famous sleuth wearing one – so much so, that now most people when thinking of Holmes, in their minds' eye, see a man in a deerstalker and smoking a large bowled curved pipe.

Turning to Hamiltonia – we have always seen the American junior Fisher T. Fish portrayed by Messrs Chapman and Shields wearing glasses. When the first of the Bunter Books came out, Shields had passed on and I think that Chapman was presumed dead, so the *Gem* artist Macdonald was pressed into service. In his depiction of Fish, the transatlantic junior was shown minus spectacles! When I wrote protesting about this omission to the author in 1947, this is how he replied – "I must put in a word for the artist. Fishy doesn't really wear glasses. These were evolved by an artist quite without the author's sanction, he being apparently under the impression that all Americans wear horn-rimmed spectacles... which really isn't so at all. I don't think you will find any mention of Fishy's specs in the stories: though I have to admit that A.P. sub-editors were quite capable of altering the text to square with a blunder in the illustrations. They did this once in my 'Rio Kid' series, I remember only too well. In the earlier *Magnets* you will find Fishy depicted entirely innocent of specs.

By way of interest (I don't have the original *Gem*) when Macdonald illustrated the "Yankee at St. Jim's", Fisher T. Fish's visit to the Sussex School, in the 1933 Greyfriars Holiday Annual, he gave him glasses! According to the author, with the exception of Mossoo, all the masters at Greyfriars were clean shaven – but I have to admit I preferred Leonard Shields' depiction of the Shell master with a moustache. By the way, in my opinion his artwork of Hacker in the Warren and Wilmot series really hit the high water mark! Again, it is interesting to note that in the Tuckshop Barring out (Shields was doing the covers) Chapman took a leaf from the former's sketch-book and gave Hacker a moustache. Without this upper-lip adornment, it was sometimes a little difficult to know which was Hacker and which was Quelch – both having angular and severe countenances! Of course in the later years, Quelch's wearing "prince-nez" did help to

make the difference. By the time of the "Crocker Old Boy – Boot Repairer" series (1939) Shields had given Hacker a shave – see the cover of *Magnet* 1623 "Hacker the Hoarder!" (story title "Guilty Gold"). In "The Clue of the Purple Footprints!" No. 1624, page 19, Chapman has also drawn him *sans* moustache. However, in *Magnet* 1630, story title, "Fool's Luck!", the feature 'My Own Page' – I don't know the real artists (it's attributed to Harold Skinner), Hacker has again grown a moustache. In the "Bertie Vernon" series, the author stresses the point that Bertie wore very quiet clothes, such as a dark grey suit, whereas Smithy went in for rather loud clothes, i.e. his trousers had a distinct stripe and he liked 'fancy waistcoats'. In the old days the bounder was generally depicted wearing fancy waistcoats, but in later years they were conspicuous by their absence. They seemed to disappear along with Johnny Bull's concertina and cornet from the stories.

SAY, BO, EVER MET FISHER T. FISH? NO? THEN . . .

. . . MEET THIS REAL LIVE GUY FROM "NOO YARK" BELOW

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NEWS OF THE OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Russell Dever of Splash Publications spoke at our March meeting about "Intellectual Property Rights". In today's economic climate it can be difficult for children's book publishers to keep afloat. The market has been fragmented by factors such as the vast number of books being published, the increased use of T.V., the onset of computers, games consoles and the Internet.

The way forward is for a publisher to hold the intellectual property rights to a writer's creation. By doing this he can not only publish the books but also create a T.V. series, a computer game and other spin-offs.

Many powerful companies own the rights to favourite children's fictional characters such as Thomas the Tank Engine and Harry Potter. Russell's excellent talk was given with detailed knowledge, and humour.

At our April meeting Mark Caldicott spoke about the underrated Rex Milligan books by Antony Buckeridge. The four books in the series, written between 1953-61, do not suit everybody as they were written in the first person. They differed from Jennings as they were concerned with a working-class school and characters. We discussed the reasons why they never became as popular as Buckeridge's celebrated character, Jennings.

Our Secretary, Geoffrey Good, then read from *Magnet* 1657 in which Mr. Quelch is wanted on the 'phone. Geoffrey then concluded the meeting by reading *The Highwayman* by Alfred Noyes.

The whole of the May meeting was given over to our guest speaker Derek Marsden. A larger than average attendance was present to hear his very entertaining talk titled 'Science Fiction and Fantasy in the Big Five'. Derek's talks are always underpinned by his wealth of knowledge on the Big Five Papers and also his natural humour made the evening even more enjoyable.

Derek defined science fiction and fantasy in several ways and he then split up the relevant stories in the Big Five Papers into sections. These included problem causing heavenly bodies, invasions by aliens, metal men and robots, and many others.

PAUL GALVIN

THE CAMBRIDGE CLUB

We met for our April meeting at the home of Keith Hodkinson in Willingham village.

Using extracts from books and magazines from his collection, together with film excerpts from his vast library, Keith gave us a view of the nasties of the boys comic and magazine world in a talk entitled 'The Horror of It All'. *Incidentally, this was all a long time before the video/DVD industry used the term as a descriptor on some of its products.*

In the printed media the Penny Dreadfuls ushered in the craze. From 1825 to 1855 some ninety publishing houses in London issued weekly magazines and penny part novels. At first the publications were aimed at adult audiences with subjects such as vampires, highwaymen and other villains, as the heroes of the tables. The Boys Own Paper was originally set up to provide youngsters with an alternative diet of reading

material, although its stories were unable to break away from the popular genre that had been created... Many other weekly papers now followed it into the market.

Keith continued his presentation using film excerpts ranging from Hitchcock's films *Psycho* and *The Birds*, mentioning of course the many other well known examples of the horror genre. The talk finished with a further example, Speilberg's Poltergeist.

ADRIAN PERKINS

LONDON O.B.B.C.

At the Hamiltonian-focused March meeting at Chingford, Chairman Norman Wright outlined highlights of our future programme: Brian Doyle reported that two TV shows were planned for the autumn – one starring Nigel Havers as Raffles and the other featuring Bob Hoskins in *The Lost World* by Arthur Conan Doyle. Norman Wright showed a recent copy of *The Lady* magazine with an illustrated double-page feature on Mary Cadogan.

Bill Bradford gave a very interesting talk on Charles Hamilton's Ken King of the Islands. Tony Potts challenged the audience to guess the nineteenth-century meaning of the word "bunter", and then gave the definition from the Imperial Lexicon of the English Language – "a cant word for a woman who picks up rags in the streets".

Roger Jenkins gave a talk, with a Hamiltonian focus, called "Variations on a Theme" based on an article he'd written for the 1961 C.D. Annual. Andy Pitt gave a Hamilton quiz which some members felt was a "brain teaser".

In the absence of Norman Wright, Mary Cadogan acted as Chairperson at the April meeting at Acton. Derek Hinrich gave an interesting talk entitled "Sexton Redux", which was an analysis of some all-new Blake stories produced for *Sherlock Holmes The Detective* magazine.

Graham Bruton's quiz on Hamilton, Brooks and Blake was well received. Mary Cadogan read excerpts from the correspondence of Frank Richards with Mr. Bagley, a journalist, in which he discussed his writing techniques and the study of languages. The excerpts provided fascinating insights into Frank Richards' character and works.

Duncan Harper then read some highlights culled from some of the many press-cuttings about the hobby collected by Mark Taha on behalf of the Club. Subjects included Denis Gifford, the decline in sales of *The Dandy*, and the theft of comics from the Colindale newspaper library.

