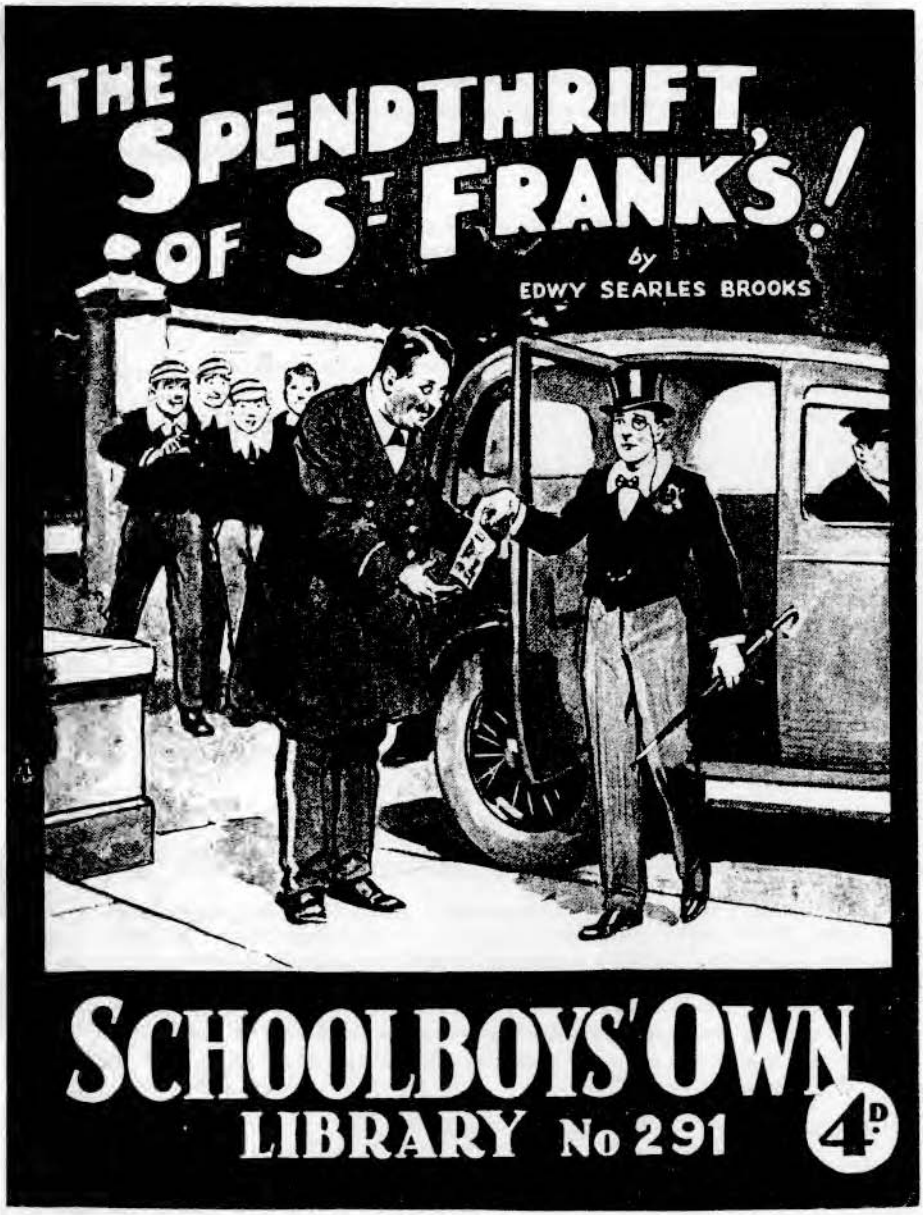
STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST
VOL. 56 No. 653 MARCH 2002



GEMS OF HAMILTONIA from PETE HANGER

Of course, it had to be kept dark. Bunter was too busy in envisaging his coming wealth to think much about the shady side of the proceedings. He was willing to admit, as a matter of argument, that gambling was wrong, or, at least disreputable; but there were exceptions to every rule – in favour of Bunter. Besides, an absolute certainty like this could hardly be called gambling; it was more like a sober and sedate business transaction. Anyhow, if Bunter's fat conscience had a twinge or two on the subject, the twinges were not severe.

Bunter was the happy possessor of a very accommodating conscience, and it could always stretch a little when required. Still, the thing had to be kept dark. Benighted Headmasters and foolish Form masters did not understand such things – even the Remove men, instead of admiring Bunter's genius, would simply look on him as a disreputable young rascal – they might even kick him; Peter Todd, in fact, was sure to kick him, if he knew. Bunter realised that his racing transactions could not be kept too dark. *MAGNET 1068*

"All right!" said Billy Bunter. Bunter's tone, which was fearfully sarcastic and sardonic, implied, that in point of fact, it was far from all right!

It was, indeed, all wrong.

Billy Bunter was wrathy. He was indignant. He was deeply irritated. He had not been treated with the distinction due to such a guest ever since he had arrived at Wharton Lodge. But now the lid was on.

The grub was god – Bunter admitted that! And, generally speaking, if the grub was all right, every thing was all right! Eating, sleeping, and talking were Bunter's three great joys in life, and of these eating naturally came first – primus inter pares, so to speak. *MAGNET 1663*

Claude arranged his music on the piano desk, planted himself on the music-stool, pushed back his cuffs as if he were going to box, and started.

Hobson listened to the crash that followed. He had to. He dared not put his fingers to his ears, lest old Claude should spot him out of the corner of his eye Hobson of the Shell stood up to it like a Trojan, while Hoskins, who had rather a fancy for the loud pedal, dragged out of that old piano every discordant sound that it was capable of producing.

If eleven o'clock struck, Hobson did not hear it. He would hardly have heard an atom bomb, while Claude Hoskins was playing his capriccio in G minor. Old Claude, at the piano, believed in putting his beef into it. But for the evidence of his suffering ears, Hobby could never have believed that a single piano could possibly have produced such a thundering row. BILLY BUNTER'S POSTAL ORDER

Billy Bunter grinned over his tea.

Bunter seemed in rather high feather that afternoon. The thoughts in his fat brain appeared to entertain him.

The biscuits did not seem to have spoiled Bunter's appetite. Blump had been under the necessity of re-filling that silver box. But the biscuits that had filled it did not fill Bunter. He had plenty of room left for the toast, and scones, and jam – especially the ham. Happy and sticky, the fat owl grinned at Sir William and the Famous Five over the tea-table. *MAGNET 1682*

Bunter was not only the most obtuse member of the Lower Fourth. He was also the laziest and the most untruthful. With obtuseness, Mr. Quelch felt his duty to be patient. But he saw no reason for being patient with laziness, slacking, frowsting, and Bunter's other striking qualities. *MAGNET 1206*

And Billy Bunter remained in cover, while the brake rolled into Courtfield, and up the High Street to the railway station. There he rolled into the station in the midst of the St. Jim's crowd. Tom Merry & Co., who had their return tickets, were heading for the platform, when Bunter caught the swell of St. Jim's by the arm.

"I - I say, D'Arcy, old chap!"

"Yaas, Buntah."

"I – I've left all my money at Greyfriars!" gasped Bunter "I – I left it all in my study!"

"My hat!" said Monty Lowther, "Was there room in one study for all of it, Bunter? Wasn't there an overflow into the passage?" *MAGNET 1206*

But circumstances, like carpenters, alter cases! *MAGNET 1589*

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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ENLARGED EASTER NUMBER

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This issue of the C.D. comes to you with my warmest greetings for a happy Easter. This is, of course, the season for hope and renewal, with fresh life bursting out all around us, as the daffodils and other spring flowers bring colour to our gardens. In the same spirit of renewal, may I, as your Editor, ask you to get busy with writing articles for the C.D. As you know, I strive to achieve a balance in the magazine's contents, and I DO need more contributions from Nelson Lee fans. Also, although the Hamiltonian and Blake items continue to flow, articles from new contributors on these subjects will be welcomed.

This Easter issue is crammed with good things, and covers a wide range of our hobby interests. As well as reading about our heroes, it is of course

pleasing to have some of the stories expertly read to us on the radio or in cassette-recordings. I am happy to report that Martin Jarvis's recordings of *Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School* and *Billy Bunter's Postal Order* are now re-issued in a boxed 4-cassette set. Also Martin will be recording *Bunter and the Blue Mauritius* later this year. Details about these cassettes, and how and where to obtain them, can be had from CSA Tell Tapes, 6a Archway Mews, 241a Putney Bridge Road, London, SW15 2PE. Most of us already know of Martin's brilliant 'Just William' recordings. He approaches Greyfriars with equal professionalism and enthusiasm, and it is good that his work is carrying the stories forward into the twenty-first century.

I would like to remind you of two important publications which were mentioned in the last C.D. These are *Frank Richards: Letters to a Friend* (available at £10.00 from the Museum Press, 30 Tonbridge Road, Maidstone, Kent ME16 8RT) and the *Collectors' Digest Index: Nos. 1 to 500* (£12.50, available from Peter McCall, 47 The Terrace, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 1BP.

MARY CADOGAN

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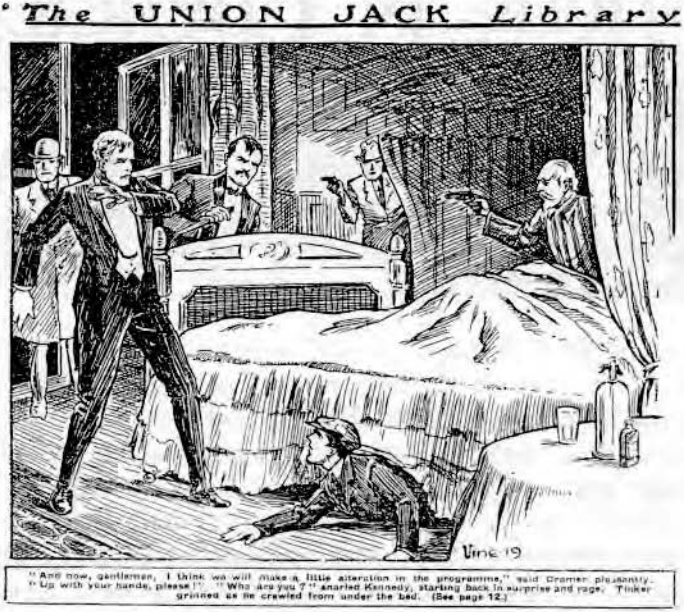


Reg Hardinge sends us this picture from U.J. No. 800 (8.2.1919) *The Affair of the Bronze Monkey*. Reg says: "It is involved with disguises. The old man in the bed is Blake who set a successful trap to catch the prime suspect in the case.

MORE GREYFRIARS VIGNETTES
by Ted Baldock

DROWSY ELEGANCE

If ignorance be indeed a bliss,
What blessed ignorance equals this,
To sleep – and not to know it.

Lord Mauleverer, "Mauly" to his companions in the Greyfriars Remove, is the scion of a noble and ancient house. 'His lazy lordship', a familiar sobriquet, admirably epitomises his languid outlook and unflappable nature. Countless interpretations may be placed upon his seeming indifference to the prevailing climate around him. Past experience has proved that this outer manifestation of languidness is but a front concealing an exceedingly alert and observant character.

Like that other sprig of the nobility, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of St. Jim's, Mauly possesses hidden and formidable depths which become apparent only in extraordinary circumstances.

To mention 'blue blood' in this splendid age of levelling and social equality is perhaps a trifle risky. Yet it may be safely stated that Mauly has, by virtue of his ancestry, inherited his full quota of this rarefied fluid. It is obvious that he was reared largely upon the precepts expressed in the letters of the celebrated Lord Chesterfield.

One tends to associate him, upon first impressions, with deep armchairs, sumptuous sofas – both of which are prominent articles in his well appointed study – and carefully adjusted cushions wherewith to support the noble head; of silence and peace wherein he may slumber far removed from the noisy and oft-times pandemonium proceeding from adjacent studies. This is not an inaccurate picture, yet it is far from being a complete one. The broad canvas of Mauly's activities conveys many surprises, some of which appear to be complete contradictions.

J.W. Wiley has said, "No boy knows when he goes to sleep". Thus, Mauly in the remove form-room on a drowsy warm summer afternoon following an adequate lunch. The voice of Mr. Quelch (a shade less acid than is usual – a tribute no doubt to the clement weather) drones monotonously and finally overcomes his Lordship's already drifting senses. The noble head droops, nods, and finally succumbs gracefully to the charms of Morpheus, until the remove master, becoming cognizant with the situation, descends with a tumultuous thunderclap, usually with somewhat painful results for Mauly.

As a general rule Mauly is quite happy to lounge on his sofa, contemplate the embers of his study fire and ponder upon the – to him – amazing energy of his fellows, leaving more strenuous pursuits in their capable hands. However, it should

not be assumed for an instant that he lacks, in any sense, courage and initiative should the occasion demand it.

Not infrequently has he been observed to display a remarkable turn of speed when Billy Bunter has been spotted in the offing making towards him. Languid he may appear to those unacquainted with his ways and habits. This is but a deception inherent in his character. But observe him in one of his more wakeful moments in the 'rag', weighing in quietly with a well-considered and eloquent opinion, which proves relevant to some voluble argument. His views are noted and respected.

Mauly possesses in his make-up an unusual power to attract and hold attention, a facet of personality inherited from a long line of distinguished ancestors, men who were born to lead and command. This characteristic is never blatantly asserted. Having dropped his pearls of wisdom into the discussion he will lapse into his usual state of languid indifference and, unless severely provoked, will be heard no more.

In the sporting annals of Greyfriars he has figured as the hero of many hard fought battles n Little Side. Mauly does awaken sufficiently to assure for himself a regular place in the school junior eleven. He has a well-established reputation for his 'do or die' springs down the wing with the ball dancing at his feet and, at the last moment, swinging it into the centre with perfect precision to the waiting feet – or heads – of Harry Wharton or Vernon Smith. They, more often than otherwise, then 'notch up' another goal for Greyfriars.

Better and perhaps more easily recognisable is his elegant white-clad figure in a deck-chair by the pavilion during the summer term, drowsing happily in the sun, awaiting his call to proceed to the wicket, to do his 'stint' for the junior eleven against St. Jim's or Rookwood.

Mauly fits perfectly and quite naturally into such a setting, dignified leisure and quiet pursuits being his long suit. It may be recorded that there does exist one fly in the ointment, which keeps his Lordship up, to some degree, to 'scratch'. This fly is Henry Samuel Quelch, the master of the remove, who is responsible for the daunting task of implanting certain knowledge in the noble cranium. A task of no

small magnitude, yet one which Mr. Quelch is eminently qualified to perform. All things considered, has he not splendid soil wherein to sow the seeds of knowledge?

From classical times it has been inferred and recognised that rank imposes obligation. *Noblesse Oblige*, and Lord Mauleverer may be said to have been bred with such a background. He has imbibed it all afresh, and may worthily be designated a sterling character, a gentleman, and a typical Greyfriars man.

Come Mauly stir your sleepy head
You're wanted in the gym,
Time to doze when you're abed
To waste the day is sin.
Wharton and the rest are there,
Just listen to the noise,
Leaping, climbing without care
T'will not destroy your poise.
Brace up old man, get off that sofa,
Jump around and run,
We know well you're not a loafer,
There's matches to be won.

THE TRANSGRESSOR

Mr. Quelch picked up a cane from his table
Billy Bunter watched that proceeding with
the deepest apprehension. The Remove
Master pointed to a chair with the cane.
"Bunter, bend over that chair."
"Oh, Crikey."

(F. Richards, *Bunter Does His Best*)

The sins ye do by two and two yet must pay for one and one.

(Rudyard Kipling. *Tomlinson*)

The environs of Mrs. Mimble's kitchen had from very early days excited an irresistible fascination to William George Bunter.

