

# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 56

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RATTY IN THE LINE OF FIRE!

**"Christmas Day at Christmas Castle!"** Grand Story of the Cliff House chums—inside.

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Week Ending December 30th, 1933.



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# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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## ENLARGED WINTER NUMBER

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### CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY TIME



I think the picture on this page persuasively conveys the anticipation of joyous satisfactions at the end of the journey. We can imagine that our heroes of the Greyfriars Remove (complete with Bunter, of course) are on their way to Wharton Lodge for their Christmas and New Year festivities. There is no doubt that our favourite old papers can continue to spread a warm glow over our twenty-first century Christmas celebrations, and we are lucky that so many of these vibrant stories and pictures have survived. They are like good and trusted old friends.

I would also like to draw your attention to a contemporary magazine *The Book and Magazine Collector* (which many of you will already know, of course). The December issue carries a 6-page feature on myself, and it is nicely illustrated with pictures of me, and books and papers. Norman Wright, a favourite contributor to the C.D., interviewed me for this article and his questions about my interest in our hobby were indeed well chosen. The same issue includes a lively illustrated feature by Norman, with David Ashford, on the work of that very popular comics illustrator, Hugh McNeill. Amongst other "goodies" in this December *Book and Magazine Collector* is an informative feature on *The Classic Works of Charles Dickens* by the magazine's Editor, Crispin Jackson. There are also articles on crime novels, and the work of the very engaging illustrator, Edmund Blampied.

Elsewhere in this number of the C.D. I am suggesting possible further Christmas reading. This year has produced an abundance of nostalgic publications, all of which endorse the spirit of peace and goodwill that mark the festive season.

As always at this time of year, I wish to say a hearty thank you to C.D. subscribers: your warm support is much appreciated, and I so much enjoy your letters of



comment, approval and suggestions.

Of course we all remain deeply grateful to our contributors. It is no mean achievement that, after 56 years of publication, the C.D. still manages to include warm and entertaining articles, and the fruits of erudite research.

Thanks are also due to the staff at Quacks, our printers, and particularly to Mandy and Freda, for their continued and helpful work in typing and printing the C.D.

Christmas and the New Year will soon be here. It is my wish that they will bring great delights to you and yours.

***A MERRY CHRISTMAS  
AND A  
HAPPY NEW YEAR***

MARY CADOGAN







## A YULETIDE PICTURE

by Ted Baldock



*Once upon a time, of all the good  
days of the year - on Christmas Eve...*

It had - true to tradition - been snowing heavily. Great flakes had been drifting down for hours and the familiar landscape had all but disappeared beneath a pristine blanket of white.

Silence reigned, all sounds being muted by the snow. Only the solitary and lonely call of an owl broke the silence coming from the direction of Wharton Magna Church, from its eery in the old tower. Within Wharton Lodge all was quiet, sleep being the order of the dark hours. All was quiet; well, not quite all!

William George Bunter occupied a room by himself. A comfortable old panelled room in which at this late hour the dying embers of the fire were barely visible.

Bunter stirred uneasily in his sleep and mumbled. For the moment the well known stentorian snore was silenced, the Fat Owl was restless. He had supped exceedingly well a few hours previously, hence the restlessness and churning. "Perhaps those last three mincepies I had for supper were a little in excess, perhaps if I had confined myself to one" - such were his mumblings.

Wharton Lodge was wrapped in darkness and slumber, except for Bunter. Wells, the butler, had long since made his last round, attending to doors and windows, assuring himself that all was secure. He had now retired and was making the little bedroom adjacent to his pantry murmur and echo with his deep and steady breathing. The old building was quiet except for the occasional creak and crack of ancient timbers.

Bunter stirred uneasily. Ghosts! What rot the fellows had been talking round the fire, especially Bob Cherry who seemed to be making extra efforts to curdle the blood of everyone. He had in fact caused Bunter to move his chair a little closer to the fire - and to the other fellows.

Ghosts, wraiths, transparent shadows and phantoms seemed to fit rather well with old panelled passages, dark stairways and uneven floors, while half open doors seemed to exude a special menace.

But it was all rot, Bunter was sure of that, although Colonel Wharton, who was sitting and smiling to himself as he listened to Bob's efforts to create an atmosphere of doubt among his friends, remained silent. He had resided at the Lodge for many years and was not entirely convinced that phantoms did not exist.

Wells had reported to him on several occasions concerning curious and unexplainable incidents. Being an old military man with a wide experience of the world in general, he had two feet firmly planted on terra firma. However, the Colonel, was not entirely disbelieving; he entertained certain doubts.

His guest, Mr. Quelch, sat and listened to his boys with a doubtful smile on his face. Even the warmth of the glowing fire could not entirely extinguish some frostiness. He also was firmly attached to terra firma. At that moment, in fact, he was looking forward to retiring and spending a pleasant half-hour in the company of his beloved 'Aneid' before composing himself to sleep.

The Remove Master had no fear of ghosts in whatever shape or form they might choose to manifest themselves. In the unlikely event of being confronted by a wraith rattling the stoutest of chains, as likely as not he would threaten to administer 'six' of the best if it did not instantly take itself off. The paranormal, in any shape or form, would receive very short shrift from Henry Samuel Quelch.

Now the Lodge was wrapped in silence apart from the low wailing of the wind at the windows and that occasional creaking of ancient wood. All aspects considered, it was rather unproductive ground for haunting and chain rattling. If there were any spooks in residence at Wharton Lodge they experienced rather a thin time. They were not at all appreciated - nobody seemed to take them seriously.