At the May meeting at Newport Pagnell, Len Cooper spoke on 'Technology And Its Impact on the Works of Charles Hamilton'. His detailed explanations and researches were outlined and, after downloading much digital information into his listeners' brain cells, Len suggested that one day it would be a splendid plan to put the whole of Charles Hamilton's output on the internet! He was, of course, aware of the difficulties involved – copyrights, the enormous volume of work required for typing and scanning, etc. But his talk certainly provided food for thought.

Ray Hopkins tested members knowledge of vintage cinema matters in a wide-ranging and entertaining quiz.

Members read a Bunter radio-script entitled "Booby-Trap", with much hilarity. Len Cooper provided "Twenty Horror-ble Questions" in a Horror film quiz, and Norman Wright ended the meeting with a discussion of one of Hamilton's rarer schools, Lynwood, which he created in the 1940s.

VIC PRATT

* *

1000 YEARS FROM - THEN

by Des O'Leary

The Thomson story papers were always keen to adopt futuristic themes in their stories. All kinds of science fiction developments and technological possibilities were featured. Helicopters, rockets, submarines, burrowing machines, or more unlikely hybrids served to carry their young heroes through jungles and over mountains or on round-the-world races against malevolent opponents. Or perhaps they were used by ambivalent characters like Captain Q of the WIZARD or the Black Sapper of the ROVER to break into bank vaults or bring to justice evil-doers and traitors, before, like the two just mentioned, reforming fully and becoming recruits to the forces of law and order.

The more conventional science fiction themes of exploration of space, robots, and menaces from alien planets also found their place in these stories, but today I would like to consider ADVENTURE'S attempt to envisage the changes which might come about in the next thousand years. Especially, of course, those which would interest their young readers.

In the 'give-away' booklet we are going to look at here, 1000 YEARS FROM NOW, presented with ADVENTURE in 1937, the young reader's attention would certainly be caught by the striking cover illustration by Dudley Watkins.

This illustration sets us a puzzle. Two space-suited astronauts leave their rocket to stumble across artefacts very familiar to boys of the time: a football, a cricket bat and a bicycle. Are we seeing an earth expedition to a distant planet or, perhaps, space explorers coming to land on a future earth?

As he turned the pages, the boy of the thirties would encounter a very different Britain from the one he saw every day. Breakfast, for example, would not be bacon, eggs and toast. The citizen of 2937, known as Z.99 (no names now, only numbers) would take two little pellets only. Even though these furnished all the nourishment required for his day, it would come as a shock to a young lad with a healthy appetite!

A chapter entitled *Slaves of Steel* shows us robots accomplishing "any job which doesn't actually require brainpower... They will replace men who will then have time for all the things men have longed to do. Only one thing the robot will never be able to do .... THINK!" One wonders whether people would make such a claim today?

Speed of transport figures largely, as one would expect, considering boys' interests in the thirties. Not only rocket ships, super fast aeroplanes and cars but locomotives too ... "The Flying Scotsman's time between London and Aberdeen will be pared down to less than an hour ... Bluebird's colossal land record will be more than equalled by ordinary private cars on the road." What a thought in 2001!

Power will be generated by the tides, the winds and the sun, since burning coal is wasteful and "towns become smoky. The air we breathe is full of coal dust [but in the future] electricity will be sent by cable-less electron beams."

Boys would find the future schools unrecognisable. The world will speak an international language like Esperanto ... statisticians will decide a child's future profession according to the nation's needs and he or she will be conditioned for it by sleep-learning machines. (Sounds like Huxley's "Brave New World" doesn't it?) School is taught by a single teacher controlling several classrooms at the same time, teaching and monitoring them via huge television screens on the wall from his central office. Reminiscent of the language laboratories and computerised distance-learning institutions already in place in 2001.

Another sinister note is struck when mention is made of compulsory military training where Z.99 will be "drilled in the use of electric ray guns for paralysing aeroplane engines, rays for crumbling defence forts, mechanical ears for the detection of planes in the stratosphere and other things." Which seems to contradict the earlier claim that in schools in 1937 "history is a long tale of war, but war between the earth nations will be unknown a thousand years from now."

Maybe there will still be threats from aliens from space and dangerous human dictators to worry about? For boys in the late thirties who heard in the news of threatening European dictators like Hitler and Mussolini and who probably watched Flash Gordon cinema serials in Saturday morning children's matinees, thrilling but distant dangers might even bring a welcome chill of excitement.

The super-cinemas of 2937 would also amuse their young patrons by showing them the primitive machines of a thousand years before and sports records would also be a good joke. Any *boy* in their day could do better. "Even records of world champions in 1937 looked like girls' records to them." Gangster films would be incomprehensible, even with the excuse that "they didn't know that crime was a disease of the brain in those days."

When an ancient newsreel of the Spanish Civil War is screened the spectators laugh "although to you now civil war is a terrible, ghastly thing." The boys of the future laugh at a war of trenches and rifles because they know of ray guns, weapons which can flatten a

mountain, "guns which could wipe out the whole population of the world at one loading with wireless waves ...", so they laugh at the primitive weapons of the 1930s. "But they are also shocked that people of the same colour and speech, sometimes even of the same family, should kill each other." A reminder of old attitudes which some today might call racist?

A chapter entitled "The New London" shows the city of the future, no longer "the big smoke" now that clean electricity powers the factories. Any trace of fog is dispersed when "silent guns firing a charge of chemicals are discharged" and the rain itself never falls on the city but only where crops require it, created by rain-making towers whose electrical discharges into the clouds bring rain down where it is wanted. But nevertheless London with its towering skyscrapers is still "what it will always be, 'the Heart of the Empire'". The inhabitants might surprise us. "The new Londoners are perfect specimens of manhood (no females are mentioned!), bronzed, tall and fit, well muscled." The future's High Street does not seem so strange to us in 2001. "The big shops work a twenty-four hour day in six shifts of four hours each ... customers are always arriving... men work only three or four hours a day. They sleep only four. They have sixteen left for leisure, etc." The streets are separated into either pedestrian or traffic zones. The pedestrians travel on moving pavements, either slow-moving ones at 6mph, seats provided, or, for those in a hurry, faster ones go at 10mph. The city has grown upwards, "huge circular blocks of flats rear themselves above the countryside. The empty spaces in the centre are playing grounds for children." Crime has been stamped out by better methods of protection and detection. More surprising is the claim: "The standard of education has made it impossible for a man to turn criminal."

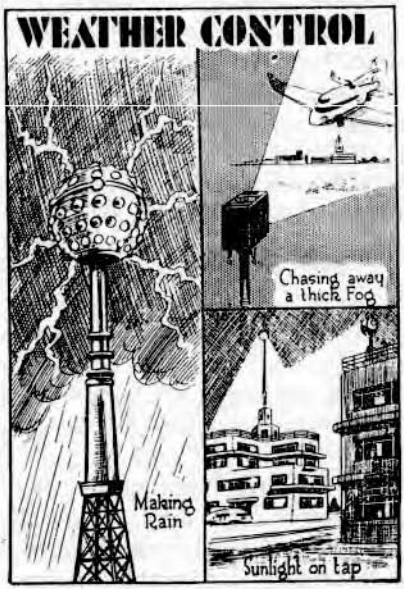
Yet some connections with the London of the past persist. The Changing of the Guard still draws the crowds to the new-style palace of "shining gilt and polished silver with its huge glass pillars and verandas and its rubber-paved courtyard." The Guards "carry gleaming metal tubes which shoot radio rays, not bullets" but the only link with the world of 1937 is the Parade of the Horse Guards. The Blues "actually ride real horses coming from the only farm in the whole world which breeds these animals. Perhaps only one of the thousands of spectators has ever seen a horse before."