He was attracted to this domestic area rather like a bee homing in on a delectable bloom. There seemed to exist some form of magnetism at work. The Owl was drawn by a greater power than he could – or desired to – resist.

Be it the aroma of toasting, roasting, boiling, frying or any other culinary scent, they all titillated his fat nostrils in an uncontrollable manner.

Wherever the faintest aroma of the culinary art manifested itself Bunter would not be far from the scene. It was an instinct and a dedicated love of 'Tuck' which activated the Owl in this everlasting search and prompted those predatory instincts.

The pleasant smell of cooking was a sure indication that food was in the offing and then the fat Owl was bound to be in close attendance.

"I say, Mrs. Mimble ..."

"No, Master Bunter." Mrs. Mimble's reply was short, sharp and very much to the point.

"But, I say, that's a fine bowl of apples you have there, may I..."

"No, you may not", interrupted Mrs. Mimble. "Go away, you have no business here, I shall report you to Mr. Quelch."

This threat appeared to have little effect on Bunter, and he returned to the attack as it were. "I say, will there be apple pie for dinner."

"NO". There was a note of extreme exasperation in the lady's reply.

By this time Bunter had by degrees insinuated his podgy person into the kitchen much to the annoyance of Mrs. Mimble who, losing patience at last, seized a broom from a corner and advanced upon him making menacing gestures which caused him to retreat. This, considering his rotundity, he accomplished with remarkable speed.

In his haste to make good his escape, prompted by the whirling broom harassing his rear, Bunter ran straight into the midst of six fellows, all of whom wore a fixed and determined expression on their faces.

It was Harry Wharton and Co. accompanied by Peter Todd who was carrying a fives bat. "I say, you fellows, let a chap get by, I am in rather a hurry you know."

Heedless, the Co. and Peter Todd gathered round the fat Owl effectively cutting off his retreat. "How fortunate, meeting you, porpoise! You are just the man we wish to speak to."

"No just now old man, I am in rather a hurry", panted Bunter as he tried to push his way past them.

"There is a little matter we wish to clear up, Bunter, and we think you may be able to help", replied Bob Cherry. "There is a cake, one of Chunkleys six shilling 'specials' missing, together with a bag of doughnuts and a pineapple from the cupboard in Wharton's study.

"The raider has fortunately left certain clues which have enabled us to get on the track of the villain. The carpet near the cupboard was strewn with cake crumbs and fragments of pineapple husk, and there were jammy fingerprints on the cupboard door. All of which evidence seemed to point in one direction – in your direction Bunty!"

"Oh really Cherry, are you accusing me?" Billy Bunter's voice was charged with a well-simulated air of injured innocence.

"Hit it in one Bunt, you are the man we want. You are hereby arrested on suspicion, and perhaps with a little persuasion and help with a fives bat you might help us to

close the case". "And that", broke in Peter Todd "Is why I have brought along this little instrument – to help you to remember."

It is perhaps only decent to draw a discreet veil over the concluding episode of this far from isolated case. Sufficient to say Billy Bunter took his tea that evening in a standing position; he seemed to prefer it that way. It was also noted that he did not rush to take possession of the one battered armchair in the rag as was his usual custom, again preferring to stand on his fat little legs.

Some lessons are extremely difficult to learn, which may possibly be the reason, why the Owl took his meals standing.

Billy Bunter's long and not uneventful career at Greyfriars has been marked by many incidents similar to that recorded above. Retribution has followed inevitably, but little seems to have been learnt from a series of painful consequences.

Whackings seem to pass him by once the initial beastliness has worn off. Then, again, he is the same old moral-less Owl whose adventures we have followed so avidly for so many years.

Perhaps, more strangely yet, we have taken him together with his countless iniquities to our hearts.

He is a 'one off' character. The mould may be said to have been shattered once he had been created. One Bunter, one Owl, one hero – of sorts. An oddly endearing enigma.

* *

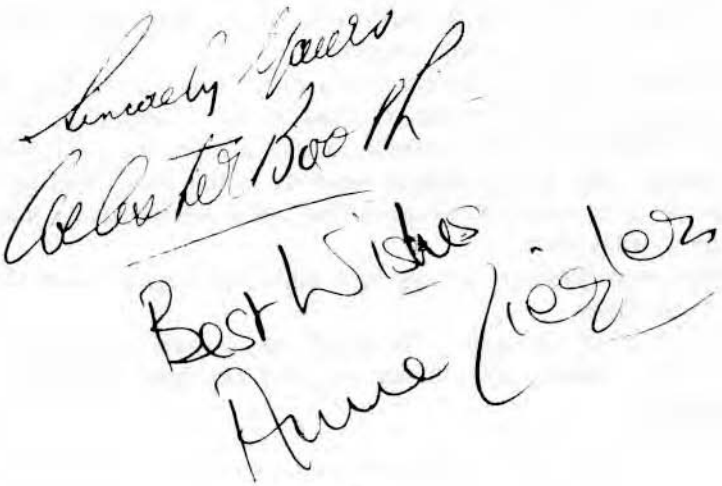
SATURDAY EVENING ON THE WIRELESS by Leslie S. Laskey

During the last years before the Second World War the highlight of the winter weekends, in our house, was MUSIC HALL on the radio, or "the wireless" as we called it then, on Saturday evenings. This show came "live" from St. George's Hall in London, on the National Programme. It began at eight o'clock and ran until nine o'clock when it was followed by The Third News.

There was a completely different bill every week and a wide variety of leading comedians and popular singers would appear during a season. There was

WEBSTER BOOTH

ANNE ZIEGLER



Billy Bennett who was billed as "Almost a gentleman", George Robey, the "prime minister of mirth", that great Scottish comedian, Will Fyffe, and the very popular "cross-talk" act of Clapham and Dwyer. Then there were Elsie and Doris Waters ("Gert & Daisy") and Ethel Revnell and Gracie West (as the two Cockney schoolgirls). Bennett and Williams always ended their comedy dialogue by playing a duet on their phono-fiddles. "Mr. Murgatroyd & Mr. Winterbottom" engaged in a very "rapid-fire" cross-talk act. They were, in fact, Ronald Frankau and Tommy Handley. The comedy acts included Stainless Stephen, Suzette Tarri, Jeanne de Casalis (as "Mrs. Feather") and Leonard Henry. Nosmo King would recite his monologues. His stage name was derived from the NO SMOKING signs on railway carriage windows. And there was Gillie Potter.

Gillie Potter had a unique style and delivery. Apparently he was a barrister by profession. For him the comedy stage was a second career. He would walk on to the stage wearing a striped blazer and a straw boater as the orchestra played "For he's a fine old English Gentleman", and his first words to the audience were "Good evening, England. This is Gillie Potter speaking to you in English". With his rather droll brand of humour he would often tell us of the latest "goings-on" in the village of Hogsnorton and the exploits of that eccentric peer, Lord Marshmallow of Marshmallow Towers. He once described to us the magnificent entrance hall at Marshmallow Towers. In the hall there were two statues. One was of Lord Nelson and the other was of William Shakespeare, though which was Nelson and which was Shakespeare, Lord Marshmallow didn't know – and he didn't care – he would strike matches on both with equal impartiality!

Singing acts to appear in MUSIC HALL included Renée Houston & Donald Stuart, the Irish ballad-singer, Cavan O'Connor, G.H. Elliott, Issy Bonn and The Two Leslies (Leslie Sarony & Leslie Holms.) Then there were The Western Brothers (Kenneth & George). Their devotion to British traditions and "the old school-tie" was reflected in their light comedy duets with one of them at the piano. Also appearing from time to time was Mario de Pietro who supplied tuneful medleys on his harp.

The declaration of war in September 1939 turned the broadcasting schedules upside-down. For a time transmissions consisted mostly of news bulletins and gramophone records. When hastily devised schedules were introduced, MUSIC HALL's new season never came. Its Saturday evening slot was allocated to a new variety show with a wartime flavour called GARRISON THEATRE, which had Jack Warner as its resident comedian. We didn't know where GARRISON THEATRE came from. For reasons of national security outside broadcasts now came from some place called simply "Somewhere in England".

In 1940 I began to spend my pocket-money on buying gramophone records of many of these variety artists, to compile a collection. Most of them cost me two shillings or half-a-crown each.

Later St. George's Hall was destroyed by the German bombers. MUSIC HALL died with it.

Doris is dark and Daisy, Elsie is Gert and fair!
That's how you can tell them. Elsie and Doris Waters

Elsie and Doris Waters *Tunbridge*

Leslie Hutchinson ("Hutch")

Bless you Thank you so much

Hutch

1944.

In the years that followed the end of the War new comedy radio shows were born and fresh comic artists began to come to prominence. Television reception was now spreading steadily across the country and this gave performers a powerful new medium in which they could be seen as well as heard by a mass audience. During the decades that followed the War the whole nation laughed with the likes of Norman Wisdom, Charlie Drake, Benny Hill, Frankie Howard, Michael Crawford, Morecambe & Wise, Eric Sykes, Tommy Cooper, Tony Hancock – and many more. Most of these are no longer performing. With the recent death of Les Dawson, and with Ronnie Barker now in retirement, we seem to have reached the end of an era.

We look for new faces to replace these great comic artists.

Will they ever be replaced?

As the late Max Miller once called across to a member of his audience in the Brighton Hippodrome – "Miller's the name, lady there'll never be another!"

(Editor's note: Mr. Laskey says that the idea for his feature came to him "as a result of reading the article by Jeffrey Richards in the C.D. Annual". There is no doubt that many of us have warm memories of sound-radio programmes, perhaps particularly during the war when "The wireless" not only gave us news – for which

we were avid – but wonderful entertainment to lift our spirits during those challenging days.

The B.B.C. seemed then very much "the voice of the nation" and, not surprisingly I decided to leave school at 16 and go and work there. I spent several interesting and happy years in their Variety Department, meeting and working with some of the artists (artistes as we called them then!) whom Mr. Laskey mentions. I have illustrated his article with pictures of some of the favourite "music-hall" and variety stars in my scrapbook).

* *

LIBRARY CHAT by Derek Ford

I have just finished reading Gilbert Chester's 1940 case-book *The Riddle of the Murdered Fisherman* and think that the meditation on page 18 is worthy of recall in Blakiana:

"A bright sun, shining through what were for London clear skies, cast little flittering pools of light upon the study carpet of a house in Baker Street. At his desk, Mr. Sexton Blake watched their capricious play across the gay pattern of his priceless rug, loot from some Persian palace in a bygone raid, long since forgotten.

In some way the huge rug had reached England, where it had come into the detective's possession, honestly enough to form one of his most prized possessions. Its complex harmonies in colour had, for some unknown toiler, formed the work of a whole lifetime. In the East, man has a capacity to endure philosophically and without complaint, and such products as this would endure also over a span of many years.

How many feet had trodden its soft texture only Blake's row of past appointment books could testify, and varying in kind those feet had been. Some were wary; others, impulsive, had grown wary all too late – a circumstance that brought their owners to seek aid of the world famous crime investigator.

Some trod boldly; others moved with nervous, faltering tread. Some moved as on stilts, shod in the high-heeled shoes of women. Some came down firmly and with the crushing weight of many stone behind them. Feet large and small, feet well – or mis-shapen; feet young and old. All sorts and sizes of feet, each calculated to

betray something of their owner's personality to the analytical eyes of Sexton Blake. As the Baghdad cobbler sang in Chu Chin Chow- "There's food for thought in a sandal skin."

Just now the detective was thinking in terms of feet – those of the man seated opposite him. Never had Blake seen larger ones, he decided, scanning the great police boots of his vis-a-vis. But then Detective-Inspector Coutts was a big man – in more senses than one. All the same, those feet of his looked queerly out of place upon so delicate a thing as the bizarre design of this Persian rug."

In that same study I can also recommend reading the instructions of Lai Nan about the theft of monastery treasure in chapter five of Chester's 1939 *The Monastery Mystery* for its Oriental philosophy. Beginning with Mrs. Bardell's "There's a gent stepped out of Chu Chin Chow which wants to see you, sir," it is a little gem.

Perhaps to go with that ancient Persian rug, some grateful client might have presented Blake with the splendid Edwardian mahogany smoker's cabinet from Sotheby's. This had an upper section opening to reveal a sycamore lined interior fitted with various hardstone and silver-mounted accessories, hallmarked for George Betjeman and Sons 1910, while the frieze drawer was applied with the ivory trade label of Edwards and Sons of Regent Street. It cost £1,900. Or, at £1,200, a Victorian cigar cabinet, veneered in macassar ebony with silver mounts for London 1885.

* *

IMITATION OR INSPIRATION? by TONY GLYNN

Three items in the Christmas edition of our quarterly set me thinking. The first was Mark Taha's mention of Chesterton creating a Mr Vernon-Smith with a query as to whether the name was "borrowed" by Charles Hamilton. The second was Brian Doyle's wondering if Alf's magical button was inspired by R. Anstey's *Brass Bottle* and the third was the feeling expressed by my old friend the late Bill Lofts that Tiger Tim was inspired by American comic art.

Certainly, there has always been a certain "borrowing", conscious or unconscious, in the field of authorship. These days, there are rigid laws of copyright and outright plagiarism is just not the done thing among authors who wish to retain some semblance of respectability.

Nevertheless, there is a grey area. In popular fiction, names and ideas can cross boundaries. I don't suppose G.K. Chesterton held copyright on the name of Vernon-Smith; nor do I suppose that Charles Hamilton or his publisher had exclusive rights to the name of Bunter. And wasn't it Lord Peter Wimsey whose manservant shared a surname with the Fat Owl?

In those cases - and in many more - perhaps the respective authors just happened on those names by sheer inspiration or perhaps they "borrowed".

When Brian Doyle mentioned Anstey's magic bottle and wondered if it sparked off W A Darlington's idea for Alf's button, made from part of Aladdin's lamp. I immediately thought of a favourite series of mine from the *Hotspur* of 1941, *The Sheriff with the Shooting Star*. It dealt with a timid sheriff in a tough region of the west. He's shy of guns and is useless at taming the roughnecks on his beat until he polishes up his star of office. Then he becomes a gun-slinging scourge of the wrong 'uns. Yes, you've guessed it, the star is made from metal from Aladdin's famous lamp. One feels that the un-named author was not unfamiliar with *Alf's Button* but what matter?

Another series in a wartime Thomson weekly, *The Rover*, if I remember rightly, dealt with a set of schoolboys who were rendered lighter than air, so they had a certain amount of fun floating thither and yon. There was, however, grave danger of their floating up into the stratosphere, thence to outer space when out of doors, so they had to carry heavy weights in their pockets.

Around the time that this series was running, we read a short story by HG Wells in our English literature studies at school, if was *The Truth About Pyecraft* wherein Mr Pyecraft, the most obese member of a gentleman's club, bores everybody with his tale of woe concerning his expanding figure. Never does he admit to growing fat. He euphemistically insists that he's "putting on weight".

Eventually, Pyecraft's dearest wish is granted - after a fashion. He is given what he wants in the same literal terms as Private Alf Higgins: instead of a silver figure, he acquires total loss of weight. Hence, a dismayed and still obese Pyecraft is discovered floating upwards. Like the schoolboys, he too has to weigh himself down to keep earthbound.

I do not know if the Wells' story predates *Alf's Button* but again, what matter. In both cases, the idea of a literal granting of wishes is used to amusing effect, *The Truth About Pyecraft* certainly predated the floating schoolboys by a good many years but, then, ideas used by Wells were by no means unknown in the Thomson brand of science fiction.

A great favourite of mine from *The Wizard* of 1940 was *Full Speed Ahead to the Worlds of Fear*, which strongly echoed Wells, the Conan Doyle of *The Poison Belt* and Balmer and Wylie who wrote *When Worlds Collide*.