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Harry Wharton and Co. were discussing the morning's activities at the well laden breakfast table. A long tramp in the snow seemed to be a good preparation for the traditional Christmas dinner. Their way would take them down to Wharton Magna to deliver certain parcels made up by Aunt Amy for some elderly persons in the village, these being traditional contributions from the Lodge.

It is Christmas morning and the shadows and doubts of the dark hours have all dispersed. A wintry sunshine outside, and warmth and comfort within, plus a well laden breakfast table. Billy Bunter is doing sterling work among the rashers and eggs under the somewhat amazed gaze of Wells who is kept constantly in motion replenishing the covers on the sideboard.

"Any more rashers there, Wells", came a squeak from Bunter. "No, Master Bunter..." Wells got no further. "See to it then, and don't keep a fellow waiting, look sharp now!" The portly Wells did indeed look sharp, for a moment he looked very inclined to twirl the fat Owl from his chair and administer a most unbutler-like assault upon the Removite. But dignity and training saved the day, plus perhaps the influence asserted by the season of good will. Wells nodded to John who was standing by, and the butler maintained a silence which, if not menacing, was very eloquent.

John hurried off kitchenwards and soon more rashers, more eggs, more toast and more marmalade were forthcoming. Bunter now firmly in the saddle, as it were, had discovered that the coffee was barely lukewarm and not at all to his taste. "Wells, this coffee is cold, have some more sent up directly will you". Wells seemed to make a convulsive movement, and once more signalled to John. So breakfast continued, charged with unseen but powerful undercurrents of emotion.

But even with these slight hiccups goodwill reigned supreme. It was Aunt Amy who wondered why such a pleasant atmosphere could not be the norm throughout the year. At this season even Wells relaxed, just a little, the discipline usual below

stairs, for which the domestic staff were duly grateful. He even turned a blind eye when he caught John, the footman, saluting Mary with much giggling beneath the mistletoe.

So let us leave them laughing and yarning in the firelight, and (particularly in Billy Bunter's case) happily consuming the traditional fare of Christmas. Looking round at the familiar faces one may experience a feeling of wonderment that these fellows have been our companions and friends for so long and that they have remained unchanged. Their's is the precious gift of eternal youth, attained only through the written word from the hand of a master.

Perhaps the person at Wharton Lodge at this season who most appreciates the warmth and companionship of the gathering is Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, 'Inky' to his friends. As he sits cheerfully by blazing logs, could he be thinking of his home in far off India, where likely as not clouds of dust will be rising from the arid plains of Bhanipur, stirred by the searing wind, where the intense heat of the sun will have driven both man and animals to seek such shelter they can from the pitiless climate.

A cheerful note was always struck when the exciting ceremony of seeing 'what Santa has brought' would get under way on Christmas morning. Billy Bunter's fat features were beaming, glowing and exuding satisfaction, he was smiling from one fat ear to the other. There was something he just had to tell Wharton & Co. "I say, you fellows", he fairly chirruped, "I say, it has come, I said it would didn't I?" He was clutching an envelope in one fat hand, in the other he waved a slip of paper and he was fairly bursting with news. "I say, my Uncle Carter, you know...".

Bob Cherry clapped him on the shoulder. "Congratulations, old fat man, has Uncle Carter sent you a Christmas card?"

"Oh, really Cherry, my Uncle Carter thinks a great deal of me, he has always admired my manliness, you know, and my athletic ability - and all that!"

"Oh, my hat" exclaimed Frank Nugent. The Owl continued, scarcely able to contain himself. "And he has sent it, you know, a postal order, isn't it ripping?"

"Good old Uncle Carter," chuckled Bob Cherry. "Now you will be able to settle one or two little outstanding debts old fat man".

Bunter appeared to be stricken with sudden deafness at this awful suggestion. At that moment his mind was completely concentrated on just how he would spend the



magnificent sum of twenty shillings: the treasures of Aladdin's cave were within his grasp - almost!

So in the happy season of good will there was a happy Fat Owl who was now engaged in glorious dreams and calculations. Just how many doughnuts, eclairs, jam-tarts and bottles of ginger pop would be his for twenty shillings at Mrs. Mible's little tuckshop at Greyfriars. Whatever commissions Uncle Carter had failed to attend to he had certainly, without doubt, 'worked the oracle' on this occasion.

We may leave the gathering at Wharton Lodge in this aura of good will to all 'men' which, of course also encompasses the Owl of the Remove.



## NUMEROUS VILLAINS

by Derek Hinrich

Amongst the great serial villains whom Sexton Blake encountered in his hey-day, only the hydra-headed and octopus-tentacled Criminals Confederation, was treated as an organisation. Prince Wu Ling of the Society of the Yellow Beetle and, to a lesser extent, Leon Kestrel despite his Syndicate, were treated as predominantly single adversaries. Zenith the Albino, George Marsden Plummer, Huxton Rymer, and the rest, may have had the occasional accomplice but generally were also seen as individuals.

Yet Blake encountered many gangs and conspiracies in his time. Even in his very earliest cases in the eighteen-nineties he encountered such bodies as 'The Red Lights of London', 'The Assassins of the Seine', and the 'Terrible Three' (one of whom apparently had the dangerous and surely risky habit of walking about with one mandarin-like fingernail dipped in venom, ready to scratch an enemy: fortunately Sexton Blake habitually carried a stick of lunar caustic which he used like a styptic pencil).