As we come to the booklet's conclusion a grand boast is made: "Many things will alter in the next one thousand years but there is one thing which won't change much, and that is the grand old game. Football." Changes in the game are foreseen to ensure "good views... good seats under cover and comfortable conditions of transport." In 2937 there will be possibly two million fans at Wembley Bowl to see the Cup Final of the British League between Arsenal and Glasgow Rangers. The game will have been

speeded up with no off-sides, no touchlines or touchline throws, no goal lines but a transparent barrier surrounding the pitch which causes stray kicks to rebound. The ball being constantly in play will make goals easier to score so the goal will need to be smaller. And finally, "very likely" the teams will copy American football teams in having replacement players. But at least the crowd will stay the same, loudly condemning opponents and the referee as they shout their old war cries: "Come on. Rangers!", "Play up the Reds!", "Send him off!" etc. etc .

The final chapter is entitled "Boys Will Be Boys" and, comfortingly perhaps, proclaims that, because of "the spirit of mischief which is present in all boys [they] will find ways and means to wriggle clear of authority and do just as they darn well please ... an ambition everybody has which nobody can afford to satisfy, except boys."

However much we may notice the missing predictions – no computers, atomic energy, world organisations like UNO, population and political shifts, I think the booklet gets more right than wrong. There are still no electricity power beams or wireless guns but we already have robots, space exploration and what we might today call 'green' sources of power, wind, tides, solar and hydro-electric. There is also world-wide travel, only a few hours to China, round-the-clock shopping and vastly advanced forms of transport at greatly increased speeds. Even football teams accept substitutes and explore means of modernising the game. Social changes, as any science fiction reader knows, are far harder to predict. No feminism here or ethnic diversity in Britain. No dismantling of the British Empire, no Chinese or Indian restaurants to challenge the fish and chip shop, no mass holidays on the Costa Brava for the British working class, no dangerous new drugs like LSD and Ecstasy, no huge rise in hard drug taking, vandalism and crime but, to be fair, no penicillin or anti-polio or anti-TB drugs.



But the world depicted in 1000 YEARS FROM NOW is very appropriate. It carries an encouraging message for those youngsters of 1937 who shortly afterwards would face great dangers and problems with optimism and determination.

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FORUM

From JOHN HAMMOND:

A number of recent letters have referred to the writer Alfred Edgar, who contributed to many boys' papers and wrote the famous 'House of Thrills' serial, which originally appeared in *Bullseye* and was later reprinted in *Film Fun*.

It is not so widely known that he later adopted the pseudonym 'Barrie Lyndon' and wrote a number of highly successful plays (later filmed) including *The Amazing Doctor Clitterhouse* and *The Man in Half Moon Street*. He also wrote the script for the film *The Lodger* (1944) about Jack the Ripper, and the screenplay for the well known film of H.G. Wells's *The Wars of the Worlds*, made in 1953. Alfred Edgar was born in 1896 and died in 1972.

From ELIZABETH COOKSEY:

I do enjoy reading the *CD* and I am particularly interested to know the books and authors enjoyed by your other subscribers. Also, it is interesting when you mention in your Editor's Letter what you yourself are reading or re-reading.

A couple of weeks ago, I enjoyed hearing you on the Radio 4 book programme discussing Richmal Crompton and the re-issue of one of her "adult" books. I had not appreciated that she had written so much other than the William books.

When my brother died a few years ago, I inherited a handful of his old "William" books, which I enjoy reading occasionally. I confess to enjoy listening also to William stories on tape, read by Martin Jarvis. I am looking forward to reading your article in the CD, "William and His Literary Contemporaries". Along with the William's, I also received some P.G. Wodehouse books and read my first, "Summer Lightning", last year. Tears of laughter poured down my cheeks whilst reading the chapter where Hugo Carmody and Sue Brown go to Mario's restaurant and meet up, unintentionally, with Percy Pilbeam and Ronnie Fish. The book is a real pick-me-up!

At a recent book sale, held at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, books were being sold at six for two pounds. I will not say how many I purchased but my husband thinks I am frightfully greedy! The purchases included an Angela Brazil, also a great favourite of mine, "The School in the South". It is not in very good condition but I think it would have cost me considerably more if I had been in Hay-on-Wye!

From ROY WHISKIN:

Regarding the correspondence in *C.D.* about E.S. Brooks' residence at Halstead in Essex, I see from Brian Doyle's excellent 'Who's Who of Boy's Writers' that three of Brooks' pseudonyms were J.B. Halstead, E. Sinclair Halstead and C. Hedingham Gosfield. Gosfield is the village next to Halstead and the Hedingham would have come from Sible Hedingham and Castle Hedingham, two nearby villages. I always think Sybel Hedingham would have been a suitable pen-name for a writer of romantic fiction.

From TONY GLYNN:

The newest number was much appreciated and I think the new style will work very well.

I must confess that news of going quarterly made me feel at first that I should greatly miss the welcome arrival of the *CD* every month but then I saw that, in all fairness, you must have time for other things and you must consider your health. You have done such a good job for so long, we have probably taken you for granted and you certainly have spoilt us. So, good luck with the new pace of things. I know the quality will be as high as ever.

Good to see the contributions from Steve Holland, with whom I had some contact years ago. I have a soft spot for the Target comics of Bath. They were not out of the top drawer but they certainly bring back waves of nostalgia for my childhood in the late thirties.

I cannot pinpoint the reference, but somewhere among the great amount of Blakiana produced by Bill Lofts there is the information that William J. Elliott wrote one Sexton Blake story – in the *UJ*, I think – and that he once shared a flat with a noted Blake author. I'm nearly sure the author was named by Bill as Gwyn Evans. It's a point Steve might care to investigate in view of his interest in Evans and Elliott contributing to the detective novels published in Bath.

I certainly agree that Elliott deserves a study of his own. I recall him from his Swan days when he seemed to produce everything from short fairy stories to hardback westerns.

From BETTY and JOHNNY HOPTON:

We would like to thank the Northern Old boys' book Club very much, for inviting us to their 50th (Golden) Anniversary celebrations, at Leeds on October 14th, 2000 and also for the wonderful welcome and hospitality that we received. It was our third visit to the club and we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, it was a splendid day.

Darrell Swift had organised everything so well, a trademark of all his previous excellent meetings. Joan Colman's anniversary cake, whose surface was covered with circular pictures, depicting various hobby characters was beautiful, a real work of art.

May the Northern Club go from strength to strength and here's to the next fifty years.

(Editor's note: There were several letters in answer to Arthur Edwards' query about George Robey in our last issue. See below – and also the contribution from Ray Moore.)

RAY HOPKINS writes

George Robey did not appear in *Sunshine Susie* (1931). The comedian in that musical was jolly Jack Hulbert. However, George Robey did appear in *Marry Me* (1932). Both of these films starred Renate Muller. Other early thirties films in which he appeared were *Chu Chin Chow* and *Don Quixote* (both 1933).

JOHN GRAHAM-LEIGH writes:

I was interested in Arthur Edward's mention of George Robey's hit record, *If You were the Only girl in the World.* I have it on a double LP called *The Great War- an*

evocation in music and drama through recordings made at the time, issued in 1986 by Pavilion Records, ref GEMM 303/4. The George Robey track is a duet with Violet Loraine, recorded in 1916. Also on the album are such gems as Peter Dawson's *A Bachelor Gay*, Enrico Caruso's *Over There*, several John McCormack recordings and Clara Butt's magnificent 1912 version of *Land of Hope and Glory*. Terrific stuff.