Set in 1947, it has a company of space explorers escaping from an Earth about to collide with a mysterious Purple Comet. They travel in the "Space Yacht" a globe-like spacecraft, much like that employed in Wells' *First Men in the Moon*. Like the Wellsian craft, it is powered not by rockets but by a device which, by some means, cuts off the pull of gravity. Thus, through what might be called the "Pyecraft effect", it is carried into space. The space travellers hardly had ideas about continuing the human race since there were no ladies aboard. But, then, as E.S. Turner pointed out in *Boys Will Be Boys*, females hardly existed in the universe of Thomson's boys' weeklies.

And what about that very Wellsian ingredient, invisibility? It was E.S. Turner again who cemented on the chronic outbreaks of invisibility to which the whole spectrum of boys' papers were vulnerable, I don't know if Wells really invented it as a fictional device but he certainly made it highly popular with his *The Invisible Man*.

It was given a very good run for its money from *Invisible Dick*, a text story in the earliest Thomson papers, then a picture story in the first *Dandy*, to *Yellow Ghost* an unseen Japanese spy against whom Dixon Hawke pitted his wits in the wartime *Adventure* and beyond. One of the most memorable invisibility themed serials I ever encountered in my young life appeared in *Chips* just before the second world war in which Dane the Dog

Detective and his master, Clive Markham, did battle with a gang of invisible crooks who were plaguing London. It was written, I believe, by John Newton Chance.

Invisibility was a borrowing which had a good deal of mileage in it, but one, of very ancient vintage, turned me off as soon as I encountered it in print and that was ventriloquism.

I knew very early that it was impossible to "throw the voice" and the tales of juvenile ventriloquists fooling all and sundry with unlikely voices and noises appearing to come from various individuals and locations left me cold. I shuddered when Frank Richards had Bunter employ this bewhiskered plot device. It might still have had some recants of risibility when Frank Richards was very young but after the dawn of the Twentieth Century, this one-note theme was totally played out.

So far as I know, the ventriloquism lark started with a highly popular comic novel *Valentine Vox* by Henry Cockton, published, I think, even before Victoria came to the throne. It had a long-lasting appeal. My maternal grandfather (born 1872) spoke of it with affection. Since Frank Richards was only four years younger than my grandfather, perhaps he, too, knew *Valentine Vox* at first hand though I do not suppose it was he who introduced ventriloquism into the popular boys' papers and comics where it became so widespread. I was never greatly enamoured of Bunter and his fatuous, old-hat ventriloquial gifts hardly enhanced him in my estimation.

So to Bill Lofts' remark that he felt Tiger Tim was inspired by work in American comic papers. Yes, I believe he had something there. William Randolph Hearst, the go-getting American newspaper magnate, promoted comic sections as circulation boosters. They could also appeal to the American immigrant population with an imperfect grasp of English. The Harmsworth press was certainly aware of this aspect of Hearst's methods and near-copies of American comic characters appeared in the firm's comic papers.

Bill Lofts knew this for, in correspondence about comics, I once mentioned that early Harmsworth comics carried a tramp character who looked like the American character. Happy Hooligan, created by Frederic Burr Opper, even to the tin can he wore as a hat. Bill told me that he knew Leonard Shields had been handed the American version and instructed to copy Happy.

It was the same story with two other well-known African comic characters. Hans and Fritz, also known as *The Katzenjammer Kids,* who also starred in a second strip *The Captain and the Kids.* For years, two lookalikes, Jackie and Sammy, the Terrible Twins, appeared on the front page of *Comic Cuts.* I knew the African characters from the comic sections sent over by my uncle and, when I was very young, I thought the *Comic Cuts* pair were the pair transplanted though they didn't employ the same mock-German dialogue.

As for T*iger Tim,* I think I can firmly state that his origins lay in the work of the African cartoonist, Jimmy Swinnerton.

Swinnerton went in for panels crowded with small animals and diminutive, round-headed children. One of his strips was *Little Tigers* and the illustration of J.S. Baker's version of Tiger Tim accompanying Bill's reprinted article looks remarkably like a Swinnerton panel. This very early rendering of Tiger Tim could easily pass as one of Swinnerton's rather kittenish tigers. Later hands made Tim taller, more full-bodied, less cuddly and completely changed from Baker's early version.

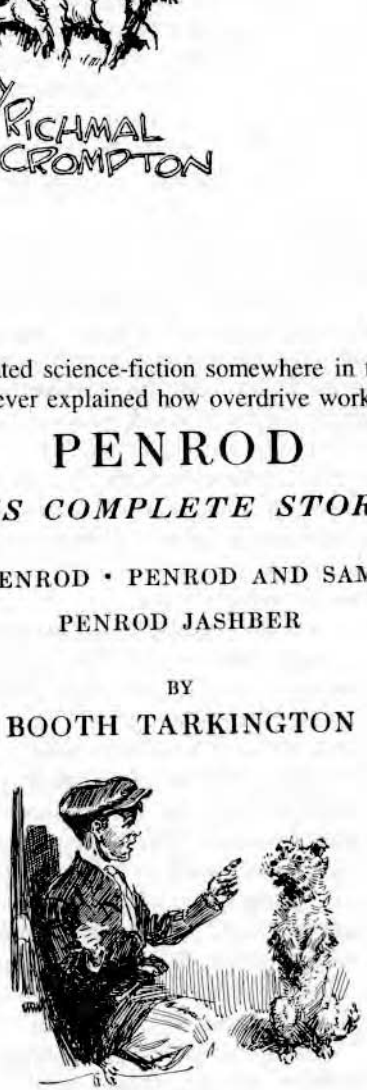
Whether by imitation or inspiration, some notions become common currency, used throughout popular fiction whether ventriloquism, invisibility or something like

"overdrive" which emerged in the more sophisticated science-fiction somewhere in the 1940's to permit travel between the stars. No one ever explained how overdrive worked but the readers accepted it just as juvenile readers accepted the magic which powered the plots of many DC Thomson boys' yarns.

As for "borrowings" it has been suggested that Kipling's *Stalky and Co.* was the inspiration for the Hamiltonian schools, but, surely, *Tom Brown's Schooldays,* the works of Talbot Baines Reid and of other 19th century writers must have helped to lay the foundations.

Was Richmal Crompton's William really inspired by Penrod, the mischievous small boy created by the American Booth Tarkington?

And think of the resounding echoes of Wells, Conan Doyle and Rider Haggard found in E.S. Brooks' yarns when he took the boys of St. Frank's from the ivy-clad confines of the old college to fantastic regions into which Charles Hamilton and others would never allow a schoolboy to set foot.



In the end, what matter? When we were very young, we never queried the inspiration behind the stories we devoured. The yarn was the thing whether the author's ideas came in dizzying moments of "Eureka!" or whether they were simply borrowed.

(Editor's Note: I have always understood from Richmal Crompton's family that she was *not* influenced by Booth Tarkington's Penrod Schofield in her creation of William Brown. There *were* similarities in some of the stories and character relationships but, in my view, Richmal's stories had far more wit and sparkle than Booth Tarkington's. It is however interesting to compare Gordon Grant's pictures of Penrod with Thomas Henry's illustrations of the William saga. There is a similarity of style and of course their type of drawing was much in fashion in the second and third decade of the twentieth century.)

* *

SYLVIA REED WRITES:

Further to Margery Woods' article in SPCD of September 2001, I also believe the later Annuals pale into insignificance compared to the early Annuals.

I received my first Annual during the early 1960's and without realising it, my addiction began. Over the years my Annual collection was disposed of, replaced and then grew.

In 1969, the reading of my first SGOL added to my yet unrealised addiction, wondering what the authors looked like, how old they were (never realising at the time they were men).

During the intervening years the addiction was more or less unfuelled due to travelling, getting married, etc. During the years 1979 to

1984 when my son and daughter appeared on the scene, I had a big clean out and donated all my Annuals to charity, thinking such books were not needed now that I was a parent.

However, a short time later I vaguely regretted disposing of my Annuals but was too busy to really care.

Come the 1990's and my children were growing, I started to think again about the Annuals and the SGOL's. I had subscribed to an excellent Australian paper that was devoted to weekly publications, sadly now defunct, run by John Tipper. From this publication, I was able to obtain some contacts for SGOL's and the collecting started, my addiction was re-fuelled. At the same time, the decision to start replacing the Annuals commenced. For quite a while I was happy with the SGOL's and the Annual replacement, until I realised the existence of the first series of SGOL, the early Annuals, Morcove and Cliff House. Out of curiosity, I purchased an early Annual. THEN THE ADDICTION BECAME MORE ADDICTIVE!

I had to know more of Morcove and Cliff House. I grew up only knowing Bessie Bunter as a comic strip character in the eagerly awaited weekly that came rolled up with the newspaper. If the weekly did not arrive, utter devastation set in. From a young age I have been a voracious reader.

My collection is growing very slowly, but with each addition I still have to have more and know more about Babs, Mabs and Co, Betty, Polly and Co. Dawn Marler's article also struck a chord. The Silent Three stories bring back a lot of memories. Island School and St Kit's to me sounded such exotic locations. I loved the striped blazers the girls wore. These were so glamorous compared to the navy blue blazer I had to wear. Striped blazers are now quite popular in schools in Western Australia. I have The Silent Three Companion by Marion Waters plus all the new Silent Three stories that Marion wrote. I must state in writing that Marion Waters publicly thanked me in one of 'her' publications and I was rude enough not to notice it at the time. Some time later I wrote a note of apology to Marion, and now make the apology public in SPCD.

It is also gratifying to hear that Miss Read is very popular. My mother is an avid fan of the Miss Read books, I have started to collect these in hard cover as well. Iris Bromige is the only romantic writer I will concede to. Although digressing from actual SPCD content now, has any other reader read the Iris Bromige books? These books in hard cover are also collected by me.

* *

LOOKING FOR CRIME THRILLERS PUBLISHED

BY MITRE IN THE 1940s

Especially any titles by Michael Hervey or F.W. Gumley.

I am also searching for THE EYE OF SUDA by Major Charles Gilson.

Please contact: JOHN HAMMOND,

49 Beckingthorpe Drive, Bottesford, Nottingham, NG13 0DN.

I'm interested in stories in old boys' papers, prior to 1914 and between 1918 and 1940, which anticipated the aerial bombardment of cities, either by foreign powers or arch villains.

Examples are "The Witches Clutch" in *Marvel*, c.1900, "The Aerial War" in *Boys Own Library* no. 44, c.1907, "The Flying Armada" in *Boys' Friend*, 1912, "The War in the Clouds" in *Dreadnought*, 1912, and "Germany's War of Revenge" in *Champion*, 1922. I understand that Boys' Friend published many such stories before 1914.

Can anyone provide me with photocopies of any of the above, or originals, and tell me of any other similar "next war" stories?

HARRY WARREN, 159 Cambert Lane, Manchester, M18 8HJ. Tel. 0161 231 1583.

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COLLECTING-IT IS - IS IT CURABLE? by Glyn Frewer

COLLECT: Obtain (specimens, books, stamps, etc.) for addition to others. That's the Concise Oxford Dictionary definition. From the Latin *colligere* – to gather together.

So the Ancient Romans had a word for it. I shouldn't be surprised if Stone Age Man had a grunt for it, too, when he amassed a heap of polished stones or seashells. It's in the blood. It's certainly in mine, as I suspect it is in many, if not all, of those reading this *Collector's Digest*. It starts when you're young, like spots, but unlike spots, it doesn't get any better as you get older, it gets worse.

Take my case. I wasn't yet in my teens when the Second World War started. I used to listen to *Children's Hour*, and the Zoo Man (David Seth Smith) urged us children to collect acorns to aid the war effort by supplying them to local farms for animal feed. So I began collecting them, bags of them, sacks of them, and my parents delivered them. That's when it all started. Because I came back from these countryside excursions with leaves as well, lots of different leaves, and pressed them between the pages of books before I was given a press like a miniature trouser-press that flattened specimens between blotting paper, tightened by wing nuts at the corners. After leaves, flowers. And once I had joined the Cubs, I started on stamps because other boys were sticking stamps into albums they had been given. Acorns, leaves, flowers and stamps. Not yet ten, I had been bitten by the bug for which there is no known antidote.

After Cubs came Scouts. In the Scouts you were encouraged to collect Proficiency Badges. So I aimed for the Collector's Badge as my first. I had friends who collected coins. The war was on by this time and our district was flooded with intakes of American soldiers. I collected American coins but I soon had all there were to get, which weren't many. What there was a lot of, however, were American chewing-gum wrappers. These became a craze at school and we vied passionately with each other to have the best collection. Condition was important and swapping went on apace. Matchboxes, too, were many and various and soon these, too, were being exchanged along with stamps, coins and chewing-gum wrappers.

Different again were train numbers. These you could not exchange. They had to be personally seen on the engine by the collector. I spent many a happy day on the local station platform with notebook and pencil waiting for the next magnificent steaming, snorting engine to hiss to a standstill or thunder through non-stop. Inevitably, train-tickets became the next objects of desire and they, in turn, led to bus-tickets. I can vividly remember one day when, lacking a Chiclets chewing-gum wrapper and a Dentine, I saw both on the railways track below the platform. I was ready. It was forbidden to climb down on to the line for obvious safety reasons but it was not forbidden to have what all we collectors had, a dart tied to a piece of string. We developed great skill at darting wrappers on the line below us and hauling in the catch. I had a friend who could hit a train ticket three times out of three at six paces. And that was just for swaps. HE already had a good collection but three swaps of different coloured Wrigleys could get him the scarce yellow Chiclets ten-pack.

And so it went on, the objects of collecting changing like fashions as we grew up. Cigarette cards became all the rage. Although we were too young to smoke, our parents weren't and we sent for the albums from W.D. & H.O. Wills, John Player, Ballaher and others. Later came Brook Bond tea-cards with descriptions by Frances Pitt and

illustrations by Tunnicliffe, all highly collectible, all swappable and all increasing the appetite for collecting. It was great fun, but more than fun, for these youthful pastimes, more often than not, led to serious interests in later life.

One particular collecting path I followed certainly led me to a field of interest which has provided a lifetime of pleasure. I'm referring, perhaps surprisingly, to the collecting of birds' eggs. I say *surprisingly* because today, of course, it is a criminal pursuit. In my school and Scout days it was not. It was positively encouraged and in all the boys' papers were enticing advertisements and articles. In comics like the *Wizard, Hotspur, Rover, Adventure* and *Champion*; in magazines, *Modern Boy* and *Boys' Own*; in the *Magnet* and *Gem;* all bore advertisements urging you to buy egg-cabinets, fine-bore glass tubes for blowing out the contents as well as tiny drills for making a single hole in the side of the egg rather than piercing the eggs at each end with a pin, which was the usual method. The magazines also carried instructive articles on bird-habitat and climbing techniques. Never was there any mention of endangered species. We were, however, strongly urged to take only one egg from each clutch so as to allow the rest to hatch and increase the species: common sense rather than a statutory conservation policy. Equal encouragement was given to the collecting of butterflies and moths although I bypassed this avenue because the idea of using killing jars did not appeal. To my young mind, eggs were inanimate and not alive like fluttering insects.

Another of the Scout proficiency badges to aim for was that of Bird Warden. This entailed keeping records of birds and their nests and habitats and anything else to do with them. So I began collecting claws and skulls and feathers. This was educational as well as enjoyable. Claws cut from dead birds were sun-dried and pinned on a board. Skulls were not so straightforward as they needed boiling and my mother's tolerance of my kitchen activities deserved a medal. As did her control when she caught me about to skin a mole (skins also were interesting) which I had pinned out, belly up, with drawing pins through each large paw, on her pastry board.