Later, Blake, when almost on the brink of his Golden Age, ran a course with a sinister but rather nebulous group, 'The Brotherhood of Silence' (a set of criminally-minded trappists, perhaps?). Then there was Baron Robert de Beauremon and the Council of Eleven, (active just before and during the First world War but not at all

afterwards, having been discarded from G H Teed's repertory of villains), shortly followed by the Council of Nine who impinged a couple of times on the activities of George Marsden Plummer.

But the most dangerous gangs Blake encountered at the height of his popularity in the 'twenties were the Double Four, led by the Ace (alias King Karl V of Serbovia who preferred master criminality to being Supreme Autocrat of his turbulent Balkan kingdom, which lay between Austria and Yugoslavia) and the Black Trinity. Blake encountered both these desperate bodies in *The Union Jack* in 1927 (The Double Four later reappeared in two volumes of *The Boys' Friend Library*, but Blake and Tinker's names were changed).

The King Crook was the brainchild of Gwyn Evans. After several encounters of mixed fortune with Blake, his hash was eventually settled by a revolution in Serbovia which deprived him of his immunity as a sovereign.

On formal - criminal - occasions, the King Crook wore a black domino mask with a sort of yashmak of Mechlin lace attached. The Black Trinity, however, favoured the more popular style of the Sinister Hooded Figure. Sinister Hooded Figures abounded amongst Sexton Blake's adversaries as may be seen from many illustrations to the saga (they seem to have been even more prevalent in the pages of the *Union Jack's* sister paper, *The Thriller*).

The Black Trinity was a creation of Anthony Skene and he told the story of Sexton Blake's struggle with them in four consecutive issues of *The Union Jack*. In a preamble to the first episode, 'The Coming of the Black Trinity', we are told Blake's campaign against them extended over about two years. All four episodes involve a good deal of violence and sudden death which is related in the cool and lucid Civil Service prose of Anthony Skene's *alter ego*, Mr G N Phillips of HM Office of Works.

The Black Trinity lives by theft and murder. It rules its corner of the underworld by sheer terror. Failure or disobedience means death. Even mentioning the very existence of the Trinity is to incur death at their hands. Its methods are clumsy and brutal but effective. Blake became conscious of the Trinity as a new force in the underworld long before he heard a whisper of its name, though we never hear mention of any





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specific robberies it carried out. Its foot soldiers are apparently the remnants of the Sillox Gang, a bunch of racecourse toughs left leaderless after Sillox himself was "topped". Blake eventually was told something - only the name of someone possibly involved with them - by a dying prisoner in Wormwood Scrubs. Blake had hardly returned to Baker Street, however, than he learned that the prison doctor and a "trusty", who had both overheard the dying man's words, had been murdered. Thereafter, Blake was involved in a headlong round of chases and attempts on his life until what was Round One of the battle ended with the death of one of the Trinity.

There is a pause, partly to enable the Trinity to regroup, partly - they hope - to lull Sexton Blake into a false sense of security. Then they make an attempt upon him as he leaves an East

End police station. Their intelligence within the police - and, as we have seen, within the prison service - is evidently excellent. Blake captures the Trinity's would-be assassin and forces the man to change clothes with him and then, while his prisoner is chloroformed, makes the man up as himself and himself as the thug. Blake now takes his captive to Smith's, where the Black Trinity are meeting. There we meet our old friend Monsieur Zenith the Albino, in a cameo role, as a neutral observer of affairs at Smith's, that surreal thieves' kitchen which provides a luxurious subterranean rendezvous for the criminal classes with many secret entries and exits beneath Essex Street in Islington (Building Smith's must have been a considerable enterprise, since it must be greater than the Cabinet War Rooms and infinitely better appointed. I wonder if it's still there, and in use? What a surprise it would be for the newer inhabitants of the district!).

Blake had once before penetrated Smith's in disguise in an earlier story by Skene. On that occasion when challenged, he had removed his disguise to reveal beneath it the features of Leon Kestrel, the Master Mummer. I mention this here to indicate Blake's supreme mastery of disguise, so that his second exploit at Smith's becomes credible. For a man who could adopt two disguises, one atop the other, and then remove one without disturbing that beneath it was surely a grand master of the art.

In the course of events, Inspector Couotts becomes at last convinced of the Black

Trinity's existence. This is a tale of rapid reversals of fortune and of Blake's good fortune - Julia Fortune that is, a young lady, the daughter of a former ambassador to the Imperial Court at St Petersburg, and a leading light of our Secret Service (but whether MI5 or SIS is not made clear) who is a very useful *deus ex machina* for Blake in his last rounds with the Trinity. But why, in those interwar years, the secret service should interfere in domestic crime is unexplained.

Blake has now learnt that the spokesman for the Trinity is not in fact its ringleader.

There is a hiatus between the second and third stories while the Trinity lick their wounds again and scheme to ruin Blake this time rather than kill him, first by attacking his investments which takes some time to organise, and then by fabricating evidence of a fur robbery against him with the aid of a corrupt official at the Yard. With the help of his loyal friend Inspector Coutts and of Julia Fortune who is, quite literally in at the death, they are again thwarted and at the end of this story the Black Trinity has become the Black Unity.

The final reckoning follows. Julia Fortune again plays a guardian angel role, saving Blake from death by chloroform. She also finds that she knew the leader of the Black Trinity when they were girls in St Petersburg. For the elegant young man about town who proves to be the brains of the Black Trinity is a White Russian émigré transvestite, Lydia—, we never learn the patronymic, and the body count at the end resembles a Jacobean tragedy, but our hero is triumphant.