The album was reissued as a CD in 1989 but with only 24 of the LP's 37 tracks – unfortunately the George Robey recording is among the missing ones.

I hope Arthur is able to obtain a copy to stir his memories – if not, he might like to contact me directly and I'd be happy to help.

From SYLVIA REED:

Thanks for publishing my article in the last *SPCD*. Just love the bigger format, makes one look forward to it more than previously.

Thoroughly enjoyed Margery Woods' article regarding A Survey of the Schoolgirls' Own Annual and am looking forward to the next instalments! As a co-incidence, I have been reading the Morcove stories in the Annuals that I have as I have run out of SGOL Morcove stories. I originally found that Morcove stories were really hard to 'get into' as there was so much detail to the stories, but once 'in' am addicted, and want to read more and more! Recently purchased SGOL Annual 1937 and I took it with me to read when my husband and I went camping on Australia Day in January.

Girls growing up in the 1920's to 1940's had far more exciting literature than the girls of today, or am I biased? They had the weekly papers (of which I have a few), the SGOL's and the Annuals, although the Annuals went on for many years. An outstanding Christmas memory my Mum has is ordering the Annuals for Christmas for my sisters and me every year from the late 1950's to late 1970's. Looking back on those Annuals, I don't think they are a patch on the earlier Annuals from the 1920's and 1930's.

The girls in the SGOL's had such fantastic adventures at school and were so adept at anything they put their hands to, always seemed to keep their cool in whatever situation they were in, that it makes one deadly envious of the schooldays they had, and one wonders how their lives were after entering adulthood?

On a slightly different tangent, does anybody remember the Alison books by Sheila Stuart? The first book I read was a Sunday School prize and it was entitled Alison's Island Adventure. I still have this book, have managed to collect quite a lot of the series and my sister Margaret is also an 'Alison' enthusiast. (By the way, my youngest sister is also named Alison.) Alison and her brother Niall live with their Uncle George Campbell in a small coastal village in far north Scotland. Kyle of Lochalsh is not too far from Clarig. Their elder brother and sister, Hamish and Mary, are with them but are usually based in the south of England with their respective careers. Shona Lessing who is the niece Sir Angus Lessing, of Clarig House is friendly with Alison. Shona is a very spoilt wealthy girl whose every whim is granted by her Uncle, and although she has everything money can buy, she is envious of Alison and her happy life at Clarig. Shona has a friend named Yvonne who goes to school with her. Sallie and Ronald, who farm at Tigh-an-Eas, just down the cost from Clarig are also good friends, as is Mr Murchison, the minister of Clarig.

RAY MOORE writes:

Congratulations on an absolutely marvellous issue of the SPCD. It was certainly well worth waiting for.

I was very sorry to hear the news of 'J.E.M's passing. As well as the work he did for the SPCD I will always remember him fondly for the articles he did for Alan Cadwallender's *Comic Journal* under the *nom de plume* 'Comicus'. A truly sad loss.

Further to John Hammond's article 'More Ripping Yams' he certainly brought back memories for me with his mention of John Buchan's 'Prester John'. I remember this was one of the class readers we had at school when I was 11 or 12 and for about a year or so after we read it some of us in the class were still using the name of the South African village 'Blaauwildebeestefontein', where much of the action takes place, as a mild and impenetrable expletive!

Interestingly but perhaps not too surprisingly given its Fifeshire opening Dundee based D.C. Thomson had Dudley Watkins do a picture story version of 'Prester John' for their magazine-cum-newspaper *The People's Journal* in 1957 which was then repeated in the tabloid-sized *Topper* comic in 1959. A similarly Scotland based Buchan novel *Huntingtower* was also adapted into picture strip form by Dudley Watkins for *The People's Journal* in 1960 but this unfortunately never made it into any of their more widely distributed comic titles.

In his article John Hammond also mentions *Rogue Male* by Geoffrey Household and recalls Fritz Lang's 1941 film version *Man-Hunt*. I also remember a T.V version in 1976 starring Peter O'Toole and featuring the last screen work of the brilliant Alistair Sim who died shortly after filming was complete. The opening of *Rogue Male* when the hero has the chance to bump off Hitler always reminds me of a picture strip I read in the *Victor* in 1967 titled 'The Finger on the Trigger' in which British secret service agent spends the whole of WWII trying to eliminate the leader of the Third Reich. It was drawn by the Spanish artist Vincente Ibanez and was based on an earlier prose story in 'Adventure' in 1960, itself illustrated by Jeff Bevan, with the rather giving the denouement away title *I Shot Hitler!*

In Robert Kirkpatrick's *Billy Bunter on Television* Mr Kirkpatrick is still at least one item short in his Bunter T.V. listings and that is the Bunter special 'Billy Bunter at Large' that was shown on Tues 12th Mar 1957 at 5pm. This episode was unique in that it was filmed entirely on location in a sweet factory. Another interesting fact is that all the episodes in the first series were all enacted twice on the same day, once for younger viewers at 5.40pm and then again at 8pm for more mature viewers. As to why two episodes in the 1957 series seem to have the same title I'll try to do a bit of research and find out. The most obvious answer is that the details printed in the 'Radio Times' in one or other instance are simply wrong. A not unheard of occurrence.

In the first and second series of *Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School* Mr Kirkpatrick correctly points out that Harry Wharton was played by the actor John Charlesworth. John Charlesworth got the role on the strength of playing Tom Brown's redoubtable chum East opposite John Howard Davies in the starring role in the 1951 film version of' Tom Brown's Schooldays'. Sadly, after appearing in a small role in Richard Attenborough's social drama 'The Angry Silence' in 1960 John Charlesworth committed suicide. He was only 26.

I'm always pleased to see items by Steve Holland and his piece on the Target publications was no exception. I seem to remember, and I've probably got them stored away somewhere, that Denis Gifford did a facsimile package of four Target titles for the New English Library in 1975 titled *Penny Comics of the 1930s*. The comics including the first issue of *Merry Midget*, the last issue of *Sparkler* and an issue each of *Rattler* and *Target*.

Finally I'd like to respond to a couple of points raised in Arthur Edwards' letter in the Forum section. Mr. Edwards memory is not failing him when he remembers George Robey's co-star in the 1916 revue *The Bing Boys Are Here*, from whence came the song *If You Were the only Gorl in the World* written by Clifford Grey and Nat D. Ayer, as being Violet Loraine (although with one 'r' in her surname and not two). Violet Loraine (1886-1956) was a popular revue star from the late Edwardian period onwards and a tireless fundraiser for worthy causes during the Great War and ended her days in my own neck of the woods in the Northumberland town of Haltwhistle.

As regards *Sunshine Susie* I can find no evidence that George Robey featured in this 1931 comedy set in Vienna which actually starred Renate Muller and Jack Hulbert. However, George Robey did star in a film comedy opposite Renate Muller in 1932 with a very similar plotline but this time set in Berlin titled *Marry Me*. I wonder if this could be the film that Mr. Edwards remembers?

It was also interesting to discover that Mr. Edwards saw George Robey in Olivier's original stage production of *Henry IV Pt I* as Falstaff as Olivier, of course, resurrected Falstaff in his film production of *Henry V* in 1944 just so that Robey, whom Olivier admired greatly, could reprise the role.

It really is a pity that Robey wasn't exploited more as a character actor on the silver screen as he was always worth watching. As even in his final years he made a telling cameo appearance in *The Pickwick Papers* in 1952 as the wily old coachman Tony Weller.