The advertisements in the many boys' papers were, of course, only incidental reading. Every word of those wonderful publications was read avidly, and not only those already mentioned. There were the other 'picture' comics: *Dandy, Beano, Knockout, Radio Fun, Film Fun*. But it was the 'story' comics I remember most fondly, with their memorable heroes: Rockfist Rogan, Colwyn Dane, Wilson, the Wolf of Kabul, Dixon Hawke. If only I had kept them. But, like all my contemporaries, we swapped issues all the time and the *Magnets*, the only ones I did keep, went missing during a house move. But every cloud...

I have spent years of pleasurable hunting-down and collecting my favourite reading of those days. My shelves now groan under the weight of the first sixty *Magnet* reprints (three cheers for Howard Baker), a couple of hundred *Schoolboys' Own Library* issues, some *Sexton Blakes*, a number of Murray Roberts's Captain Justice stories, all the Nomad and Romany Books and (when the price has been right) some first editions of the Cassell and Skilton Bunter books, a few Biggles, stories by Percy F. and John Westerman, certain titles by Ballantyne, Marryat, Henry Williamson and BB and so we go on. As all collectors know, the joy of rediscovering an old favourite cannot be matched and the excitement of the chase never wanes. And one thing always leads to another. I now collect *Collectors' Digests*. It's incurable. I'm happy to say!

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RAY MOORE WRITES:

Congratulations on another most interesting edition of the *CD* (September 2001). From Bob Whiter's piece on C.H. Chapman through to Bill Bradford's piece on 'Boy's Cinema' it was all entertaining and informative stuff.

In response to Derek Marsden's very well reasoned letter concerning the cancellation of the *Skipper* I must admit that the only reason I used 'Hotspur' as a comparison was because of the school story link between 'Skipper's most popular character Mustard Smith and *Hotspur's* fully formed educational establishment Red Circle School. Had *Skipper's* mainstay been a jungle hero I would probably have used *Rover's* Morgyn the Mighty or *Adventure's* Strang the Terrible for comparison in much the same way. I certainly wasn't intending to imply that the *Hotspur*, on the principle of 'last in, first out', was the natural candidate to have been battling it out for survival with *Skipper* for, as Derek eruditely points out, this was hardly likely to have been the case.

I also really enjoyed Margery Wood's survey of the *School Friend* annual as it helped to fill out my knowledge of one of the best of the girl's papers. One thing I can add is that in her article Margery makes mention of the 'ballerina' front endpaper of the 1957 annual and said how well it was drawn. This was the work of an artist named Selby Donnison who also drew most of the Terry Brent detective stories in the *School Friend* during the 1950's and then went on to draw most of the Sandy Dean school strips in 'Lion' (1959-1965).

Similarly Dawn Marler's piece was of immense interest as it concerned itself with that mainstay of a good public school, the secret society, preferrably the robed and cowled variety. I must admit that the Amalgamated Press seemed to have had the edge on D.C. Thomson in this regard as the latter didn't have two many secret societies roaming the midnight corridors of its halls of learning, certainly not in their boy's papers at least. Although, that being said 'The Hooded Class at Ironmoor' and its sequel 'Master of the Hooded Class' in the *Hotspur* in 1934/1935 do spring to mind in the story paper era as does the picture strip version of the former in the *Hotspur* picture paper in 1969, and the *Dandy's* 'schoolboy wangler' Winker Watson's did have a year long run in with 'The Hooded Terrors' in 1978/1979.

One final point with regard to Alan Pratt's piece on Frank S. Pepper and 'The Two-faced Skipper of the Roarers'. Frank S. Pepper died, aged 78, on 13th Dec 1988.

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ALISTAIR YOUNG WRITES:

The admiration that Bob Cherry has for Marjorie Hazeldene is well known. Less well known is the feeling Frank Nugent has for Barbara Redfern. The attached poem, however, proves this to be the case.

It is surprising that neither Frank nor Hilda Richards was aware of this important circumstance!

GREYFRIARS CELEBRITIES.

In this weekly feature our versatile rhymester gives you pen portraits of the leading lights at Greyfriars.

This week: FRANK NUGENT.

WHEN Wharton first to Greyfriars came,
And things looked none too happy,
He met a fellow, Frank by name,
A very decent chappie.
These two became, without delay,
Great pals, beyond the ordinary,
And they are still, right to this day,
Which really is extraordinary.

Frank Nugent is a handsome lad.
In fact, he's almost pretty;
"A 'y' to lad you simply add,"
Said someone, sharply witty.
But though his looks are rather sweet,
Our Frank is not a dandy;
He never fails to find his feet,
And proves himself quite "handy."

At cricket and at footer, too,
He's full of bold defiance;
Though hardly up to, it is true,
The standard of the giants.
In all the matches you will see
Him waiting, keen and ready;
There's better chaps, and worse, than he,
But Nugent's sure and steady.

Which shows, that of the Famous Five,
Our Frank is not the beacon;
But he is very much alive
When lesser chappies weaken.
An all-round sportsman, Nugent plays
As straight a game as any;
And this, indeed, is higher praise
Than we can give to many.

Our noble Frank, I'll have you know,
Has other splendid qualities;
He'll help you in a time of woe,
Or join in all frivolities.
He has an ever-ready hand
Stretched out for friendly giving;
Affectionate and generous, and,
What's more, he's quite forgiving.

Let's yell and yell until we're hoarse
With rising jocularity,
To praise the Famous Five, of course,
And swell their popularity.
And while our voices boom away,
Let one and all remember,
Frank Nugent is, in every way,
A really worthy member!

Babs Redfern we know has beauty and charm
With a nature showing both courage and calm,
Frank Nugent thought of her as supreme
She was the star of his every dream

One day when he was near to the shore,
He wanted to see her more and more.
He thought to go up the cliffside lane,
And have a chance to see her again.

Down the lane came two laughing girls,
Marjorie sticking a feather into Clara's fair curls.
Frank stuttered a greeting, words in a rush,
He felt himself hotter, his face in a blush.

The girls smiled as they saw whom they'd met,
Clara said she knew Babs was his darling pet.
Marjorie asked if he intended to wed her,
At which Frank felt his face getting redder.

Said the two girls, "Babs is indoors, we'd better
"Go back up the hill, we will go to get her."
Frank mumbled his thanks, said he would wait,
Sitting himself down astride a farmer's gate.

The girls turned round to go back up the hill,
Nearly back to the school, a voice that was shrill
Assailed their ears, a voice just like chalk,
T'was Bessie Bunter with whom they had a talk.

Meanwhile Frank waited for Barbara to come,
He waited not long when he was struck dumb,
As a fat waddling creature shouted out loud,
He got off the gate, joy turning to cloud.

The horrid fat Bessie threw her arms round poor Frank,
He suspected this was, from dear Clara, a prank.
For Bessie had been told his love was for her,
Which was, of course, on his feelings, a slur.

BARBARA HILDA REDFERN is her real name, and, as you are all aware, she is the captain of the Junior School at Cliff House.

Cheerful, a lover of fun, a good, all-round sportswoman, Babs combines all the qualities that make a good leader, and is one of the most popular girls in the school.

"Babs" was born at Holly Hall in Hampshire, which is still her home. Her age is fourteen years and six months. She has glossy chestnut hair, deep blue eyes and a rosy complexion. Her chief hobbies are drawing and painting, and her best friend is Mabel Lynn, who shares study No. 4 with her and Bessie Bunter.

Doris Redfern, of the Upper Third at Cliff House, is her sister. Babs also has a brother, Reggie, aged three and a half years.

The girl Babs most admires in the school is Cliff House's head girl, Dulcia Fairbrother. Her favourite mistress is, of course, Miss Valerie Charmant, of the Fourth.

The girl Babs least admires is Sarah Harrigan of the Sixth, who for long has been Babs' enemy. The mistress she likes least is Miss Bullivant.

She takes size two in shoes, having rather small feet. Her height is 4 feet 10½ inches. Her favourite colours are blue and gold, possibly because these are also Cliff House's colours, and her favourite flower the daffodil. She has no particular favourite among authors, but confesses to a weakness for Dickens and Agatha Christie. Her two favourite film stars are Joan Bennett and Robert Montgomery.

In the realm of sport Barbara has made her mark in hockey, cricket, and tennis. She is a fairly good swimmer, but not in the same class as Janet Jordan or Diana Royston-Clarke.

Barbara Redfern.

She is also quite a good actress and takes part in most of the Junior School plays and concerts. As an organiser she is brilliant.

She maintains a fairly good position in class, last term's examination placing her as No. 5.

Like Clara, she is enormously fond of all animals, and one of her proudest possessions is her golden retriever, Brutus, who has won many prizes.

Her great ambition is to be an artist, and have her pictures exhibited at the Royal Academy.

He fought her off, which took all of his strength,
He then had to hold her at his arm's length,
Explaining that he thought her a horrid old hag,
While she tried her best to hit with her bag.

At last he escaped and tore up the hill,
Where he heard young Clara's laughing bright trill.
He gave her a glare, he was tired of her jokes,
But she explained it was only a teeny wee hoax.

And straight away Babs stepped out from behind
And gave him a smile that was so sweet and kind,
He then invited her for a walk by the shore,
There to forget Bessie among pleasures in store.

* *

BILL LOFTS

Writing about Bill in the last C.D. I mentioned that I did not have any photographs of him. This situation has now, happily been remedied because both Betty Hopton and Terry Jones have sent me pictures of Bill, which are reproduced here. MARY CADOGAN

Bill Lofts (third from right) at a meeting of The South Western OBBC in 1986

Johnny Hopton Betty Hopton Bill Lofts
at the William Meeting, Chester 1988

* *

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I REMEMBER by Bill Bradford

I REMEMBER

The *Triumph* was launched by Amalgamated Press on 18.10.1924, nearly 3 years after the arrival of the *Champion*, the latter having achieved outstanding sales. The *Triumph* was the successor to the short-lived *Rocket*, although it had little in common with fame. D.C. Thomson had now become serious rivals with the advent of *Adventure Rover* and *Wizard* during 1921-1922.

The *Triumph* was priced at 2d throughout its 16 years of publication, the number of pages reduced from 28 to 20 over that period, app. size 11½"x9". The cover colour changed several times over the years but, to me, the *Triumph* essentially had an orange background and depicted an exciting scene from a story within.

My first purchase was in 1932 and I read it regularly until 1937. It was initially a great adventure story paper with few school or sports tales. During the early years it was greatly influenced by the First World War and featured many stories of fighting on land and sea and in the air. This had much appeal to my generation, whose fathers and uncles had borne arms. Although these veterans rarely related their experiences, all too anxious to forget, it was of much interest to young readers. I still remember finding a grey German forage cap in our garage. When questioned my Father merely said "I bayoneted a Boche and his cap fell at my feet so I pocketed it".

Of all the characters I followed over the years, three are outstanding in my memory. Black Cheetah, who was a Zulu chief struggling to regain his kingdom. Mad Carew, an air ace of the R.F.C. who returned years later in peace-time adventures and was resurrected in 1940 to fight the Nazis in Norway, and the third, Victor Gaunt, a British agent operating in the Khyber Pass. Both Carew and Gaunt, each created by E.R. Home-Gall, were to appear in at least 2 books (each) published by Spring Books around 1950/

The *Champion Library*, of 274 issues between 1929-1940, contained at least half of original stories from the *Triumph*.

The *Triumph Annual*, 1937-1941 is now comparatively rare. It usually featured old friends from the 'weekly ' and all were, I think priced at two shillings and nine pence, against six shillings for the *Champion Annual*, but the latter contained more reading and was printed on better quality paper.

Free gifts were regular events and I particularly recall picture cards of World War battles. This would be in 1932. Imagine my delight at finding 96 of these at a recent Book Fair, but these proved to be gifts from 1928/29 presented with the *Triumph* and *Champion*. Not having any of the later series I cannot say if this was a duplication.

In order to give you some taste of the average contents of the paper I propose reviewing copies at about 2 yearly intervals, which may revive memories for other 'oldies' of my generation.

***TRIUMPH* No. 1** - Week Ending 18.10.1924, 2d. Published every Tuesday 11½"x9". Commenced with the usual Editor's Chat, 2 cigarette cards depicting motor cars would be given weekly, for 16 weeks, and by saving coupons each week, you could obtain a free album to hold them.

'Terrier Tex Strikes The City of Thrills' by Richard Dering. Adventures in India (10 pages).

'Mascot Ted' by Rupert Hall. Tribulations of a young football fan (6 pages).

'The Million Dollar Pals' by John Ascott. Cowboys in Canada. (5 pages).
'The Mystery Nick O' Nowhere' by Dick Shaw. Life of a hotel page (5 pages).
Plus a football competition to forecast winners of 10 matches that Saturday. Also ads. for Fry's Chocolate Cream Monster Bars at 1d, and to join the Navy, if between 15½-17: the latter suggests that readers were not that young!

TRIUMPH No. 105. W/E 23.10.1926. Now 24 pages.
'The Job-Hunters Work Overtime' by John Ascott. Adventures in Mexico (8 pages).
'Buster Bang Shocks The Navy' by John Gale. Boy reporter visits the Navy (4 pages).
'A Disgrace To The Fighting Fussies' by Herbert Macrae. Army post-war (4 pages).
'Vengeance Of The Sea Hawk' by Dick Shaw. Tunisian-based pirates (4 pages).
'Football Forbidden' by John Wheway. Conspiracy on the soccer field (4 pages).
Plus free photo of international footballer. One of 26 from *Triumph/Champion.*

TRIUMPH No. 211 W/E 3.11.1928.
'Those Wide-awake Tenderfeet' by Dick Shaw. Wild West adventures (4 pages).
'The Team They Couldn't Keep Down' by Donald Dane. Sabotage in the 2nd Division (4 pages).
'K.O.Trounces The Toughs' by Victor Nelson. Thrills in the Boxing Ring (4 pages).
'Pirate Plunder' by Cecil Fanshaw. Skull and Crossbones ahoy! (4 pages).
'The Happy-Go-Lucky Hikers' by John Ascott. Fun with the non-stop walkers (4 pages).
'War Hawks O'Flanders' by Rupert Hall. World War 1 in the air. (4 pages)

***TRIUMPH* No. 311**. W/E 4.10.1930.
'The Race Without a Winner' by John Ascott. Thrills of the Turf. (4 pages).
'Dare-Devils Of The Q PATROL' by Edwin Dale. Armed steamers v U.Boats (4 pages).
'The Speedboat Trackers' by Rupert Hall. Mysteries afloat (4 pages).
'Barred From Mystery Ranch' by Cecil Fanshaw. Two pards v rustlers (4 pages),
'Simply Crazy For Cycles' by Will Gibbons. Laughter pedalling (3 pages).
'Win-Or-Smash Samson' by Jack Stirling. Thrills motor racing (5 pages).

***TRIUMPH* No. 416** W/E 8.10.1932
'Steel Face' by Pat Hayes. Restoring a rightful king, in mid-Europe (4 pages).
'Gaunt-Master Spy' by Edwin Dale. Secret Service in the Khyber Pass (4 pages)
'The Football Toreadors' by Jack Maxwell, British soccer team in S America (4½ pages).
'Young King Cole' by Douglas Dundee. Ex doorman becomes Zulu ruler (3 pages).
'Boss of the Outlawed Legion' by Cecil Fanshaw. Foreign Legion in revolt (3 pages).
'The Quick-Change Ray' by Tom Stirling. Ability to change moods and emotions (3 pages).
'Zeco and his Speedboat Submarine' by Herbert Macrae. Thrills at sea (3 pages).

***TRIUMPH* No. 521**. W/E 12.10.1934
'Spy-Catchers Silence' by Herbert Macrae. Agent behind German lines (3 pages).
'Tich-The Arizona Flyer' by Cecil Fanshaw. Horse racing out West (3 pages).
'Tec from the Jungle' by Donald Dane. Thrills with a travelling Circus (3 pages).
'Invisible Charlie' by Tom Stirling. Boy causes invisibility (3 pages).
'Geraldi' by Jack Maxwell. A fictional Garibaldi type rebel (3 pages).
'Skyway Crusoes' by Rupert Hall. Action on lonely Sahara airport (4 pages).
'Millionaire Who Vanished' by Jack Maxwell. A modern Western series (4 pages).