I have not been too specific about the events of this series of eventful tales in case you should wish to read them for yourselves.

There is of course one problem that stories of vast criminal organisations led by unknowns always leave me with, and usually with no answer. If no one knows who the mastermind is, how does he get to start it and how does he maintain his anonymity, even if he/she is a White Russian transvestite?



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**WANTED:** *The Schoolgirls' Own* weekly, from first issue, 1921.  
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## THE WONDERFUL AGE OF FOURTEEN

by Margery Woods



Or is it such a wonderful age? Parents of stropy teenagers may disagree, so may the fourteen-year-olds themselves when they begin to discover the world can be a hard cruel place holding many disappointments and, to quote roughly Mrs. Medlock's sentiments in *THE SECRET GARDEN*, that the orange is only so big and the number of segments won't go round. But for the Cliff House girls fourteen was the most wonderful age of all.

Their fourteenth year spanned well over a quarter of a century. And as the years passed they moved confidently with them, adapting to new fashion, new hairstyles, new attitudes to social change and more freedom from the repressions that had bound women in previous centuries. It is tempting to say that by courtesy of their authors they were blessed with the Peter Pan syndrome but this hardly describes accurately the true alchemy of the Cliff House girls, for they managed to achieve, along with their Greyfriars chums, near immortality. Long after the print dried on their last adventure in 1940 they are still remembered and read. And what joyous living they packed into that wonderful age of fourteen, along with a few tears and some heartbreak, from which they soon bounced back and got on with being fourteen.

One of the wonders was the sheer amount of travel they accomplished, virtually round the world, although they probably looked back with amusement on the first holiday: camping with the Bull! (As Miss Bullivant was so naughtily nicknamed.) They did better with the next holiday session, which was a cruise in which they landed on Castaway island, home of Grace Kelwyn who'd been abandoned there. She came back to England and joined them at Cliff House for a while. But they were no sooner back than Barbara Redfern's Uncle Tony invited them to join him "on a little voyage" in the yacht he had chartered. The little voyage finished up at Rio, with lots of the travel-brochure kind of descriptive colour, all great fun until Grace and Bessie were swept away by canoe on a piranha infested river, over rapids and finally into an Indian village where Grace became, in the way of many schoolgirls in similar circumstances, their Queen.

The next expedition was not quite so hectic—a caravan holiday. But a few weeks later they were off to foreign climes once more. This time France, the Riviera, Italy and Morocco. Their postcard collections and snapshot albums must have been filling up rapidly. Indeed, their travels during the age of fourteen were becoming so extensive one wonders how they ever found time for the little matter of attending to scholastic curriculum. But the thirst for Europe continued with yet another tour covering several more countries, with a spell of catching their breath back at Manor House Farm before a spot more yachting and a real humdinger to add to their holiday memories: Hollywood; This took about five weeks out of their year aged fourteen. Not that their hunger for faraway places was anywhere near being sated. It was time for Egypt, at

Sparkling with High Adventure is this Thrilling Holiday Story of Barbara Redfern & Co.  
from Cliff House School.



## **BABS & CO. in *The Secret City!***

the palace of Palms, then Africa, the jungle, the long-lost City of Shest, after which they needed a comparatively peaceful little sojourn at a farm holiday amid peaceful Cornish scenery. Then it was back to the Riviera, with mystery on the Med and a great adventure in Algeria.

By now, it seemed an extra spot of motivation was needed. Their old friend Celeste turned up with a very exciting holiday proposition; a treasure hunt. So off they went aboard Celeste's grandfather's luxury yacht, the *Gloriana*. This exhilarating trip and the danger that befell them before the buried treasure was found proved a fitting end to their wonderful travels, for a war had begun and they had to make do with more or less home made amusement in a holiday chalet.

Surprisingly they did find time for some important business at school. The Fourth went through several mistresses who took on the Cliff House girls with high hopes and idealism. The first was Miss Bellew, a nice lady who was very fond of Babs, so her stay was quite a happy one except for one disturbing period when Augusta Anstruther-Browne and her father managed to get a certain Mrs Grumph installed as Head, who would let Augusta have her own delightful way. The chums of the Fourth thought otherwise; they had already seen off one tyrant Head, Miss Potter, (who seemed determined to starve poor Bessie) so they were quite ready for a spot of barring out, in which Miss Bellew took a quiet hand by sending a telegram to Miss

Primrose to inform her of what was going on in her school. Another tyrant bit the dust.

Miss Bellew was succeeded by Miss Matthews, who was also popular with her pupils, and before long she too found her form driven to rebellion by yet another tyrant, who was supposed to be an aunt of Barbara Redfern but was, of course, an imposter in the pay of a certain Mr Channing, father to two of the worst girls in the school and determined to ruin Cliff House for certain financial reasons of his own. Stella Stone was expelled, half the Sixth just packed up and departed, Miss Matthews was sacked, even the means of communication from the school were cut off and the girls staged a plot of war to expose the tyrant as a fraud and impersonator. A certain observation by Miss Bullivant is worthy of historical note. Her summing-up of the new headmistress was brief and telling. "A dwarf in giant's robes."

There was also Miss Harper, yet another tyrannical temp, She was banished with due dramatic expulsion, and then came another new mistress for the Fourth, the much loved Valerie Charmant, who, alas, was the cause of yet another season of tyranny for the school at the hands of her cousin, the infamous Shaw Desmond.