(Editor's note: Soon after Ray Moore sent me the above article, he supplied this postscript, below.)

Postscript:

As I mentioned in my original letter I've done a bit of research regarding the 'repeated' episode in the 1957 Bunter television series and I think I've found the answer to the mystery. The episode *Bunter does his Best* was indeed broadcast on 31st August but it wasn't a repeat of the episode that aired on the 3rd of the month. The episode that was aired on 3rd August was actually titled *Bunter the Ventriloquist* and, as I conjectured in my original letter, the wrong details were simply published in the *Radio Times* for this date.

Bunter the Ventriloquist was subsequently repeated on 29th April 1958.

I've also discovered the outside broadcast special *Bunter at Large*, which aired on the 12th March 1957 also went under the title *Bullseye for Bunter*. Highly appropriate given that it was filmed in the north London sweet factory of Barratt & Co. in Mayes Road, Wood Green.

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BOOK BUYING AT WOOLWORTHS

by John Hammond

When I was growing up in the 1940s one of my greatest joys was to browse round Woolworths. There was one counter in particular which always fascinated me : this was the counter which sold "novelties". These included the Seebackroscope (to enable you to see what was behind you), the Vamping Chart (which helped you to play the piano), and jokes such as imitation ink blots, nails through fingers, sneezing powder, itching powder, etc.

Next to this counter was one which sold crime-thrillers. These were what would nowadays be described as "pulp fiction". They were crime novelettes, usually A5 in size and each consisting of 32 pages. The authors were invariably Michael Hervey, F.W. Gumley or R. Thurston Hopkins. I recall that Hervey's titles always had a slogan printed on the front: "If you're nervy, don't read Hervey". They had titles such as 'Death Tolls the Bell', 'Murder Thy Neighbour', 'The Toast is Death', and 'The House of Fatal Mirrors', and were usually priced at ninepence or one shilling.

There was an acute paper shortage during the war years, so these stories were often printed on poor quality paper which "browned" easily. Yet they should not be dismissed too readily by the literary historian. Trite and predictable they may have been, but they told an exciting story in which the villain was always brought to justice in the end. They provided a highly readable diversion from the privations of the war and whetted our appetite for mystery before moving on to the more "literary" fare of Conan Doyle and Edgar Allan Poe.

My own collection of these paperback thrillers has now acquired a certain period charm. For me they recall an age in which a shilling would buy a jolly good read, in which the detective always got his man (this was, after all, the golden age of Dixon Hawke's Casebook), and in which crime did not pay.

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YESTERDAY'S HEROES

The latest recruit to BRIAN DOYLE'S roster of 'Yesterday's Heroes' in his popular series is one who 'starred' in only a handful of stories in the 'Modern Boy' and in two books before rather mysteriously disappearing from the scene. 'Jaggers' was his name (or 'nick-name') and he was something of a 'modern boy' himself, a cheerful and courageous character who never really grew up. And, the question remains, exactly *who* was it who sheltered behind that author's pseudonym of 'John Templer'....?

Anyone remember 'Jaggers'? 'Jaggers' of the R.A.F.? 'Jaggers' the Air Detective ?

His adventures ran in that excellent and versatile boys' paper 'Modern Boy' (which began in February, 1928 and ended in October, 1939) around 1936 to 1937, and in three books (comprising stories reprinted from 'M.B.') and appeared under the name 'John Templer' (of whom more later).

Jaggers was in the mould of W.E. Johns' 'Biggles' and several of George E. Rochester's flying heroes. He was actually Flt. Lt. Leo Jayson, D.F.C., A.F.C., of the Royal Air Force, but known throughout that illustrious service as 'Jaggers', the air detective and the detective genius of the R.A.F. Intelligence Department. Some dubbed him 'the flying detective' (which makes him sound rather like an airborne 'private eye', though he never, so far as I know, ever flew in plain-clothes - only, presumably, in plane-clothes....) Though it was assumed that he had seen triumphant active service in wartime, *which* war was never established; no matter, he had a 'distinguished record' and had notched up a couple of worthwhile 'gongs'.

THE VANISHED PILOT!—*Great JAGGERS OF THE AIR POLICE Story!*

This is how 'John Templer' introduces Jaggers at the opening of his first adventure in 'Modern Boy' (and in the first chapter of the first book): '...he was by far the cleverest pilot on the station. Square-jawed and broad-shouldered, his alert grey eyes concealed one of the keenest brains in the Royal Air Force, while the double row of ribbons below the silver wings on his tunic testified abundantly to his courage and efficiency.' A little later comes: 'A notice had recently been published in the 'London Gazette' appointing Flt. Lt. Jayson to the command of the newly-formed unit of 'R.A.F. Air Police'. A literal Chief, then of the 'Flying Squad' (or, in this case, 'Squadron')....

Jaggers was based at the R.A.F. Air Police's H.Q. at Topstone Aerodrome, and his ever-present and cheerful assistant and friend waas Flying Officer Winks, known to Jaggers as 'The Winkle' (or, at time-saving moments, simply as 'Winkle'). Another regular and essential member of the immediate team (and someone for the 'lower ranks' to identify with, no doubt) was Corporal Chubb, a small, fat man who spoke like a stage Cockney and dropped plenty of 'h's' and 'g's. but very few 'clangers', and rarely contributed a sentence not containing at least one 'Lumme' and a couple of 'bloomins' he always ended up with a 'Sir' though, so that was all right. He was resourceful and fiercely

loyal and had only two interests in life - one was 'the Boss', Jaggers, and the other his machines. What Chubb didn't know about aircraft and their engines wasn't worth knowing.

Jaggers' adventures usually began when his C.O. sent for him, with a new mystery or crime to solve - stolen plans, kidnappings, robberies, unexplained bomb-attacks, strange disappearances, smuggling and gun-running were all grist to his busy mill. An 'ordinary' police detective might well have solved them, but Jaggers just happened to be a detective who also flew aeroplanes, was a good man in a fight and was game for anything (as, indeed, was 'The Winkle').

It was never explained exactly how Jaggers acquired his nick-name. The dictionary will tell you that a 'jagger' is one who jags or cuts something into notches or ragged tears (maybe derived from our hero's 'notches' chalked up when he shot down enemy aircraft?) On the other hand, 'jaggery' is 'a coarse brown Indian sugar', but there's nothing coarse about our man, nor is he in the least sugary or sweet (any ladies who might find him so are non-existent in the stories - Jaggers has no time for dalliance with the opposite sex when there are crimes to be unravelled or plots to be foiled). And don't try to tell me that the word is just another name for a rolling stone! Of course, we all remember that marvellous character, Mr. Jaggers, the lawyer in Dickens' 'Great Expectations' (so memorably portrayed by the great Francis L. Sullivan in David Lean's 1946 film), but he surely had no connection with our Jaggers....?

As I mentioned earlier, the first Jaggers series ran in 'Modern Boy' in 1936 and he returned for another in 1937. As the editor enthusiastically wrote in his weekly column (on March 13, 1937); 'THE RETURN OF JAGGERS! Jaggers comes back to 'Modern Boy' at the special and urgent request of very numerous readers....in the first of his latest series of adventures.' And he did, the following week, but not, unfortunately, for very long - for six weeks to be exact. Then he seemed to disappear (unless readers know differently - I don't possess complete runs of the paper around this period, I'm afraid.) The reason was probably that the author, 'John Templer', left the country upon the outbreak of World War Two....