LONE HAND BATTLE

DOOMED TO THE DEATH BATTALION

Every Tuesday

TRIUMPH

NEW FEATURE No. 1.—THRILLING AND AMUSING—UP-TO-DATE SCHOOL YARN!

IT'S ST. JIM'S AGAIN!

THIS WEEK:
THE RIVAL SCHOOLMASTERS


GAUNT OF THE KHYBER PASS!


BLACK CHEETAH
By CECIL FANSHAW.


BOSS OF THE OUTLAWED LEGION!
By CECIL FANSHAW.

***TRIUMPH* No. 626** W/E 17.10.1936
'The One Wheel Wonder' by Donald Dane. Giant mechanised wheel v crooks (3 pages).
'Flip's Flying Flea' by Rupert Hall. Fun in a miniature aircraft (4 pages).
'Secret Agent 5' by Edwin Dale. British spy in Flanders in Great War (3 pages).
'Professor Pete' by Tom Stirling. Schoolboy inventor and his robot (3 pages).
'Fighters of Theming-Fu Menace' by Hal Wilton. Action in remote China (3 pages).
'Captain Cleek-Salvage Boss' by Douglas Dundee. On and under the oceans (3 pages).
'Lord Jim' by Frank Desmond. A touch of *Sanders of the River* (4 pages).

***TRIUMPH* No. 729** W/E 8.10.1938
'Trailed by the Terror Tong' by Rupert Hall. Footballers v Underworld (3 pages).
'The Roving Speedsters' by Tom Stirling. High speed drama on racing bikes (3 pages).
'Gangster G-Man Warren' by J. Lawson. Undercover Agent v the Mob (3 pages).
'Death Drums of the Dark River' by Jack Maxwell. Action in African lands (4 pages).
'Foes of the Forbidden Forest' by Stephen Thomson. Descendents of Spanish settlers found in S. America (3 pages).
'The Secret of the Lithping Man' by Hal Wilton. Insurance Investigator+valet (3 pages).
'Skybird Mechanics' by Peter Garnett. Adventures at an Aero Club (3 pages).

***TRIUMPH* No. 814** W/E 25.5.1940 Last issue. 20 pages
'Phantom Squadron of Offaejo Fjord' by Rupert Hall. Mad Carew in Norway (7 pages).
'Professor Nemo's Road Show'. Anon. Modern Western (3 pages).
'Superman, the Physical Marvel'. Anon. Picture story (3 pages).
'The Boys of St. Jim's'. Enough said!
'Sandu of the HIMALAYAS'. Anon. Youngster v Indian bandits (2 pages).
'Peter Farrel v King of Crime' by Hal Wilton. Detective with a valet (3 pages).

A relatively small announcement stated that the Triumph would cease publication from this issue, due to shortage of paper pulp, but that the *Champion* would continue to be published. This tells us something about current sales!

I need hardly tell most of you that although the *Gem* ended in December 1939, it was then officially incorporated with the *Triumph*, but, alas, this merely meant a two to three page story of St Jims for 5 months. I am not qualified to say whether these were original stories.

Just a few words about some of the *Triumph* authors, or rather their pen names. Rupert Hall and Edwin Dale were both E.R.Home-Gall, one of the most prolific writer of boys' stories, who also created Colwyn Dane. Pat Haynes and Jack Maxwell were Ernest L. McKeag, author of some 300 tales of Colwyn Dane. Donald Dane was D.M. Cumming-Skinner. John Ascott was J.W. Bobin, who contributed to the Sexton Blake saga/mainly as Mark Osborne, with stories of George Marston Plummer. Tom Stirling was L.E. Ransome, writer of Cliff House stories in the School Friend 1924-1929.

Most of the usual artists illustrated over the years and I cannot think of any particular one that I associate with this paper. As a lad I considered *Triumph* one of the most exciting 'weeklies'. Now looking back through the years, I still rate it highly, especially in the 1920s and until about 1935, but thereafter it deteriorated and the stories became rather light-weight and similar to many of its competitors.

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PROCESSIONS AND SUCCESSIONS
by Margery Woods

There were many of the first down the years at Cliff House. A sprinkling of older girls, some very young ones, and more around the age of fourteen---new blood for the Fourth Form, naturally, to keep the flag of conflict flying. Some crept into the great school's portals with ill-concealed fear, some timidly, some shyly, others boldly or defiantly, and some slyly, with dark motivations already working cunningly behind the outer facade of brand new uniforms in Cliff House's distinctive colours.

The succession tended to be much sparser. Service staff changed occasionally, new Maids came and went, some of whom might affect the life and happiness of a particular pupil until finally unmasked, and the smallest group of all consisted of new teaching staff. Occasionally a tyrannical dark star would explode over the school, shedding fear, even danger, over the hapless pupils---although the Fourth were not exactly hapless once Barbara Redfern , the lover of justice, got to work and those of lesser qualms, like Clara Trevlyn, Diana Royston-Clarke and Rosa Rodworth decided to rebel.

The Fourth Form's first mistress in our time was Miss Bellew, installed by Frank Richards in the days of the MAGNET and retained by him when he wrote the introductory stories of Cliff House for the launch of the new story paper SCHOOL FRIEND in 1919. She was described as a kind-hearted woman, though inclined to sarcasm at the expense of her pupils. She took her form in English, History, Needlework and Nature Study. She was very just, and had wavy golden-brown hair and brown eyes.

She was succeeded by Miss Steel. She was a much sterner proposition than her predecessor. Doubtless she felt it necessary to match up to her name.

Bessie---as indiscriminating a borrower of other people's possessions as her brother Billy---once borrowed Miss Steel's mack and umbrella before venturing out on a stormy day to collect a birthday present for Miss Steel. Bessie was not clever at managing umbrellas in a gale and Miss Steel's umbrella, a new one, ended up inside out crowning the top of a telegraph pole.

Miss Steel was not pleased. But her brother had just arrived, a gentle man, with disappointing news. Their mother had lost her memory several years previously after a serious illness and had walked out one day and simply disappeared. Every so often they follow up reports of someone who could he the missing woman, only to be disappointed yet again.

Despite Miss Steel's stern manner Babs did not wish their teacher's birthday to go unrecognised and had actually been to collect a specially embroidered sachet from an elderly lady in the village who was noted for her beautiful handiwork. It had not been quite finished and the lady had offered to bring it up to the school. Hence the walk through the stormy afternoon and Bessie's problems with the umbrella.

Meanwhile, the unkind practical jokers of the Fourth had got at the little heap of birthday gifts on Miss Steel's desk. Needless to say Marcia Loftus was responsible, and Miss Steel was distressed as well as angry. Then the old lady arrived with the belated gift Babs had ordered, and of course the long arm of coincidence reached out and the old lady, whose memory was still unsteady, proved to be Miss Steel's mother. There was such heartfelt joy, and Babs was shown an old faded piece of embroidery bearing an identical pattern done by Miss Steel's mother, which she had treasured for years. Babs and Clara made it their main job of importance to track down the joker and deal with her; Miss Steel also discovered the truth and Marcia was punished. It was a while before she got up to any more of her spiteful mischief. Miss Steel's steely facade crumbled through this and a celebration tea was held. Babs' thoughtfulness for others had brought great happiness yet again.

The Fourth Formers were really quite fortunate in the succession of mistresses whose misfortune it was to endeavour to improve and extend their educational knowledge down the Cliff House years.

Besides their own form mistress other teachers attempted to impart other studies that were part of the curriculum. One of these was music, song and dance, taught by a Miss Chantrey who was very popular with the girls. She was bright and modern in outlook and rode a motorbike with sidecar in which she would give girls a lift if she encountered them in the area. Then in this three part series strange things began to happen and there were complaints that Miss Chantrey had almost knocked down Gwen Cook, then an old lady in the village and run over Doris Redfern's pet dog. Then a stranger appeared, a girl called Jessica Chantrey who claimed to be Miss Chantrey's cousin. She seemed diffident and charming but the girls overheard a heated exchange between the cousins with Miss Chantrey stating that not another penny would she give Jessica. Certainly it is difficult to understand the change in mood by the usually pleasant teacher whenever Jessica decides to drop in on the classes. And the claims about the reckless driving of Miss Chantrey are disturbing. Only Babs the perceptive wonders if the helmeted rider is actually the teacher. But the glimpsed number plates all tally as she tears along the lanes.

Meanwhile the inevitable concert is being rehearsed to take part in a charity show at Courtfield. By now the girls have split into the "fors" and "againsts" Miss Chantrey and disaster strikes as Babs and the performers are held up on the way to the theatre, only to arrive as their rivals (who have been rehearsing with Jessica) have usurped the spot in the programme.

By now Babs is very suspicious of Jessica and determined to discover the truth. But there is much conflict and trouble before Babs succeeds. Miss Chantrey is arrested and charged with reckless driving. She is suspended from her teaching post pending her court case, and Jessica is appointed to take her place. Fortunately another interest has been running concurrently with the musical activities and Mabs believes one of the snaps she has taken is rather interesting, showing Miss Chantrey's motorcycle without its number plate. While she hurriedly sets to work reprinting, the photo and film are destroyed---by

Jessica. Then another camera enthusiast believes she has the same scene caught by her camera. Babs and Co make sure that Jessica doesn't get her hands on this camera and, when the film is developed sure enough one of the prints shows Jessica changing the number plates on Miss Chantrey's bike. So the mistress is cleared and her job restored. Jessica's diffidence and charm have proved to be the mask Babs has suspected. Always determined to be someone special but without the real talent and willingness to work hard to achieve success, Jessica has always been jealous of her cousin and decides she'll have her job somehow. Thanks to Babs and the chums she fails.

A similar ill-natured scheme threatened Miss Jane Matthews, the next mistress to take over from Miss Steel.

Miss Matthews, affectionately known as Janey, is described as being in her early twenties, attractive, with chestnut hair and flawless skin and has come from Marsden School. So also have Gillian and a third former just come into the Fourth called Winnie Mimms. Winnie is a horror, and thick as thieves with Helen Stone, another trouble-maker, and loses no time in betraying Gillian's secret, that she had left Marsden under suspicion of being a thief. Babs befriends the likable Gillian, who swears she was innocent, while Helen and Winnie attempt to discredit Miss Matthews, threatening to tell Miss Primrose that she has hidden this knowledge about the new girl, who should never have been accepted at Cliff House. Miss Matthews has attempted to keep Gillian's trouble secret because she believes her innocent but of course her silence could reflect on her new appointment to the Cliff House teaching staff.

The same old plot, readers may think, but try thinking up an entirely new one not inspired by the basics of all fictional plots; jealousy, greed, spite, or the pursuit of power. It's the way the old favourite plots are dressed up, characterised and told that put the same old story over, and the A.P. team were all pretty good at that.

But of course the chums sort everything out and the unpleasant Winnie proves to have been the real thief, and Helen Stone comes out of it all very badly. Why do the baddies never get expelled while the goodies are pitched out the first time they put a foot wrong---or are framed? Incidentally, at this time, during the run of the SCHOOL FRIEND, Barbara is described having her hair bobbed in the new fashionable Dutch Crop, like her favourite film star, and she seems to have had a sudden change of hair colour from her usual chestnut brown to a glossy blue-black!

Miss Matthews' worst time was to come later when Cliff House was revived in THE SCHOOLGIRL and she was threatened with blindness. Fortunately her sight was saved and eventually she departed to become head of another school.

This led to the arrival of another great favourite of the chums; the much loved Valerie Charmant. (Similar ring of name to the earlier Miss Chantrey.)

Valerie Charmant also had enemies. The powerful series featuring her cousin, Shaw Dennis, has been documented in earlier issues of the C.D. The author, John Wheway, arguably broke new ground to introduce a drama based on the sheer evil malevolence of a man against a woman. But, after much heartbreak, the defiant effort of the girls (Rosa

Rodworth in particular, and Jemima Carstairs) Shaw Dennis' rule of tyranny was broken and Miss Charmant was restored to her rightful place. She also suffered in another series at the hands of girl from Canada, supposedly a sister but an impostor, until the genuine sister was found and arrests were made: again, the money motive was behind it all.

Only two more principal stalwarts of academia remain: the august head of Cliff House, and the redoubtable Miss Bullivant. Both were created and introduced by Frank Richards in the early days of the MAGNET. He outlined the Bull as a very tough, masculine female, to the point where she became a figure of fun---see the very first story in the first issue of SCHOOL FRIEND in 1919. Many of these characteristics remained all the way through the run of SCHOOL FRIEND, but it must be remembered that the time of the character's inception, circa 1908-9, coincided with the rise of the suffragettes' campaign for the vote and women's rights. Miss Bullivant would have made an excellent and indomitable leader of the cause over the years needed to achieve their aims. Only the strongest women could survive the opposition ranged against them and many became figures of fun.

Miss Primrose was not so sharply drawn, a bit prissy-spinster at times but strong enough to cause the Greyfriars masters to tread warily, especially as she was a friend of Dr. Locke. It was not until later when Cliff House came into its own in the SCHOOL FRIEND that the full cast of mistresses became established. Miss Primrose and the Bull then settled in as what might be termed hardy perennials, so completely drawn that it becomes superfluity to add anything further. Except for one aspect in the presentation.

After SCHOOL FRIEND was established and Frank Richards was returned to concentrate on the boys' schools' Cliff House was penned for a while by Horace Phillips, creator of Morcove, then by Reg Kirkham and L.E. Ransome, both of whom were strong on comedy, perhaps even more than drama. There were then some very humorous episodes in which Miss Bullivant featured. A camping holiday in particular. The disgust of the girls when they discovered that she was to join them can scarcely be comprehended. The girls were much addicted to ragging in those days and fun of the girls-will-be-boys variety still coloured much of the writing as the transition of the style written for boys about boys---and enjoyed by their sisters---settled down to stories about girls in the first storypaper especially tailored to girls' tastes. But when SCHOOL FRIEND was remodelled as THE SCHOOLGIRL and Cliff House was revived in the very early thirties, there was a change of style in the depiction of the mistresses. They were allowed to become more human and to have problems and traumas in their personal lives, as did the rest of the population. Wheway was responsible for this trend and perhaps his greatest study was that of Miss Bullivant becoming a victim of moral blackmail by a schoolgirl, and another schoolgirl being the instrument of resolving near tragedy in her life as well as that of her brother. It took quite a bit of author-skill to put over the picture of the near-tyrannical Bull colluding with her own pupils in secreting and supplying food to her brother, an escapee from prison, until the efforts of Babs brought an end to the need for collusion.

Afterwards, the Bull reverted to her usual stern, unbending self but she did not forget what she owed to Barbara Redfern who had played so important a part in establishing the innocence of Grant, so wrongfully imprisoned for another man's misdeeds. The insights and the past events that had made the character what she was were skilfully drawn and showed that despite her strength and belligerence she was as much a victim of circumstances as any of her pupils.

Cliff House also suffered several tyrants when Miss Primrose was either ill or called away for some reason. These episodes served to make the girls appreciate the true worth of their headmistress. No school could have wished for better.

Sadly the procession and the succession have ended and the doors of Cliff House almost closed---but not completely, as long as the spirits and laughter of all those great characters live in our memories. Long may they do so.