Amid all this turmoil new girls came and left, captaincies, Barbara's included, went up and down like yo-yos. Circuses rolled up for the aid of the girls, and secret societies became rather fashionable. There were gypsy girls and jungle girls and mystery girls and arrogant girls, and dangerous girls like Gail Gregory and Faith Ashton. Spooks appeared and reappeared with unflinching regularity, not the least of

**Barbara Redfern & Co., Who Feature in This Dramatic Long Complete Story, Show Gail Gregory That—**



Up, the Rebels!



A Very, Very, Merry Christmas with Barbara Redfern & Co.



By Hilda Richards

## Christmas Day at Christmas Castle!

them a phantom yacht. The most fascinating new arrivals were Jemima Carstairs who brought a new and very intelligent brainbox to the many problems as well as a somewhat original turn of speech, and Diana Royston-Clarke, instantly dubbed the Firebrand, who certainly livened up things. At one time even Miss Bullivant became very vulnerable and needed the help of the chums.

Bessie went on several diets, none of which seemed to work for her. Unfortunately the will-power pill had not been invented.

And, to crown the wonderful age of fourteen, there was Christmas.

They flitted between Holly Hall and Lynn's Folly, and Clara threw a party at Rose Villa. They did make what seemed to be a very misjudged acceptance of an invitation to the Christmas luxury offered by Bessie's uncle, (shades of a certain summer cruise offered by her big brother at a certain school not so far away). Babs and Co. thought they'd got to a reformatory by mistake. Especially as Bessie herself feared greatly for the state of her circumference. But they escaped to Delma Castle, which was much

more enjoyable, and later to Luxor Hall with princess Naida, their friend from the palace of palms. A truly exotic Christmas venue, as was Christmas Castle, and the London home of the American junior, Leila Carroll. After living it up there Robin's Roost awaited them with a truly exciting and intriguing ghost hunt and Scotland could not be left out of their Yuletide celebrations. Jean Cartright's home at Glengowrie held all the Highland flavour one could wish for, plus a ghost, naturally.

Pellaby Castle rounded off the rather extensive Christmas celebrations after which they just managed to fit in the wonderfully atmospheric Mistletoe Manor and one of Clara's exciting abodes, Trevlyn Towers.

Even Bessie's constant hunger pangs must have been subdued, if only temporarily, by the lavish amounts of Christmas fare she managed to pack away. And all the mysterious events and dangers that Christmas invariably presented must have done wonders for the girls' ability to deal with virtually anything fate could throw at them. Remember Clara walking through a phantom of a great ominous monk; and Diana carrying an injured friend up from a quarry, not forgetting her instant dash into a burning garage to rescue the terrified Bessie. Marjorie refused rescue from all the jungle menaces because she would not desert her sick uncle. Babs once braved the lion's cage at the circus to save the day—but little things like discovering a girl bound and gagged in a sarcophagus were all in a day's work to the resourceful captain of the junior school.

The brave acts of the fourteenth year were legion and the unselfish efforts to help a victim never found wanting. Schooldays are said (by adults;) to be the happiest days of one's life. Surely the age of fourteen if not always the happiest, must have been the busiest year in the lives of those endearing chums of Cliff House School.

Long may they live—as fourteen-year-olds.



A Happy Christmas to all fans of the Phantom. Ron Hibbert would like to correspond with anyone, who like him, is trying to collect copies of "The Bullseye". R. HIBBERT, 30 Alton Road, Ross on Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 5ND.



Seasonal Greetings to all Digest Readers from LESLIE KING, Chesham.





## IRON IN THE SOUL III

### Professor Cyrus Zingrave

by Mark Caldicott

When E S Brooks transported the Brotherhood of Iron from the *Gem* to *Nelson Lee Library*, he reconstituted the crime syndicate in his own terms as the League of the Green Triangle. In doing so he made several adjustments, not the least of introducing us for the first time to Professor Cyrus Zingrave, leader of the League and a character who appeared in Brooks' stories for the next thirty years.

While Lord Mount-Farnell, leader of the Brotherhood was a fairly nondescript character, Zingrave has an exceptional personality. We gain this first insight into his character when Douglas Clifford, wanting to extricate himself from his mistaken oath of allegiance, demands his release.

*The professor's voice was wonderfully musical, and it had a silky, gentle tone about it that was almost irresistible. Zingrave's personality, in fact, was a remarkable one, and Clifford knew he would have to steel himself to the utmost to avoid being won over. The professor seemed to possess uncanny powers over his fellow beings, and could, without in the least appearing to, convince them against their own judgement and inclinations.*

*He was a small man, but an imposing one, nevertheless. His shoulders drooped a little, and upon them was set one of the most remarkable heads Clifford had ever seen. Clean-shaven, his skin was almost dead white. Not a spot of colour relieved his cheeks, and his brow was high and massive - the brow of genius. But it was the eyes which held Clifford's attention - which seemed to grip the young man in a grasp of fascination. They were large and absolutely black, piercing and commanding.*

*("The League of the Green Triangle", NLL OS 23, 13-Nov-15)*

To the surprise of shock of the other governing circle members in the room, Zingrave takes from his pocket Clifford's signed statement of allegiance and declares: "It is yours.... place it in the fire if you wish!" The chorus of angry protest from the others is silenced when Zingrave turns those strange glittering eyes on the company. Clifford believes that he has been allowed his freedom and does not expect Zingrave's

treachery. The Professor, however, has no intention of allowing Clifford his freedom - he has instead ordered his kidnap and incarceration, as we saw last time.