John Francis Westerman, the probable author of the Jaggers stories under the pen-name of 'John Templer', was born in Southsea, Hampshire, in 1901, and educated at Shaftesbury Grammar School and University College, Southampton. But who was he, exactly? In a major article on boys' writer, Percy Francis Westerman, in 'The Guardian' newspaper on January 50, 1982 (possibly the best-ever written about this popular and prolific author), Derek Brown stated categorically that J.F.C. was the son of Percy F. (a fact, confirmed, he averred in the local Registrar's Office); he also said that father and son, apparently hadn't got along too well together.

But Peter Hunt, in his excellent book 'Children's Literature: an Illustrated History' (Oxford University Press, 1995) mentions: '....John Westerman, brother of Percy F..... '

And then, W.O.G. Lofts and Derek Adley, in their Book 'The Men Behind Boys' Fiction' (W. Howard Baker, 1970) state that 'Johnn 'Templar' was one of several pen-names used by John L. Garbutt (another was 'John Brearley', also noted for his fine flying stories), though Lofts and Adley spell it thus, with an 'a'. They also say that Garbutt 'went to Australia in 1939' at the beginning of World War Two, and, if this was the case, it may explain why nothing further was heard of him, or indeed Jaggers, after this time. ('Modern Boy' ended its run in October 1939, anyway).

So it seems that 'you pays your money and takes your choice although I have always believed that J.F.C. Westerman was the son of Percy F. Westerman, and have said so once or twice before.

J.F.C. Westerman's (and 'John Templer's!) writing style, for example, was quite similar to Percy F's; one of Percy's most popular and best-known characters was Inspector Colin Standish of the Royal Air Constabulary, while John's 'Jaggers' was in the R.A.F'S Air Police (and often described as an 'Air Detective' (as was Standish); all John's 'Jaggers' tales first appeared in 'Modern Boy', while many of Percy's stories (including his 'Standish' yarns) also made their bow in the same paper (usually before their publication in book-form); both men had the middle-name of 'Francis'; Percy wrote a book 'Leslie Dexter, Cadet' in 1930, while John wrote 'Peter Garner, Cadet' in 1931; and Percy wrote a very good air story 'Winning His Wings! A Story of the R.A.F.' in 1919 (only a year after the R.A.F. had been formed, incidentally - it was previously the Royal Flying Corps), though he usually specialised in sea stories, while John's 'Jaggers', of course, was in the R.A.F. (Percy, by the way also wrote a book titled 'By Luck and Pluck' - which perhaps neatly summed up both authors' favourite ingredients for their stories and their heroes....!)

John F.C. Westerman wrote 30 boys' books (Percy F. wrote 178!) and his name was occasionally prefixed by the rank of 'Major', perplexingly enough since he actually served as a wireless officer in the Mercantile Marines, from 1920 to 1932. His recreations including camping and sailing (but, not, apparently, flying - so he evidently had no personal experience of Jaggers' exciting way of life!); and he lived for many years in Portsmouth, Hampshire (not all that far from Percy, who was for a long period a resident of Wareham, in Dorset).

John's first boys' novel, it is believed, was 'Bringing Down the Air Pirate' (1930), followed by 'Peter Garner, Cadet' (1931), "Twelve Months to Win' (a Scouting story) (1932), 'The Gold Consignment', 'A Mystery of the Air', 'Treasure Chest Island', 'John Wentley Takes Charge', 'The Antarctic Treasure', 'The Ocean Bandits', '"The Aero Contract' (about aircraft, not chocolate) and 'The Power Projector'; 'The J.F.C. Westerman Omnibus' (containing the last three titles) was published by the Oxford University Press in 1938.

The three Jaggers books (by 'John Templer', of course) were: 'Jaggers: Air Detective' (OUP, 1936), 'Jaggers Swoops Again' (OUP 1937) and 'Jaggers at Bay' (1938), illustrated by D.L. Mays (who was the main illustrator of Anthony Buckeridge's 'Jennings' books in later years). The books were based upon the 'Modern Boy' stories.

Many flying stories by such fine authors as W.E. Johns ('Biggles' tales) and George E. Rochester ('Scotty of the Secret Squadron' and 'The Grey Shadow' among others) were appearing in 'Modern Boy' around the same time as 'John Templer's' 'Jaggers' yarns were running (and both, it should be reported, were rather better writers than 'J.T.' or 'JFCW').

'Modern Boy' was very 'air-oriented' and had run flying stories from its first issue. The famous Captain W.E. Johns had illustrated an air serial by Percy F. Westerman in 1931 and contributed (both as artist and author) to the paper from then onwards; he was also the resident 'air expert' (and who better?).

'John Templer' was first (even before Johns) with his 'Air Police' idea, making Jaggers Commander of the 'newly-formed R.A.F. Air Police' in 1936, as we have seen. Johns created his own 'Special Air Police' in his 'Sergeant Bigglesworth, C.I.D.' in 1947,

with such other titles (among many) as 'Biggles: Air Detective' and 'Biggles of the Special Air Police' coming along in 1952 and 1953 respectively.

Other excellent writers of boys' flying stories during the 1930s period included Robert Hawke and Hedley Scott - both, in fact, the same man: Hedley O'Mant! (He created those popular flying tales about 'Baldy's Angels' in 'Ranger' and 'Pilot', for example. Herbert Strang and Frank S. Brereton also wrote the occasional air stories. And, of course, there were others too. (It's interesting to note that Johns, Rochester, O'Mant and Percy F. Westerman had all served in the R.F.C. or R.A.F., so knew what they were writing about....)

But back to Jaggers. He mostly flew a two-seater Hawker Demon, with powerful Rolls Royce engines (it tended to 'flash through the sparkling air at 200mph....'), with guns fitted at front and rear; sometimes it was a white, twin-engined amphibian (or flying-boat), 'The Corsair', which boasted not only two machine-guns, but also bomb-racks for

WINGS of the NIGHT

Thousands of rounds of rifle ammunition are being smuggled out of England. JAGGERS, of the Air Police, sets his wits working full pressure to find the Man Behind the Gang!

By
JOHN TEMPLER

In an effort to avoid the diving Demon the pilot of the Moth pulled up in a reckless zoom. Instantly the wings seemed to crumple up.

20-pounder bombs (and a luxuriously-fitted interior) (don't ask - a whole story explains how he eventually acquired such an aircraft....!); and occasionally he flew a rather smaller Tiger Moth (ahh, now you're talking!).

Jaggers and his friend 'The Winkle' had the usual sort of non-stop adventures, brushes with disaster and scrapes with death, but always managed to win through and survive at the end, with a metaphorical mop of the brow, a dusting-down of the flying-suit or uniform and a scratch of the head. (Of course; did a hero or 'goodie' ever get killed in a boys' paper? The occasional evil villain perhaps, who deserved everything he got. But never, never, good-old-whoever-it-was....! Quite right too - what boy-reader would have wanted it otherwise....?)

Jagger and 'The Winkle' tended to behave like senior schoolboys (or maybe junior ones) out on a prank or a raid on a rival school, using 'planes rather than bikes (Jaggers rather than jiggers....?), bullets rather than ink-bombs, or like Raffles and Bunny out on a nocturnal jewel-robbery jaunt. Light-hearted and jocular they may be, but at the same time they are daring and fearless, and brave and clever and resourceful - handy with fists on the ground and guns in the air.

The schoolboy-style slang falls thick and fast as our heroes amiably insult one another, often holding up the action of the story to do so.