STORIES QUOTED IN THIS ARTICLE

Miss Steel		
The Best Gift of All (author not known)		SCHOOL FRIEND 269 1st series.
Miss Chantrey		
The Mystery of Miss Chantrey		
The Fourth Form Ballet	)	(author not traced)
The Secret of the Snapshot.	)	SCHOOL FRIEND 134 to 136 1st series.
Miss Matthews		
Because She Feared Exposure	)	by E.L. Ransome
Not Wanted at Cliff House	)	SCHOOLFRIEND 131, 132, 133
On The Brink of Expulsion	)	2nd series
Miss Bullivant		
Babs' New Term Task	)	by J. Wheway
With Babs and Co To Aid Her	)	SCHOOLGIRL 216, 217, 218
Babs Must Find a Way	)	
Miss Charmant		
Her Feud Against Her Sister	)	
Forced To Defend a Thief	)	by J. Wheway
The Sister She Could Not Claim	)	SCHOOLGIRL 268, 269, 270, 271
Celia Charmant's Secret	)	
Miss Charmant		
New Rule at Cliff House	)	
When the Form Rebelled	)	by J. Wheway
Rosa Rodworth's Bargain	)	SCHOOLGIRL 293, 294, 295, 296, 297
Their peril on Belwin Island	)	
When Bessie Bunter Blundered	)	

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THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME
The History of the Picture Strip in D.F. Thomson's 'Big Five'
Part 5 - Adventure - A Preamble 1921-1946 by Ray Moore

Launched on Sept 17th 1921 'Adventure' was D.C. Thomson's pioneer boy's story paper and, in time, would become the big brother of the publisher's renowned 'Big Five'. The eldest but never quite the favourite son and, regardless of its own enthusiastic dalliance with the genre, curiously the one, save war-time casualty 'Skipper', that bequeathed the least to the boy's picture strip titles that were to follow in terms of characters and storylines.

'Adventure's' first editor was the gifted sports writer **David Grimmond** who was drafted in from the firm's sports paper 'The Sporting Post' from whence he arrived with ace detective Dixon Hawke in tow. Hawke having first appeared in 'The Sporting Post's' earlier incarnation 'The Saturday Post' in April 1912 in a case titled 'The Great Hotel Mystery'.

David Grimmond (1889-1972) was, himself, quite a remarkable man, possessed of both tremendous energy and good humour garnered in equal measure from his own not inconsiderable sporting prowess and the deep religious faith that was the mainstay of his life. A faith that saw him, four years after his retirement in 1960, and after having served 52 years in various editorial and journalistic posts at Thomsons, became an ordained priest in the Scottish Episcopal Church.

As it turned out **David Grimmond** remained in charge of 'Adventure' for only eight years, a mere gnat-bite by Thomson boy's paper editorial standards, until, in 1929, his editorial career took an entirely different direction when he accepted the same position on Thomson's magazine-cum-newspaper 'The Topical Times'. His replacement at the helm of 'Adventure' being his chief sub on the paper since its inception **Stuart Gilchrist,** he in turn then editing the paper for the next twenty years, most tellingly being in charge during the war-torn 1940s.

As was the case in untold numbers of offices and factories across the length and breadth of Britain in the early months of World War II the D.C. Thomson editorial dept in Dundee saw itself sorely depleted of those younger members of staff who felt constrained to leave their desks and do their bit.

Consequently this loss of staff meant that, for the duration of the war, some editorial posts at Thomson's were simply shoe-horned together and so it was that 'Adventure' editor **Stuart Gilchrist** also became editor of 'The Beano' in 1940. His initial workload on the two papers was somewhat eased by their tumbling page counts thanks to the war-time paper shortages and ultimately, in 1941, by the introduction of the fortnightly publishing schedules that saw 'Adventure' published one week and 'The Beano' the next.

This editorial duality makes it interesting to speculate how much **Stuart Gilchrist's** editorship of 'Adventure' coloured his 'accidental' editorship of 'The Beano' in those war years and indeed how much his editorship of 'The Beano' influenced his editorial decisions on 'Adventure' during the war and after.

For example **Stuart Gilchrist** and his former boss **David Grimmond** had both been early champions of the work of **Dudley Watkins** with the artist's first work for Thomson's having actually appeared in 'Adventure' in 1925. The editorial pair, suitably impressed, then using the artist's burgeoning talent extensively from that point on, not only in the


GRAND NEW BOXING STORY INSIDE!
No.1148
DEC. 15
1945
2D
ADVENTURE
XMAS EXTRAS!
In the Christmas of 1899 the Boers shelled the British - with Christmas puddings in the shells.
There was once a snowball fight at Hong Kong where snow had never fallen before. The snow came from a ship's refrigerator.
In the middle ages Christmas was also bath day, because the monks were only allowed a bath twice a year - at Xmas and Easter!
After being boiled for three days and nights a 900 lb Xmas pudding was still uncooked in the centre.
People used to think it was unlucky to whistle on Christmas day.
One Xmas a man was arrested for throwing red-hot coins to carol-singers.
At Xmas in Albania you can appoint someone else to eat for you if you've had enough.

pages of 'Adventure' but also in the pages of 'Topical Times' which **David Grimmond** edited throughout the 1930s.

This being the case it certainly comes as no surprise to find **Watkins** being given a large catalogue of work for 'The Beano' throughout **Stuart Gilchrist's** tenure as editor and in particular his first attempts at what would become one of his specialities, the adventure strip. Some of the strips in question, and most notably, 'The Shipwrecked Circus' and 'Strang the Terrible' both owe their origins to prose story serials in 'Adventure' in 1928 and 1936 respectively.

Within months of becoming editor of 'The Beano' **Stuart Gilchrist** had abandoned the traditional single picture cover on his other editorial charge 'Adventure' in favour of a front cover feature page, the first of which 'Would You Believe It?' [No 992 (2/11/40)] was drawn by **Jimmy** 'Korky the Cat' **Crighton.** These comically informative feature covers then remaining 'Adventure's' banner-head regulars until 'Sleepyheads and Balmy Beds' in Aug 1946 [No 1166 (24/8/46)].

The artwork for these feature covers was farmed out as usual amongst the available staff illustrators, and artists such as **Jack Gordon** and **Jack Glass** did their fair share but, if available, for the most part they were the work of another of **Stuart Gilchrist's** favourite artists **Jack Prout,** the editor also having taken to using **Prout** as frequently as he was able in the pages of 'The Beano' too. All things considered, it is quite likely therefore that **Stuart Gilchrist** would have been happy to continue with the feature covers on 'Adventure' had not **Jack Prout** been whisked away for what were then considered, and indeed proved to be, more important duties.

Since November 1944 **Jack Prout** had been drawing the heading block spot illustrations to accompany the 'Black Bob' stories in 'The Dandy' and in the summer of 1946 it was decided that the prose adventures of the 'Dandy Wonder Dog' thus far expounded in that paper would make a rather nice basis for a half page picture strip in yet another of Thomson's tabloid magazine-cum-newspapers 'The Weekly News' and, despite having very limited experience with the form, **Jack Prout** was given the job of illustrating these picture strip adventures too.

In fact up till this point the only picture strip that **Jack Prout** had contributed to was the first series of 'The Shipwrecked Circus' in 'The Beano', under the guidance of **Stuart Gilchrist,** which he had taken over from **Dudley Watkins** for the closing episodes in 1943 [Nos 213-221]. And, meticulous illustrator though he was, **Jack Prout's** single failing as an adventure strip artist turned out to be one of speed, or rather his lack of it and, as a result of this and his new commitment for 'The Weekly News', this meant that he couldn't carry on providing the artwork for the feature covers on 'Adventure'.

The loss of his favourite feature artist thus left **Stuart Gilchrist** with three choices, he could continue the feature covers with a different artist or artists, he could revert back to the single picture covers of the pre war years or he could try something new, maybe something that he'd learnt in his six years as stand-in editor on 'The Beano'. His tenure in charge of the comic had just ended with the return of the original 'Beano' editor **George Moonie** after six years service with the Royal Marines.

In the end **Stuart Gilchrist's** solution was to go with the last of these three choices and so it was that, excepting a single picture strip series on the rear cover of the pre war pages of 'The Skipper', [See CD No 650] 'Adventure' became the first of the Thomson boy's story papers to run a regular picture strip and, not only that, to give it pride of place

on the front page. 'The Human Eagles' [1167-1178] when it appeared starting a trend that would, amongst other things, literally change the face of 'Adventure' for the rest of its publishing life and, although it may have been a long time coming, herald the beginning of the end for the Thomson boy's story papers.

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THE LIVING IMAGE

by

DEREK HINRICH

I have never seen any of the silent films of the adventures of Sexton Blake, though I have seen portraits of some of the actors who portrayed him and I believe that some of Mr Langhorne Burton's performances used to be available for screening on 8mm home projectors but no-one I have known has had them. I have, however, seen the interpretations of all three actors who have played the part since the advent of the sound film.

Of the three, I suppose Geoffrey Toone most closely resembled the portrait of the Blake of his day, if only because pen and ink sketches of him replaced the earlier "official portrait" of the "new look" Blake on the inside covers of the Sexton Blake Library issues of the 3rd or, if you prefer, 4th series after the release of *Murder at Site Three* based on W Howard Baker's *Crime is My Business* (SBL3/408). Unfortunately it is over forty years since I saw this film and I recall little, if anything, of it. I wish some TV channel from which I might record it, would put it on one day, even if only in the small hours of the morning!

The earliest of the three to play Blake, George Curzon, did so three times. One of these, *Sexton Blake and the Hooded Terror*, based on "Pierre Quiroule's" *Mystery of No 13 Caversham Square* (SBL2/569) has been shown on Channel 4 several times and is preserved in the National Film Archive. Curzon's Blake is brisk, alert, and dapper. He gives an accomplished performance but he does not closely resemble Eric Parker's definitive portraits of the Blake of the Golden Age. The film is a jolly little thriller with Blake engaged in a desperate, non-stop, no holds barred struggle with an international criminal conspiracy called the Black Quorum, led by a mysterious arch- villain called the Snake. The actor cast as Tinker is saddled with some rather excruciating "humour" in that curious tradition of "B" pictures, that a detective's assistant must be a bonehead to inject a little light relief into the story. Quiroule's tale is modified to enlarge the villain's part (he only appears briefly in the latter part of the novel) to give Tod Slaughter something to get his teeth into. There is not much mystery about the identity of the master criminal (well with Tod Slaughter in the cast who do you think it's likely to be?), and there is one rather inconsequential scene where the villain and his henchmen sit round a table talking for some before putting on their hoods *a là* Ku Klux Klan. The sequence in the gambling room is, however, ingenious and reminiscent of some of the bizarre touches in the later television series, *The Avengers*.

As the story is adapted from a novel by Pierre Quiroule, it is inevitable that Granite Grant, the King's Spy, should appear in it. So he does, in the person of David Farrar in his first screen role and if Tod Slaughter's part is written up, so the King's Spy's is written

down and he does not reappear, as in the book, after the first desperate moments. Never mind, for Farrar's turn was to come.

In 1944 and 1945 Farrar played Sexton Blake in his first two starring roles in a pair of films, *Meet Sexton Blake* and *The Echo Murders*. Like Blake's previous appearances, these were second features.

Now none of the films I have mentioned is available on video release in this country but oddly enough these two - it must be said - fairly obscure films have been released on tape in the USA, and I have been fortunate enough to view them on my current recorder which seems to be able to play American tapes reasonably.

Before watching them I consulted David Quinlan's *British Sound Films The Studio Years 1928-1950.* From this I learnt that *Meet Sexton Blake* and *The Echo Murders* were "from characters by Harry Blyth", which seemed to be going back a bit! I knew that the *Sexton Blake Index* identified *The Echo Murders* as being taken from *The Terror of Tregarwith* by John Silvester (SBL 3/47) but no attribution was given in the *Index* for *The Echo Murders*. Then I saw in Quinlan that the cast of characters included Superintendent Vernier, so I realised that the film must be taken from something by Anthony Parsons. I soon found that it was based on *The Mystery of the Free Frenchman* (SBL 2/741). The film follows the book fairly closely with the exception that one of the subsidiary villains is an agent of the OGPU, an earlier name for the KGB (though I'm not sure that this was the one in use in 1941: the initials, and whatever they stood for, changed several times over the years). As the Soviet Union was our gallant ally by the time the film was made, aspersions of this type could not be countenanced. The plot was a murky business (so was the film, quite literally, for the first ten minutes or so, which took place at night by the Thames in the black-out in London during an air-raid) involving dealing and double-dealing and enemy agents after the formula for a new alloy to be used in aircraft construction, and the machinations of that stand-by of the British thriller in the inter war years, the international arms magnate (shades of Sir Basil Zaharoff!) making a rather late in the day appearance in such a story: there were far more real and potent villains abroad.. One puzzle I found in the book was that several of the characters flew direct from Switzerland to London in 1941. Would the Luftwaffe have allowed this?

The *Echo Murders* also adhered closely to its original, *The Terror of Tregarwith*, with one extraordinary exception. The character of Tinker, who has a substantial part to play in the book, is entirely omitted from the adaptation! Not quite Hamlet without the prince, perhaps, but certainly a loss. The novel was concerned with a fiendish plot by German spies and fifth columnists to establish a secret advanced base or beach-head, for a German invasion of this country using a Cornish tin mine whose workings connected with sea-caves, but first they have to close the tin mine down and much dirty work is necessary to achieve that first step. There is also a convoluted melodramatic subplot concerned with blackmail, a forced marriage, and the ownership of the mine itself. The reader certainly got full value for his seven pence halfpenny in 1941.

Both films were strenuous spy thrillers with rather florid plots and a reasonable competence for the first half of the old-fashioned weekly double-billed programme of the 'Forties, with casts drawn from the staple list of character actors and actresses that regularly provided the support in British films of the time. They were both directed by John Harlow, who was responsible for a number of enjoyable but unmemorable melodramas in that decade.

David Farrar made a very acceptable Blake, rather more virile than either of the other two and I think he would almost certainly be my choice of the three for the most suitable personification of Our Hero, though I would like to have another look at Geoffrey Toone before giving a final opinion on that point. Toone must have been the oldest of the three when he played the part: *Murder at Site Three* was made in 1958 and I remember him as an army or territorial officer in the 1939 film version of Guy Dumaurier's hoary old war-scare play about an invasion of Britain, *An Englishman's Home.*

Farrar, however, was thirty-six at the time, just the right age by a consensus of the Golden Age authors and his features were suitably aquiline in the manner approved by Parker, whose portraits he closely resembled (though his hair was a shade wavy). He wore a polka-dot dressing gown, however, which looked rather more Noel Coward than Baker Street, and he tended to smoke a Ropp cherrywood pipe, which is rather more Holmes (who smoked clays, briars, and cherrywoods at different times - when he was not indulging in cigars and cigarettes) than Blake (who remained steadily faithful to briars - when he was not indulging in cigars and cigarettes). How heroically these heroes smoked in days gone by!

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COMICS, STORYPAPERS, THE MAGNET AND ME
by Eric Baines

I discovered the Magnet at the age of ten when the daughter of a friend of my father's gave the copy dated 2nd July 1932, the second story in the Green Satchel series. I did not read the first story until much later.

I immediately became hooked (as we would not have said in those days) and had it delivered every Saturday until May 1940 when the newsagent gave me the news that it had ceased to be published.

I had been a keen reader from the time I learned to read at home using a large Alphabet book and Chicks' Own. In due course I moved on to Chips, Comic Cuts, Rainbow, Bubbles and My Favourite. Reading led me to other interests such as the story of Robin Hood when I came across it in the Bubbles picture strip.

At the age of 8 I discovered the Thomson 4: Adventure, Wizard, Rover and Skipper. (No Hotspur then). Our small gang of 4 or 5 boys pooled our pennies and bought all 4 each week and swapped them around thus getting eight pennyworths for tuppence each. We referred to those story papers as 'books' to distinguish them from comics, unlike some journalists who appear to think all papers for children are comics.