Five years later, escaped from his imprisonment, Clifford is free and is working with Nelson Lee to bring about the fall of the criminal organisation. In the intervening years Zingrave has developed the power of the League. The headquarters is in the Orpheum Club, and it is not long before Nelson Lee manages to penetrate its defences. From his ally inside the circle, Martin Caine, Lee learns that Mr Oscar Sillard, the governor of Portmoor Convict Prison, a governing member, will be making a rare visit to London to attend a meeting. Lee does not have Frank Kingston's advantage - he has no Professor Polgrave to supply chemicals which alter the shape of his face to resemble another's, but he is able to disguise himself to resemble Sillard and tricks that gentleman, paying a visit to the Governing Circle meeting in his place. Thus Lee learns that the entrance to Governing Chamber of the League is hidden in Zingrave's own room, the fireplace moving bodily backwards to reveal steps to an underground meeting room.

Through attendance at the meeting Lee learns of the proposed fate of Charles Markham. Markham has knowledge of the location of a fortune in gold, this secret to be extracted from him by the famous brain surgeon and league member Dr Sims Jameson before the scoundrelly surgeon brings about Markham's death. Lee rescues Markham from this fate but not before Zingrave has learned the location of the gold. ('The Specialist's Last Case', NLL OS 25, 27-Nov-15).

Zingrave calls a meeting of the Governing Members. One of the key members. Sir Roger Hogarth, ventures to suggest that Nelson Lee was responsible for the downfall of Dr Sims Jameson. Zingrave shakes his head.

*"No; you are mistaken. Sir Roger," he interrupted silkily. "Nelson Lee is a clever man, I freely admit, but I do not think we need fear him. In the affair of Dr. Sims Jameson he proved himself to be exceptionally smart. But one thing is certain - he knows nothing of the doctor's connection with the League of the Green Triangle, and our organisation is as much an intangible myth to him as it is to the dunderheaded police."*

Zingrave, unaware that Nelson Lee has inside information of the League's business and had sat in the very chamber at the previous meeting, has made the mistake, in his vanity, of underestimating Lee's strength as an opponent. When Zingrave sends the American mining engineer Page T. Dayton (Triangle member, of course) to recover the gold Nelson Lee manages to reach Markham's cave before Dayton who, in his attempt to murder Lee and Nipper, brings about his own death ('The Gold Cavern', NLL OS 27, 11-Dec-15).

When Lord Sylvester, another Governing Member, is in the company of three millionaires who are not members of the Triangle, he overindulges in his host's excellent whisky and feels impelled to tell them the advantages of membership - to the horror of Sir Gordon Hyde, who is also a guest but who is himself a Governing Member. When this is reported to a meeting of the Governing Circle, we see Zingrave

*moved for once from his usual equanimity.*

*Zingrave rose to his feet.*

*"What did Sylvester utter?" he demanded, his usual gentle voice now quivering with scarcely suppressed passion. Even Hyde was somewhat taken aback by the fire of fury which blazed from Zingrave's eyes.*

*"Sylvester declared that he and I were members of the Governing Circle of the league," continued Sir Gordon reluctantly, "and that the Orpheum Club is our headquarters. In addition, he said that you, Professor Zingrave, were the chief."*

*"I did not know what I was saying," he cried huskily. "I did not know—"*

*The professor smote the table with a loud smack.*

*"Did not know" he thundered. "That is no excuse! A man who reveals the league's secrets in a drunken orgy is unfit to belong to the Governing Circle. Lord Sylvester, I have a mind to treat you as all traitors are treated—" ("The Three Millionaires", NLL, OS 29, 25-Dec-15)*

This was the first time the Governing Circle has seen Zingrave in a fury. But, in a moment he has overcome it, and reverts to his usual equanimity as his nimble brain sees a way to safeguard the League's secret and make a fortune at the same time. The solution proposed by Zingrave is to trick the three millionaires into entering a tontine, a partnership by which if any member dies, his share is divided among the others. James Coldrey, the League's crooked lawyer, ensures that he and Hyde are partners, and they, of course, will gain as the three millionaires meet with fatal accidents. When Nelson Lee is tipped off by Martin Caine, he takes steps to foil the evil plan.

Zingrave's title of Professor is not merely an affectation - he is a leading scientist. Dr Leverett, a renowned Egyptologist has taken delivery of the mummified body of Pharaoh Meyduraam, and is attacked by Ramses Rhamsiptah, the High Priest of the Sacred Worshippers of the Myduraam Pyramid from which the mummy was stolen. Finding his master unconscious, Dr Leverett's butler telephones Professor Zingrave as a fellow scientist to ask for assistance. Zingrave is out, so the butler calls Nelson Lee instead. Meanwhile the message has been passed to Zingrave who arrives first. He examines Leverett and discovers a poisoned splinter. At that moment Lee arrives and is in time to observe the Professor hide the splinter and pronounce Leverett dead from a heart attack. Lee discovers that the doctor is the victim of a poison attack and also discovers a notebook. Meanwhile, from his conversations with Leverett, Zingrave has already learned that there is a fortune in treasure hidden in the Meyduraam Pyramid, but that only the Sacred Worshippers know the secret of the entrance. Guessing that the doctor's attackers mean to take the mummy back to the Pyramid, Zingrave uses one of his own inventions, a drug which induces a death-like trance for weeks on end, to substitute for the mummy a certain Frank Hungerford, a prisoner of the League who would be forced to co-operate by stealing the treasure once he has been taken inside the Pyramid.