"My dear old addle-brained, beetle-headed half-wit," said Jaggers to 'The Winkle' at one point - at which 'The W.' falls silent (as well he might). Another verbal attack on the patient 'W' begins: "Suffering sea-serpents. What's this? A fancy-dress dance? What in the name of Moses are you doing here dressed like a dog's dinner?"

"Pipe down!" Jaggers is apt to say, when he requires a moment or two to mentally grapple with the current mystery. One of his top favourites though is: "Don't be an ass!" and he also grins rather a lot (like Peter Cheyney's heroes....)

This jocular tone is maintained even when Jaggers and 'The Winkle' are in a tight spot during an aerial battle, with guns blazing: '"Any damage?" snapped Jaggers, as he wrenched back the cocking-handle of his gun. "You could drop a handful of potatoes through the fuselage," replied 'The Winkle' calmly. "That is, if you had the potatoes." Jaggers grinned... .and wiped the perspiration off his face.'

The Jaggers stories are not particularly well-written or well-told, but they are entertaining in their breezy, undemanding way - easy to read and easy to forget. But wait! That last point is quickly disproved, since I've remembered good old Jaggers, with some affection and nostalgia, since I first read about him, as a schoolboy of 12, when I borrowed the Jaggers books from my school library. And I've also wondered why not many people seem to remember him today (only a handful of 'Modern Boy' fans, apparently).

Whoever he was - J.F.C. Westerman (P.F. Westerman's son or brother, or John Garbutt - or maybe somebody else completely) - 'John Templer's' Jaggers stories whiled away a few pleasant hours for quite a few boy-readers who loved flying and adventure yarns in the late-1930s. Jaggers may have been a very minor 'Yesterday's Hero', but he was likeable, a good egg, and a chap it was all right to be seen around with.

And, like the flying heroes of Johns, Rochester, O'Mant, and others writing in the genre, he was one of the flying aces who probably inspired many young men to join the

R.A.F. at the beginning of World War Two and who became (often sadly too briefly) some of 'The First of the Few', the young and wonderful pilots in 'The Battle of Britain'.

Now they were 'Yesterday's Heroes' .... (*Editor's Note:* And also today's, I hope.)

* *

SYLVIA REED ASKS, "HAS ANYONE READ MISS READ?"

by Elizabeth Cooksey

I first read a " Miss Read" during the school summer holiday of 1959. The book was "Village School", published in 1955, which included delightful drawings by J.S. Goodall. Village School was to be the first in the series of heart-warming stories of the fictional village of Fairacre and its inhabitants, of whom Miss Read was the schoolmistress.

Why do I remember so well when I read the book? I was thirteen years old, my Mum had died the previous Easter, my Dad and older brother were at work all day, so during the long, summer school holidays I had to entertain myself, which meant to me, long hours in the public library. I loved the library. I would spend considerable time browsing and choosing books, you were only allowed to borrow four at any one time in those days, and then I would make my way to the Reading Room and start reading them. The room was always so warm, quiet and restful; voices had to be silent, only the occasional rustle of turning pages or a clearing of the throat could be heard. One day, I spotted "Village School".

I had always loved school stories. Angela Brazil, Elsie J. Oxenham, Elinor M. Brent-Dyer, Ethel Talbot, May Wynne, Rita Coatts, were just some of my favourite authors. My favourites of all, like those of so many other girls, were (and still are), Enid Blyton's two school series, "Malory Towers" and "St. Clare's". The Malory Towers books published in the fifties, always had endpapers, which showed an aerial plan of the school, surrounding gardens and, of course, that wonderful swimming pool carved out of the rocks leading into the sea. Oh, how I wanted to go to boarding school! Maybe it was better to be just a dream, I shall never know.

So, the title "Village School" was a magnet to me, although the story was a world away from other school stories I had read. It was not with the fictional books, as Miss Read's are today, but with a miscellany of books on education, etiquette, old customs, etc. It was bound in the usual library bindings of the day, with "Village School" printed in faint gold lettering on the spine. I took it down, opened it and was immediately entranced with the drawings. I read the first page and that was the start of my lifelong love of Miss Read stories.

From *Village Centenary*

For anyone who does not know of Miss Read, (in real life, Dora Saint), as well as the Fairacre series, there is another series about the fictional village of Thrush Green (based, I believe, on Wood Green a part of Witney, Oxfordshire). There are also a few "one-offs" which include books such as "Fresh from the Country", "The White Robin", and a short series about the Howard family of Caxley.

Sadly, J.S Goodall, who had illustrated Miss Read's books for over forty years, and whose drawings had delighted many people, died in 1996.

I have read every Miss Read. At least, I hope none have escaped me. My own collection contains many paperbacks, some hardbacks as they were published, and, in recent years, newly published collections, such as, "Fairacre Affairs", "The Caxley Chronicles" and "Farewell, Thrush Green". I also have audiotapes of some of the stories, delightfully read by June Whitfield. These do help chores like ironing pass quickly by!

Well worth reading also are her two volumes of autobiography, "A Fortunate Grandchild", and "Time Remembered". I have also listened to these on audiotape read by Miss Read (Dora Saint) herself.

You are absolutely right, Sylvia, her books are extremely comforting. They are gentle, enchanting, restful pick-me ups, yet at the same time very real. The books reflect, perhaps a way of life gone, or going, forever. For me, the stories will never go out of fashion. The seasons will come and go as they always have done and long may Miss Read continue to receive her seventh marrow of the week from her well- meaning friends and neighbours at Autumn time.

****

FAREWELLS TO OLD FRIENDS

DARRELL SWIFT writes:

MR. GEOFF PHILLIPS – New Zealand

The Revd. Jack Hughes of Townsville, Australia, has given me the sad news of the death of our mutual hobby friend, Geoff Phillips of Tairua, New Zealand.

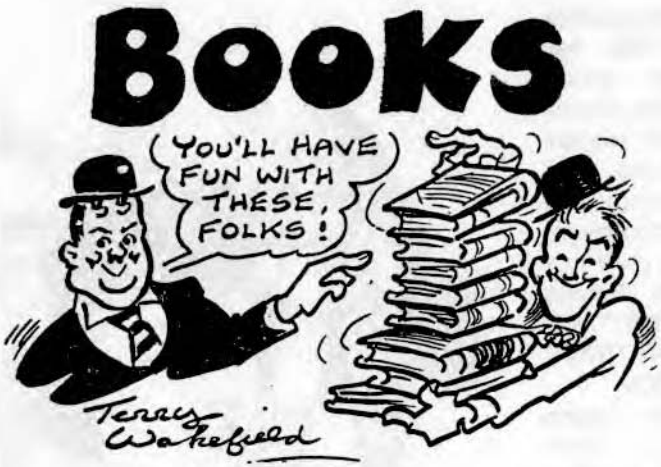
Geoff had spent the last few years of his lift with illness. He was superbly cared for by his loving wife, Dolly. Over the years, I had the privilege of corresponding with Geoff and had the opportunity of visiting him twice in New Zealand. He and Dolly paid a number of visits to Jack Hughes in Australia and he visited them a number of times. Geoff was a keen reader of *The Magnet* and had a lovely collection of *The Nelson Lee*.

So, it is with sadness that we report the death of another hobby fan: but we know that over the years, the hobby had given him much pleasure and encouragement. That is a consolation to us.

BETTY and JOHNNY HOPTON write: We regret to report the death of KEN **TOWNSEND**, of Willington near Burton Upon Trent, Staffordshire, which occurred at the end of the year 2000. Ken was a very charming gentleman. Both he and his wife visited us when we lived in Burton Upon Trent. He was an enthusiast of so many of the Old Boy's Books and papers, including the D.C. Thomson comics and annuals.