We thrilled to adventures of the Electric Shadow, the Black Sapper and Dixon Hawke and his assistant Tommy Burke and the Wolf of Kabul with Chung and Clicky-ba. While continuing to read the Thomson papers through the early and middle Thirties, I seldom bought any of them, mainly acquiring through 'swaps'. I recall a couple of series called Britain Invaded and Britain at Bay in, I believe, the Rover. The invaders were referred to as Mongols and Chans, although they were clearly Chinese and Japanese. Another story in one of the Thomson papers was about an Inca with some kind of giant burning glass but I do not recall any details.

The Magnet remained my favourite 'book' and had the approval of my Father who recalled reading it before the Great War. Harry Wharton, with whom he shared a Christian name, was his favourite character. He also remembered reading about a trio called Jack, Sam and Pete as well as Sexton Blake. As the Sexton Blake Library was still going strong I decided to try it and bought about one a month which I was able to exchange with a friend for his copy. Occasionally I took the Schoolboys Own Library but preferred to spend 4d when I had spare cash on the Sexton Blakes. I encountered Nelson Lee and Nipper, Handforth and Co. in the Schoolboys Own Library but never read enough of them to become really interested. In recent years by acquiring some Lees at Book Fairs and from Colin Crewe, I have found them in their own way as good as Hamilton's characters and Edwy Searles Brookes certainly had a way with a story.

Sexton Blake was not the first detective I read about. The English Master being called away, the head came in, distributed copies of the Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, told us to read and keep quiet.

I was enthralled as were the others and the only sounds that were made were by turning pages. Crime stories have remained favourites. The first Sexton Blake had George Marsdon Plummer and Vali Mata-Vali as Blake's opponents. Later I read, Sexton Blake versus Raffles which led me to Hornung's original Raffles Books. I came across the Saint in the Thriller and subsequently read all Charteris pre-war books. During the war I came across Dashiel Hammett's hard-boiled thrillers and Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlow. However, I never lost interest in Sexton Blake, and particularly liked G.H. Teed and Gwyn Evans.

Following the green Satchel series, I enjoyed the Egyptian series. After the Egypt series, I rebelled with Harry Wharton, cruised with Bunter and spent Christmases at Wharton Lodge. I particularly liked Bunter and the Mystery of Wharton Lodge, and Lord Bunter of Raynham Castle. I thought the Texax series rather odd; the action and advent of the Rio Kid totally anachronistic. Such a character belonged to the 19th Century.

Never having heard of the first South Seas Soames series and having no memories of it to compare with the 1938 series, I found that enjoyable. I also liked the Water Lily series. I did not care for the Lamb series and felt it went on for too long. That an alleged first class private detective should spend many weeks pursuing one burglar, and in war time, when there would be many other cases to work on, did not make much sense. It made Locke appear to be thoroughly incompetent, especially as the Bounder cracked the case in the end. I remember saying to my brother that they should have called Sexton Blake.

I thought the abrupt ending of the Magnet was rather odd. The Thomson papers kept going---it would not have been due to a sudden shortage of newsprint.

I think the Magnet was losing readers and they decided to cut their losses.

A feature of the 30s was the large number of annuals on sale at Christmas; each with a distinctive cover and character, unlike the not very inspiring ones of the post-war years. Where I lived in the Colne Valley of Yorkshire, the Coops displayed annuals in the drapers' shop windows, and we used to go along when they made their appearance and look them over. It was after I started taking the Magnet that I looked for the Holiday Annual. At 6 shillings it was more expensive than the annuals I had had at previous Christmases. I was fascinated by the large size and cost of the Chums annual which was

12/6d. They made a fine colourful display and remained a feature of Christmases until the war. I went to have a nostalgic look when on my first peacetime leave in 1945 but annuals were no longer there.

By 1933 I persuaded my father that the Holiday Annual, now reduced to 5/-, was good value, and so from then until 1930, it was the present I most looked forward to. My brother was content with one of the Thomson annuals---he never cared for school stories.

From about the time of the Stacey series I began to save my Magnets and kept them in a box in my room for re-reading at intervals.

A keen cinema-goer, I bought Boy's Cinema whenever it featured films I had particularly enjoyed, they were mainly adventure films: Bill Bradford's article in September C.D. struck a chord: I too recall Sanders of the River, Lives of a Bengal Lancer, G. Men, China seas A Tale of Two Cities, Last of the Mohicans and Beau Geste. Some of these films led me to read the books on which they were based. So I came to read all Edgar Wallace's Sanders books, P.C Wren's foreign legion books, and Fenimore Cooper's leatherstocking tales. Dickens I read at school: along with a Tale of Two Cities, I got through David Copperfield, Great Expectations, Nicholas Nickleby, A Christmas Carol and Oliver Twist.

A favourite book at 7 years, was the first hard back, proper book I ever read; an old Sunday School prize of my father's called "Under Wolfe's Flag". This disappeared during a house move, and I have unavailingly sought a copy for years.

I encountered William in the pages of my grandmothers 'Happy Mag' and acquired William books whenever someone would buy me one.

I saved all the books I ever acquired, and kept them in my box and bookcase. In addition to the ones already mentioned were some Saint books, some P.G Wodehouse books, including some 3 or 4 dust jacketed first editions (now apparently worth thousands of pounds).

In a stall in Huddersfield's fine two storey Victorian market, demolished some years ago by official council vandals, to the rage of Ian Nairn, the architectural writer, there was a stall with back-numbers, and large numbers of American comics, I bought them when I had spare cash: King Comics, which had Flash Gordon, very well drawn. Tip Top comics which had Tarzan, also well-drawn, and Famous Funnies. I saw one of the last advertised in Exchange and Mart and rang to enquire the price, about ten years ago. I could not believe what was being asked—over £70. The ones I bought back in the 30s went into my box when I'd read them.

When I went into the RAF in the Autumn of 1940, I looked forward to having plenty of nostalgic reading matter when on leave, but when I arrived in the summer of 1941, I discovered the box and bookcase were in the same state as Mother Hubbard's cupboard. My brother had taken the lot for salvage, along with my cherished-collection of cigarette cards, the fruits of a collecting habit which started with the 1930 Player's cricketers set.

So Greyfriars passed out of my life until early in the 1950s when I came across the Post-war books. I borrowed them from the Red-Circle library but felt they were not quite like the Magnet stories-too much Bunter, I felt! In 1952, I found in Woolworth's half a dozen Goldhawk St. Jim's books which I quite liked.

At a church jumble sale in 1961, my daughter, who had a taste for the Bunter and St Jim's books, bought a 1926 Holiday Annual for the princely sum of sixpence (2½p today).

One December looking for books for Christmas presents, she called my attention to the Howard Baker edition of The Courtfield Cracksman, which of course was new to me. So not only did I replace all the Magnets I'd lost but a great many more of whose existence I'd known nothing. I've also replaced all my Holiday Annuals plus others and now have all of them, some originals, some Baker reprints, along with the Bakers 1973 to 1986 and the three St Franks and St Jim's books and some Sexton Blakes and S.B.L.s plus the Nelson Lee's previously mentioned.

I first began to buy books and papers from Norman Shaw in the early 1980s. In about 1991 he included the first copy of SPCD I'd ever seen. As a result I got in touch with Mary Cadogan and have been a devoted reader ever since April 1992. What a fine job she is doing in keeping up the standard set by Herbert Leckenby and Eric Fayne. Having acquired many back numbers I can see how well Mary has done in maintaining that standard.

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BOOK NOTES
by MARY CADOGAN

***FOR LADIES ONLY: EVE'S FILM REVIEW, PATHÉ CINEMA* 1921-33. By Jenny Hammerton. (Published by The Projection Box, 12 High Street, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 3EY.)**

Many of us remember Pathé films with affection, particularly the *Pathé Pictorials*. This book features their films, or Cinemagazines, intended mainly for women audiences – *Eve's Film Review*. I suppose I was just too young to be a film-goer during the period when this movie-mag was popular, but I'm sure, from Jenny Hammerton's book, that I would have greatly enjoyed it. She writes with zest and affection, but provides a wealth of detail and fascinating information which has social significance as well as entertainment value. As the author says "Some seventy-odd years after they were made, the films still have the power to entertain, charm, amaze and inform". (How one wishes to see them now – either in the cinema, or on the TV screen!)

Fashions, hobbies, beauty hints, domestic tips, family matters, keep-fit and cabaret acts all are featured, and the book's well chosen illustrations are a nostalgic delight. Whether a girl wishes to learn to dance the Charleston, or to prevent the development of a

double chin, *Eve's Film Review* could cater for her. Women will find this book intriguing – some men too, I imagine.

Evelyn was tempted by an apple –
The Stars As They Are – Miss Evelyn Laye

***DESERT ADVENTURES* by Captain W.E. Johns (published by Norman Wright, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, Herts, WD19 4JL. Price £20.95, plus postage, see page 33).**

Norman Wright's series of finely produced reprints of books by W.E. Johns continues with this two-for-the-price-of-one issue. It comprises the 1935 novella, *The Raid*, and the 1938 full-length novel, *Desert Night*. Both have desert settings, and it is interesting to see how Johns has expanded and developed one theme from the short to the longer book. Like most authors he knew a good idea, and was always happy to recycle it, with variations.

Each of the stories has a thoroughly British hero who, with lots of flair and derring-do, saves the day for his king and country, and, in the process, rescues (while appearing to abduct!) a fanciable female who would, without his intervention fall victim to the "worse than death" designs of a foreign and ruthless anti-British schemer.

Johns was fascinated by the Arabian Desert and he gives compelling descriptions of its power, menace and strange beauty in these stories. Action and suspense, however, are the keynote, though the romance, which is thrown in for good measure, works well too. A jolly good read, at more than one level, to set loose our imaginations. This is a numbered, limited edition so don't delay if you want to order a copy.

Andrew Skilleter's frontispiece to Desert Adventures

CHILDREN AT WAR: FROM THE FIRST WORLD WAR TO THE GULF by Kate Agnew and Geoff Fox (Continuum £14.99)

This is one of a series of books which focus on 'Contemporary Classics of Children's Literature'. However, its range is wide, and, as well as classic and serious books for children about various aspects of war, it looks at comics, story-papers, series and other popular books.

First we have an overview of the whole period indicated by the book's sub-title. Then a chapter explores the juvenile literature of the First World War and two further sections deal with books, comics etc. of the Second World War. These chapters provide fairly substantial textual quotations so that, to an extent, the books and stories under consideration speak for themselves. An interesting approach to the Second World War

fiction is that one chapter surveys it from the point of view of the United Kingdom and North America, while another looks at it from the viewpoint of mainland Europe.

It provides a great deal of food for thought, as well as some intriguingly nostalgic moments. (For instance, we find mention of and/or quotations from Frank Richards, Richmal Crompton, W.E. Johns, Elinor Brent-Dyer's Chalet School Series and the stories of Dorita Fairlie Bruce as well as papers such as the *B.O.P., Captain, Gem, Magnet, Beano, Dandy* and others. Whether or not one agrees with all of its conclusions, it is a scholarly but very readable survey. A few pictures, however, would have been welcome to convey and enhance the many moods which are expressed.

FINE REPRINTS FROM GIRLS GONE BY

The appeal of many children's authors spreads across the generations and it is good to know that the enterprising publishing company *Girls Gone By* is continuing to reprint favourite books by several popular writers. In their recent batch of attractive publications we find one of Elsie Jeanette Oxenham's charismatic 'Abbey School' novels called *Maidlin Bears the Torch.* With its emphasis on folk-music, camp-fire rituals, country-dance, and the resiliently positive influence of 'Gracedieu Abbey', it is likely to appeal not only to today's nine to twelve-year-olds but to their nostalgic mothers and aunts. Lorna Hill's *Vicki in Venice*, another of their reprints, will net a similarly wide audience. One of the Sadlers Wells ballet series, it is a rite of passage story with Vicki Scott leaving her Northumbrian home for the delights and challenges of Venice. There is, of course, a great deal of ballet atmosphere, with a 'Ruritanian' royal impersonation plus a romance thrown in for good measure.

(The books cost £9.99 each and can be obtained from *Girls Gone By*, 4 Rock Terrace, Coleford, Bath, Somerset BA3 4NF.)

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FORUM

From BILL LEWIS:

Amongst the many fascinating features in the 2001 Collectors' Digest Annual, I was particularly interested in Brian Doyle's article 'A Pseudonym Made for Two' about 'Herbert Strang'. As a schoolboy in the 1930s (I am now 81), I would have considered 'him' to be one of my favourite authors, never for a moment realising that 'he' was in fact two men, George Herbert Ely and Janes L'Estrange.

The pseudonym was well disguised at the time. I remember being vaguely surprised that the name does not appear in my 'Concise Universal Biography (Amalgamated Press, 1934) and now I know why.

Today, I looked up one of 'his' stories, in 'A Century of Boys' Stories' (Hutchinson, c.1934 or 1935). This is introduced by the editor, Francis Brett Young, in the following way, definitely giving the impression, although he must have known the truth, that Herbert Strang was one person:-

'Herbert Strang, the well-known author of boys' stories, her written many school, adventure and historical tales, one of which is included here.'

The story itself is one of gripping adventure, set unusually in the eighteenth century, its background being a cricket match, 'Colborn v. Hambledon', upon the result of which thousands of pounds have been gambled. There is much more adventure than cricket, though!

I was also interested in the reference made by Mr. Doyle to G.A. Henty, whose books, such as 'With Clive in India' and 'With Wolfe in Quebec', I also enjoyed enormously. However, I have a question. Henty definitely died, as mentioned in the article, in 1902. Yet, I clearly remember reading a book on similar lines, written obviously about 1914 and entitled 'With French at the Front', set in the early months of World War I prior to the development of trench warfare. Mr. Doyle suggests that 'Herbert Strang' often employed a similar style of writing to that of Henty. Henty having died twelve years earlier, might 'With French at the Front' have been written by 'Strang'?

Incidentally, Brian's other article in the Annual – about the *Children's Newspaper* – also evoked happy memories.

From COLIN PARTIS:

First of all thank you for a really bumper C.D. Annual, as every year.

In *Doubtful Genius* by Ted Baldock, I would point out that Claud Hoskins and his friend Hobson were in the Shell, not the fourth form.

As a member of the Conan Doyle Society, I read with interest '*Crabbe's Practice*, a twice told tale' by Derek Hinrich. He says that the existence of two separate versions must surely make *Crabbe's Practice* unique among Sir Arthur's published works. This is not so, as if Derek would like to compare the original Strand magazine of May 1897 and the following issues, he will find that the novel *The Tragedy of the Korosko* is completely different from the later published book version.

Whether Sir Arthur revised any more of his stories I cannot say. Re. your article "But Fleur has often Wondered", Ellen and myself have both had experiences that cannot be accounted for by the laws of physics, and, as Ellen will tell you, no one is more scientific than I am.

I believe we do not understand the true nature of space and time.

From BETTY HOPTON:

The Annual was a joy. I was fascinated by your lovely article on spectral stories in *the Schoolgirls' Own, School Friend, The Golden* and the *Popular Book of Girls' Stories*, the Annuals of 1938. I have them all, and I'll be making a point of reading each one, they sound wonderful.

I also particularly enjoyed BOB WHITER'S "Also Ran" and Margery Woods' Cliff House story. In fact, all the contributors had surpassed themselves, with very interesting articles.

From MARK TAHA:

(Some extracts from Mark's comments on the Annual. The numbers refer to the pages in question. Ed.).

19 Also-Ran – I remember the Caffyn series, when it was said that Joe Lodgey had no intention of going to the headmaster. Getting a Greyfriars fellow sacked would have finished his business at the school.

30 I remember a quotation from somebody's autobiography – it seems that he was sent the Children's Newspaper at his prep school and found it very embarrassing. Does anyone remember who that was? I have a book by Mee – Heroes of the Flag, published in 1922. It combined traditional patriotism with praise for the "Jamboree Boy" over the "Junker" and the hope that "Let us hope there will be no children sleeping in dark alleys... when our next king is crowned." Pity he was too optimistic!