Nelson Lee deduces from the Leverett's notebook the League's intentions and, when he is visited by Hungerford's mother wanting help to track down her missing son, the plot is revealed and, of course, foiled by Lee and Nipper.

Vera Zingrave is the Professor's stepdaughter. She shares none of his evil traits but is instead a sweet, gentle and charming girl. This does not, however, prevent the Professor from attempting to make money from an arranged marriage with the brutish and uncouth South African millionaire Malcolm Tressidor. ("The House of Fear", *NLL*, OS 37, 19-Feb-16). Apart from the fact that Vera finds the millionaire's attentions loathsome, she is, unknown to the Professor, already devoted to Douglas Clifford, whom she met before his incarceration.

Since Clifford's return, their friendship has developed into love, but this is thwarted by Clifford's necessity to disguise himself as an older man. Vera is aware that Clifford is disguised to escape a powerful criminal organisation but has no idea that her stepfather is the leader of this organisation.

The Professor stoops to new depths by trading on his stepdaughter's goodness and devotion to achieve his mercenary ends, showing no humanity in the process. He goes so far as allowing himself to be seen chained by Tressidor in a prison, apparently starving, to force Vera to accept Tressidor's proposal of marriage. Vera is ready to sacrifice herself, but fate takes a hand, and Tressidor perishes by a freak of nature when the house where he and Vera are staying, and where Clifford has been imprisoned, half collapses over the edge of a cliff. Vera is rescued and Tressidor perishes thus removing the threat of marriage.

This is the second time Clifford has escaped prison because its walls have collapsed, a form of escape which is repeated elsewhere in the ESB canon. Another recurring theme is the collapse of half of a house over a cliff, an idea that Brooks considered worth repeating and which can be found in the 1954 *Ironsides Cromwell*





As they staggeringly retreated, Lee saw the masses of lava pouring down the mountain, and in less than two minutes the spot where Zingrave had been standing was covered every inch of it - by the awful liquid fire! (See page 40.)

story "The Crooked Staircase".

Clifford knows that one day he will need to break the news to Vera that his enemy is her stepfather. However he is saved from this difficulty by an occurrence brought on by Zingrave's own evil. He has taken Vera's cat to use for an experiment. Vera, in seeking her cat, accidentally locks herself in a cupboard in the Professor's laboratory, where she overhears a conversation which makes it clear that the Professor is the head of the Green Triangle and is planning more criminal activity ("The Ship of Doom", *NLL*, OS 47, 29-Apr-16). Confronted by Vera, he takes steps to have her taken on board a ship. This is his greatest betrayal, for his plan is to ensure that she dies at sea, ostensibly of some obscure disease. The seizing of Vera has not, however, gone

unnoticed, for she has revealed her discovery to Clifford at Nelson Lee's consulting rooms and Lee recognises her danger. Information from Martin Caine reveals the Triangle's plans and Lee and Nipper secrete themselves on board the ship. Vera is rescued, it goes without saying, of course, but the detective and his assistant are considered by the Triangle to have perished along with Vera when the doomed ship, the *Ocean Queen*, sinks to the bottom of the South Atlantic sea.

This allows Lee and Nipper to go into hiding to bring about the final demise of the criminal organisation. The pair strike at the heart of the Triangle's existence, the Orpheum Club. Of course, Lee, when disguised as Oscar Sillard, the Governor of Portmoor prison, has already penetrated the secrets of the Triangle's meeting room.

The Governing Circle of the Triangle are greatly surprised when Sir Gordon Hyde attends the next meeting of the Circle. It is believed by all that Sir Gordon had met his death following an encounter with Lee (in "The Three Millionaires", *NLL*, OS 29, 25-Dec-15). Hyde explains how he escaped and has been in hiding. What is not suspected by any of the members at the meeting, however, is that Hyde did indeed perish in that encounter, and that this reincarnation is Nelson Lee himself in disguise.

Lee uses his disguise to set up a raid on the Orpheum Club with the help of Inspector Lennard and Scotland Yard. The whole of the Governing Circle of the Green Triangle is rounded up, marking the final defeat of the great organisation.

Zingrave escapes, but is tracked by Nipper, who sees the professor dive into an ornamental pool in his garden and fail to surface. Nipper and Scotland Yard believe he has gone to his death, but dragging the pool reveals no corpse. Lee discovers Zingrave's cunningly-contrived hide-out, but after a desperate fight, the professor escapes. ("The Great Club Raid", *NLL*, OS 50, 20-May-16). Nelson Lee and Nipper get onto Zingrave's trail with the help of William the Conqueror. This latter, it should be explained, hastily, had no royal blood, being a "clumsy, ugly-looking dog of no recognised breed, although the animal certainly bore a resemblance to a bloodhound".

The chase takes Lee and Nipper across the world to Batavia, the capital of the Island of Java. Here Zingrave is witnessed by the pair to meet his end when a volcano erupts and molten lava rushes down the mountain side, completely covering in seconds the place where the professor was standing.

This is the spectacular end to the life of a remarkable villain, or at least would have been if indeed the professor had met his end. Certainly Nelson Lee, Nipper, Clifford and Vera Zingrave believed Zingrave to be dead, and the Green Triangle to have been eradicated. Clifford is able to cast off his disguise and to fulfil his promise to marry Vera. All is serene until Christmas time, and then...