Ken is survived by his wife, to whom we extend our sincere condolences.

* *



REVIEWED BY MARY CADOGAN

BOOKS PUBLISHED BY NORMAN WRIGHT

In our last issue we reviewed the very useful Index to *The Schoolboys' Own Library* published by Norman. He has now produced an equally valuable companion volume *The Schoolgirl's Own Library, 1922-1963, An Index of Both Series.* This attractively presented 44-page publication, based on work done by Dennis Bird, Ray Hopkins and Arthur J. Southway, provides complete dates and titles lists for the pre- and post-war series of SGOLs as well as information about which weekly paper first featured the stories. For quick reference there is also an 'Analysis of Authors' section which lists the SGOL's authors (with pseudonyms and real names) with details of the SGOL numbers publishing their stories.

The final section lists authors with multiple pan-names. Not surprisingly John Wheway, with his varied output including most of the 1930s Cliff House stories, is shown as the most prolific SGOL contributor with 140 titles to his credit.

The SGOL was a far more complicated enterprise than the *Schoolboys' Own Library* because so many more authors were involved, and the compiling of this Index is therefore no mean feat. It deserves a place in every collectors' library.

The same can be said of the next Norman Wright publication, *DIXON HAWKE-DETECTIVE: An Index to The Dixon Hawke Library and the Dixon Hawke Casebook.* This is another *tour de force*, a 32-page book, researched and compiled by Steve Holland which provides complete listings of dates and titles of the two main Dixon Hawke vehicles. Steve Holland's informative introduction gives a history of Dixon Hawke's appearances in various D.C. Thomson papers (and laments that newspaper publication of his adventures ended last year after the famous sleuth had solved more than 6500 cases over a period of 88 years!). The Introduction points the difficulties of providing the individual names of the authors of the various stories because of DCT's policy of author anonymity. However, Steve Holland is able to suggest the names of a group of Dixon

Hawke writers including the most prolific; this list includes several celebrated crime-writers. (Researches by our late lamented Lofts and Adley are given credit in the book's Introduction).

Now we come to a veritable gem. Norman has published *WINGED JUSTICE AND OTHER UNCOLLECTED STORIES* by Captain W.E. Johns. Every Johns fan will be thrilled to have all these stories in one volume. They are truly many and varied. Most of them, expectedly, have flying themes and strike echoes of the celebrated Biggles (although that great hero does not actually feature in this collection). Norman provides details of the magazine, paper or book in which each story originally appeared, and this makes the reader even more grateful for this collection because to obtain the ephemeral publications listed would be a very daunting task.

As Norman points out in his Introduction, W.E. Johns was a master of the short story. Some of the tales in this collection show his sharpest, pithiest style as well, of course, as providing satisfying instances of his intriguing, sometimes bizarre, twist-in-the-tail final *dénouements.*

A personal satisfaction to me is this book's inclusion of a long Worrals story (from *The Children's Gift Book 1946).* This is set against another of Johns' 'feminine' stories, *Pearls and Primroses* (from *Stirring Stories for Girls*, 1960) which shows how Johns (like most prolific fiction writers) could re-work one of his already published themes with vitality and conviction.

WINGED JUSTICE comprises 187 pages and features an attractive full-colour cover illustration by Norman Skilleter, as well as his excellent black and white line study of Worrals.

Details of how to order the three titles reviewed above can be found in Norman Wright's advertisement on page 13 of this issue of the C.D. **PLEASE NOTE: These are all strictly limited editions, so if you require copies do not delay in ordering them.**

BOOKS PUBLISHED BY ANN MACKIE-HUNTER AND CLARISSA CRIDLAND

The names of Ann and Clarissa will be familiar to many hobby enthusiasts. Both have contributed to the C.D., and together they organise the Friends of the Chalet School, a movement devoted to propagating the works of that resilient author Elinor Brent-Dyer. They have recently re-published *The Maids of La Rochelle* which is the third of the seven books in what is known as the La Rochelle series. Last year they re-published the first and second titles – *Gerry goes to School* (now already regrettably out of print) and *A Head Girl's Difficulties.*

These editions are finely produced. Good quality paper-backs, each includes an interesting outline of the particular book's publishing history. As well as having attractive full-coloured covers by Nina K. Brisley each of these three books gives pictures and information about jackets, bindings and spines of earlier editions. So readers are getting even more than simply the appealing Brent-Dyer story!

The Guernsey setting of these stories adds to their appeal: the Introductions provide fascinating background and trace the La Rochelle series links with Elinor's celebrated Chalet School Books. Above all, of course, the books portray with authenticity and empathy the friendships, hopes and aspirations of young girls.

For details of how to order the books please write, enclosing an SAE to Friends of the Chalet School, 4 Rock Terrace, Coleford, Somerset, BA3 5NF.

"THIS IS THE AMERICAN FORCES NETWORK" by Patrick Morley. Published by Praeger, £52.50

Sometime ago we reviewed a slim paper-backed volume, written and published by Patrick Morley, entitled "This is A.F.N.". His original account of A.F.N. broadcasts in the Second World War has now been considerably expanded and published as a hard-back of 174 pages. Enthusiasts of the first volume will probably want to buy this hardback reprint, despite the pretty high price. It is a "must" for anyone interested in popular culture of the war years and will revive many memories for those who used to tune in to A.F.N. As the author points out, the ephemeral nature of sound broadcasting means that much has gone without trace (particularly transmissions in the years before individual tape-recordings "off air" became possible). It is therefore valuable to have this detailed history, background and note of the achievements of A.F.M. Patrick Morley has managed to assemble and organize an astounding amount of facts, figures, hard information and anecdotes to produce this compelling account.

POSTCARDS FROM THE NURSERY by Dawn and Peter Cope. Published by New Cavendish Books at £35.00

This book is quite breath-taking in its size, scope and quality. There are over 250 very large pages of descriptions of postcard illustrators and their work, ***lavishly*** illustrated

in full and glowing colour! In addition there are over 20 pages of indexes (indices?). Most of us have tender memories from childhood of postcards illustrated with nursery rhyme, fairy, flower, animal, or comic themes. The artists we best remember are probably Margaret Tarrant, Cicely Mary Barker, Millicent Sowerby, Anne Anderson, Mabel Lucie Attwell and Angus Clifford Racey Helps. All of these are well represented in *Postcards from the Nursery* with lots of other celebrated illustrators, but it is good that so many lesser known artists also receive excellent coverage. 81 illustrators are featured, with their portrait photographs, and detailed biographical and bibliographical information.

Some 750 picture postcards are reproduced, as well as book illustrations by some of the artists. This is truly a treasure-trove for nostalgic enthusiasts, collectors, librarians and historians. It is a family book, with something in its richly varied contents to delight people of different age-groups.

As well as the biographical individual entries (given conveniently in alphabetical order) the authors have provided sections giving interesting background information on themes such as 'The Rise of Women Artists', 'Popular children's themes' and 'The Magic of the Painting Book'.

The place of advertising and the role of publishers in the world of postcards are also illuminatingly addressed. *Postcards from the Nursery* is a book which one can dip into again and again with nostalgic pleasure. It is also a splendid reference book. (It should be obtainable in bookshops, and can be ordered by post from Antique Collectors' Club, 5 Church Street, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 1DS.) (See also page 68)

* *

Remember that, as well as longer contributions, the C.D. still requires short articles, and readers' comments for our F O R U M feature

COLIN CREWE CATALOGUETTE . NUMBER 19
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