35 Bredon-where did that name derive from?

48 Was Dennis that new? Lord Snooty and his Pals had got up to similar activities-not to mention William Brown and, in America, Buster Brown, the Katzenjammer Kids, Penrod Schofield, Peck's Bad Boy.

49 Surely boy assistants dated back to Sexton Blake's Tinker – I always found them a bit boring, too.

52 Invisible Dick – I remember a strip in Sparky, about 1970.

70 While contemporary Greyfriars stories seem incongruous, Marjory Woods is one of the best substitute writers I've ever read!

91 Sammy "Always detestable"? The only significant action of his I can recall during the 30s was his pulling an injured Bob Cherry's nose during the Caffyn series – which I found funny, even if Bob didn't!

92 Other Bunter adult relatives – his uncle Joseph Carter in the Arthur Carter series, uncle Humphrey Carter in the post-war Bunter books, cousin George Cook in the "Schoolboy Tourists" series of 1933, and mention of his having an uncle who was a Maths master in the early years.

94 Personally, I like Bunter and believe him to be often more sinned against than sinning – I thought that Quelch was too hard on him, as was Peter Todd, amongst others.

96 General Lew Wallace had been a General in the American Civil War – was he still alive in 1926? Or was that stipulation to do with the stage version?

Whenever I see Dallas being run out of town at the start of Stagecoach, I feel my blood boil. I don't know who I'm madder with – the sheriff for running out a girl who hadn't done anyone any harm or the old crows – sorry, Ladies of the Law and Order League – who'd nagged him into it. I didn't in the least blame the banker for leaving the one he was unfortunate enough to be married to!

I remember all three films – on TV or at the NFT! Reg and I may like the same films but we're not the same generation!

From RAY MOORE:

I really enjoyed the last issue of CD and the CD Annual and was more than pleased to see 'But Fleur has often Wondered' by your good self.

It was also nice to see Norman Wright's piece on Dennis the Menace, it being interesting to find out that Beano editor George Moonie took the name from a menace of an entirely different colour. Dennis the Menace in the song (which was invariably sung by a woman saddened by experience in cautionary tones to her sisters) being something of deflowerer of innocent virgins abroad, or at least the innocent virgins who were rash enough to step into his Venetian gondola. (I recall both Effie Atherton and Harriet Hutchins did versions of this song.)

In the last CD I also enjoyed Uma Hamilton Wright's piece on Charles Hamilton's funeral and your own item on your visit to the photographic studio which so nicely

prefaced the L.T. Meade sketch that followed (nice photo too). Then Brian Doyle as always continues to be a mine of information and his article on W.A. Darlington was most informative although I must admit that I don't see what was so mysterious about them changing Alf's original line in the screen version of 'Alf's Button Afloat' from 'Strike me pink!' to 'Stripe me pink!' given the fact that the film was made in black and white and therefore stripes would show up much more clearly on screen than some rather vague uniform pastel shade. I suppose they could have gone with 'Strike me purple!' or some more strident hue but obviously they didn't.

This matter of colour definition in black and white movies always reminds me of the Olympus Ball scene in the 1938 film 'Jezebel' set in pre Civil War New Orleans in which Bette Davis as the headstrong Julie chooses to wear a bright red dress in defiance of the convention that all unmarried girls have to wear white. As it turned out when they came to film the scene the red dress that they had prepared for the sequence simply didn't look 'red' enough on the black and white film stock. So in fact the dress that you actually see Bette Davis wearing in this scene in the film is not actually red at all but emerald green. Emerald green apparently looking a lot redder than red does when filmed in black and white!

From Des O'Leary:

In the Annual I enjoyed Roger Jenkins' summery of Dorothy L. Sayers, the only detective write I ever read enthusiastically.

I agree with most of his judgements but I wish he had not singled out dislike of foreigners and Jews as significant in Wimsey. The note about offending the Race Relations Board is not really relevant, I feel. In the first half of the twentieth century, many such remarks, particularly anti-Semitic ones, were common in fiction. That fine writer, John Buchan, was a far more serious offender. After all, Wimsey's friend, Freddy Arbuthnot, married a Jewish girl and remained his best friend! I would rather say the fact that Dorothy Sayers introduced Harriet Vane as a younger, slimmer version of herself into Wimsey's life, was a far more serious fault! The short stories mentioned by Roger Jenkins are usually free of Harriet's presence and, I agree, were some of Sayers' best work.

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WANTED:

Witches Hollow by A.W. Brook, published by Blacks, 1920.
BFL No. 142 "Sons of the Men of Mons".
One copy of each: Startler, Pioneer, Scout.
Nelson Lee No. 51, January 1931.
MR. M. FOLLOWS, 60 Hipwell Crescent, Leicester, LE4 2DL. Tel. 0116 2368186.

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NEWS OF THE CLUBS

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

For our Christmas 2001 meeting we gathered at the Linton village home of Roy Whiskin.

It was a time for the enjoyable Club tradition for the attending members to provide brief presentations, so we had a fascinating selection of items.

Firstly, Roy had brought along three Christmas issues of publications dealing with entertainment – a 1936 'Radio Pictorial', a 1938 'Screen Pictorial', and a '208' magazine from Radio Luxembourg – Howard Corn recalled a rather bizarre US comic book story that was now receiving collectors' interest and, in the first of his three presentations that afternoon, Keith Hodkinson showed a recent video he had made of the start of town Christmas festivities in late-afternoon in late-November in the North Yorkshire town of Pickering. Howard introduced a 1958 Stan Freberg record satirizing the approach of the advertising industry to the Christmas season. Tony Cowley read us a Christmas story from Keith Waterhouse, and then Keith showed us a wonderfully nostalgic 1952 Pathé Pictorial on the subject of London's Tin Pan Ally. Paul Wilkins related a few seasonal poetry items before we concluded the meeting with a showing by Keith of a short Bud Abott and Lou Costello film.

Ten of the Club's members met at the Longstanton village home of Tony Cowley, for our February meeting.

After our usual short business session we listened intently as Tony continued his series of sound memories from over a half-century ago.

Part Two of Tony's talk, which began with the 'On the Air' melody, consisted of radio programme excerpts from the BBC's output. Examples included Schools programmes; Children's Hour dramas; variety and comedy programmes such as Ray's A Laugh, Breakfast with Braden, Life With The Lyons, Educating Archie; topical programmes like In Town Tonight; the period adventure dramas such as Dick Barton and The Adventures of PC49; and Radio Newsreel stories typified by the Flying Enterprise marine heroism.

Later Howard Corn talked about his most productive visit to the BBC's Written Archives library at Caversham on a PC49 scripts search – a series of PC49 stories were broadcast from 1947 to 1953.

ADRIAN PERKINS

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Our Informal Christmas Party took place at our usual venue in the centre of Leeds on Saturday, 8th December.

The traditional Christmas Fare meant the central table was almost groaning under the weight of the delectable provender provided by our members. We were especially delighted to have Derek Marsden with us – he had made the trip from Liverpool.

After a very sociable and relaxed tea, Paula presented us with a "first lines" of books quiz – covering a very general selection of children's book. This quiz was won by Joan. To vary the theme, Geoffrey then presented us with "last lines of books" – much harder, for Geoffrey had covered a full range of books. Much hilarity ensued and eventually, the quiz was won by Joan – again.

Geoffrey then read from "The Courtfield Cracksman" where Bunter, in his usual charming manner, managed to "invite" himself to Wharton Lodge – except Harry that had arranged for the chauffeur to pick up Bunter and then land him at "Bunter Villa"!

Geoffrey then made our "traditional" speech and toast – we all raised our glasses to "Members Everywhere, Past and Present" and we wished all readers of the C.D. "A Very Merry Christmas and Prosperous New Year".

At our January meeting we had a sale of members' books and the proceeds were donated to Club funds, raising a decent amount. The main item of the meeting was a fascinating account, by Keith Atkinson, of *The Young Frank Richards*, in fact and fiction.

At our February meeting "Poetry Please" was a novel item in which all members present were asked to read their favourite piece of poetry – serious or humorous. We had a number of contributions, and some quoted from "The Mask of Comedy" which contains poems from our own Frank Richards. Although of course, famous for his school stories, he also had great aptitude in other fields in prose and verse. Perhaps the most entertaining item was from Chris Scholey who quoted from memory "Albert and the Lion", that famous rendition of Stanley Holloway's!

"The Children's Book Club" was an item from Darrell Swift who recalled, as a boy, being a member of this group where one had to agree to buy one book a month for a period of six months. Three Williams books were re-produced and there were many books by Capt. W.E. Johns – but no books by Frank Richards. The Book Club was certainly around in the mid 1950s and continued for a number of years, but it has proved difficult to get some precise dates. A number of "offshoots" were shown, along with some other facts and figures.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

LONDON O.B.B.C.

Chairman Norman Wright welcomed a large number of members to our Annual festive gathering at Bill Bradford's Ealing home in December.

The Club was pleased to welcome one of its founder members, Bob Whiter. It's always a real pleasure to have Bob along, and he had brought an entertaining quiz that he had prepared on the plane as he flew over from the U.S. of A. Mark was the winner, followed by Roger, Mary and Chris. The winners were particularly lucky to receive special prizes: Bob's splendid handmade Greyfriars figures, real works of art!

Next, Roger Jenkins gave the customary Christmas Hamiltonian reading, another of those little things that helps to make our Club unique and special. He read passages from *Magnets* 1140 and 1141: part of the Courtfield Cracksman series. Both were classic Frank Richards, well-paced and carefully crafted. In the first, Bunter attempted to borrow "a couple of quid" from Wells, the unflappable butler, in the second, the Fat Owl gleefully locked Wharton in a wardrobe. Funny stuff, which provoked many chuckles from around the room.

Derek Hinrich read a brief article from CADS magazine relating to a rare detective story by Frank Richards entitled "The House of Fear", summed up as "well paced but easily guessable". Does anybody have a copy of this late Forties whodunit novelette?

Tea followed, a splendid Yuletide feast. Mince pies and Christmas cake were much in evidence and there was much cheery chat.

Members took their seats, some of which were marked "RESERVED FOR QUIZ TEAM", in anticipation of Norman's Christmas Quiz event. Chris, Larry, Andrew,

Graham, and Derek filled the second row, behind Brian, Mark, Roger, Len and Alan; "it'll reflect the result", boasted Brian. Roger Coombes was quiz master. Inspired by "The Weakest Link", Roger concluded the rounds with comments such as "whose Holiday Annual has come to an end?" and "whose story paper is a few pages short?" Things were pretty close for a while, until a round of questions on girls' storypapers confounded Chris's team: they drew a blank. Mary remarked upon both teams' "extraordinary ignorance" of the topic, sternly threatening to set a further quiz on the subject. Mark provided to be rather a "rod in pickle" for Brian's team when it came to the girls' papers. Radio, comics, Hamilton and Blake were also covered in this entertaining event. After ten thrilling rounds, Brian's team finally emerged victorious. "Give us a chance", cried Chris, "give us another round of girls' paper questions!" Bill had kindly provided a fine selection of videos as prizes. In addition, certificates were awarded to both teams, suitable for framing.

And so this jovial 23rd Christmas meeting at Bill's came to an end. Long may the tradition continue! Grateful thanks were expressed to Bill and his hard-working assistants for their fine efforts in the kitchen. As Henry Hall used to say, "here's to the next time!"

At our January A.G.M. meeting, Roger Coombes was unanimously voted in as the new Chairman. Derek Hinrich and Vic Pratt foolishly agreed to remain in their posts for another year!

Mary Cadogan commenced the entertainment with a talk on Christmas stories in girls' papers. Though possibly not so adventurous or comic as Christmas tales of the Greyfriars chums, it was Mary's contention that any weaknesses in such stories were more than compensated for by the oodles of seasonal atmosphere and mystery. Mary illustrated this aspect with readings from one of her favourite Morcove stories, "The Legend of Swan Lake", from 1929. Reminding those present of their shameful ignorance of the genre (made clearly apparent by last month's quiz contest), Mary followed the presentation with a short quiz. Playing close attention were Chris, Marie and Ray who answered all questions correctly; followed closely by Frances-Mary.

Next, Bill Bradford gently led us down Memory Lane as he read from newsletter number 350, a reminder of the December 1981 meeting.

Andrew Pitt then delivered an interesting and insightful talk entitled "Growing Up with Just William". Andrew described the William stories as "the best and funniest short stories in the English language". While they are still popular, he continued, "there is still hope for this mad world". I'm sure we all share such sentiments. How would life be without our books, our music, our films? It's too horrible to contemplate. Reminiscences of youthful reading were interspersed with entertaining extracts from the stories in this celebration of boyhood.

This was followed by Chris Harper speaking about the life and works of Edgar Wallace, an extraordinarily prolific writer; so prolific in fact that researchers are still uncertain about just how much he wrote. One of his most famous creations, Mr. Sanders the African administrator, may have appeared in as many as 150 stories. But nobody knows for sure; not even Lofts and Adley could be exact about Mr. Wallace's output. Sometimes working on ten projects at once, Wallace dictated many of his stories, fully-formed, on to wax cylinders ready to be typed. Those poor old typists must have cursed old Mr. Wallace, and his wax cylinders, to boot. An interesting and intriguing look at the writer's career.

Bill Bradford was next, with a quiz based around the old papers, which covered a wide range of members' interests. Afterwards, as he prompted members to shout out their answers before he revealed the correct solutions, Bill admitted, "I always like to ask for the answers first... so that if I've got one wrong, it won't come out!"

Grateful thanks were extended to Audrey, for her smashing food, and to Suzanne and Chris for their great hospitality in sharing their splendid old house with us all once again.

At the February meeting in Mark Taha's home, Ray Hopkins was on first with an entertaining reading from a Rookwood adventure, not at "the bottom of the bill", as he claimed, but actually a case of "putting the best acts on first to soften up the audience", as Bill remarked. Ray read out some funny scenes from the football comedy "Rookwood Calling", published in S.O.L. 368 from 1939, which had everybody laughing.

Next on stage was Alan Pratt with a talk on The Hardy Boys. No, you're not suffering from déjà vu; he gave a talk on this very subject just a few years ago. But this one, like household detergents and breakfast cereal, was new and improved, and provided lots of interesting trivia, including the possible discovery of the real Canadian town on which series location Bayport was based. My Paw is a keen Internet user, spending many happy hours engaged in important debate with other enthusiasts of old popular cultural stuff from all over the globe, on various discussion "boards". And from these various sources he's been digging up lots of new information, which he shared with us today, in an entertaining nostalgia-fest.

The meeting continued with Norman Wright presenting a "Collector's Item": the first issue of *Boy's World* magazine from January 1963. This quality publication, from the Longacre Press, featured both comic strips and text features, as well as perhaps most important of all, a free "Pathfinder" compass to strap on to the wrist.

Bill was without glasses; therefore Derek Hinrich stepped in for Memory Lane, reading from newsletter 351, which told tales of the February 1982 meeting.

Len Cooper was next with an entertaining cryptic crossword based around Hamilton's characters. Some people found it difficult; our host completed his paper in roughly four minutes, however, showing the rest of us up.

Finally, Mark Taha presented an item on Michael Green, author of the "Coarse" books. "These books should have a public health warning," Mark enthused, "do not read them in public!" Mark read humorous extracts from some of the books in the series, including *The Art of Coarse Golf* and *The Art of Coarse Management*. Of *The Art of Coarse Rugby*, Mark commented: "I like the songs and the drinking... it's just the bit with the ball I don't like!" Mark's presentation brought proceedings to a close, and grateful thanks were extended to our kind host.

VIC PRATT

* *


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