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## A TOAST TO ABSENT FRIENDS

by Bob Whiter

**(Bob gave this toast at the October 2002 Luncheon at the London Old Boys Book Club. He intended it also as a tribute to the many "absent friends" of or hobby who are not individually named here.)**

I think I'm the only surviving member of the original eight collectors who founded the Old Boys Book Club way back in 1947.

I was number three after Len Packman and Bob Blythe and served as treasurer until I emigrated to America in 1961.

Looking back over the years one is saddened by the loss of so many fine fellow and lady collectors, most of whom prior to their passing had become very dear friends.

Time doesn't permit us to mention everyone but Mary has asked me to say a few words about some of them. Who doesn't remember Eric Fayne? I had been in correspondence with Eric for many years, but had never met him until we held the second O.B.B.C. meeting at my house in Wood Green. I was delighted after having invited him to attend, to have him show up resplendent in his Modern School blazer. He soon showed what an asset he was going to be to the London club.

He insisted that for the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting we make use of his school at Surbiton. It was here that the first quiz on the schools was held. Lucky me, I was invited to lunch! Eric also invited another collector from Brighton, John Robyns (known as Red Magnet Robby), three wonderful friendships were formed and to this day I treasure the happy moments spent in the company of both these men. Not to be outdone as it were Robby invited the Book Club to use his home for future venues. What wonderful times they were. After the meetings Eric would give a film show in the school's own cinema and Robby who was a Pearl White fan would show episodes from the Exploits of Elaine & the Clutching Hand.

When Herbert Leckenby relinquished the editorship of our beloved Collectors Digest he couldn't have handed it over to a finer successor. Without any reflections on Herbert, Eric made our little mag into a publication that made everyone proud to be a part of.

I was always full of new ideas and innovations (I would still like to see his creation of Slade College professionally published – I still reread his Xmas stories of the 'Gump's' detective work!). And of course reverting to the club meetings at his school – they became a legend – who can ever forget his worthy housekeeper, "Madam"?

I could go on singing his praises as I'm sure most of you could – but we mustn't forget to pay tribute to some of our other hobby friends who although have left us, have also left us with a lot of happy memories. I would like to mention Bill Lofts. The amount of facts and figures about our story papers that he unearthed and ferreted out was truly amazing and he fully deserved his nickname as the Sexton Blake of

"A toast to departed friends!"



Bob White  
-2002-







Story Paper Collecting. When writing an article on R. Caton Woodville, I was very grateful for his help concerning the latter part of the famous artist's life. It was partly through Bill's assistance that I was able to trace and contact the daughters of the late George E. Rochester, the well-known aviation author. His many articles on our favourite topics were and are very interesting and well worth reading and re-reading.

Many times the idea of making a film about Greyfriars has been suggested, each time the objection raised was – yes but who are we going to get to play Bunter? Finally after many tests and try-outs including the fat boy from the Will Hay trio, a virtually unknown actor was selected – his name was Gerald Campion. Opinions are divided over the series as a whole – but I venture to say most people would agree he made a good job out of an extremely hard part to play. I wrote to him and invited him to attend one of our meetings. I received a charming reply – “he'd be delighted”! After a very jolly visit – he answered all sorts of questions and gave out his autograph – he said how much he'd enjoyed the meeting and on hearing I belonged to the Wood Green Operatic offered to help in any future productions. As I was showing him out we passed the downstairs front room – acting on an impulse I asked if he would do me a special favour - would he go in and meet my mother? “Why of course” was his reply.

I ushered him in to where my mother was sitting. With outstretched arm he said “Mrs. Whiter, how very nice to meet you” addressing her as though she was the queen! It made my mother's day and I shall never forget his kindness. A couple of days later I received a very nice letter thanking the Old Boys Book Club for the welcome they had given him and enclosing an autographed photograph of himself in his Bunter role. In later years I was very pleased to see him in a very much older part in one of the Sherlock Holmes series with Jeremy Brett.

I only had the pleasure of meeting Betty Hopton once but was immediately made aware of her wonderful disposition, her sincere love for all her hobbies – what a joy from then onwards to receive her Xmas cards – brimming over with lively drawings of her animal friends, and good wishes. Every time Marie and I came back to the U.K. we were in hopes of seeing Betty and her husband again.

As with the preceding people my last I remember with deep affection – Darrell Swift. He awakens bittersweet memories, particularly as Marie and I were the last of our circle to see him alive! What a hail fellow well met he was. A friend to everyone – always cheerful, always helpful, a lover of jokes – he would mention jokes in his letters that we'd exchanged verbally years before! Whilst at the Universal Studios he bought several towels bearing the Psycho movie motif – I don't think I'm telling tales out of school when I tell you, Mary, these were to be used in a joke on you, when you were to attend the Northern Club's Luncheon!

Let us now raise our glasses and drink a toast to all our departed friends, who although no longer with us, will always remain in our hearts, providing us with happy memories of ‘Happy Hours’ of past meetings, and the resolve to keep alive the spirit of

#### THE OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB



# THE NORTHBROOK SCHOOL SERIALS

by Cliff Wanford

Eagle, the boys magazine of the 1950s and 1960s, is best known for its picture strips Dan Dare, Riders of the Range, Luck of the Legion and many others. But Eagle also contained a wealth of written stories and serials. There were several one-off serials followed by Rex Milligan and Jennings school serials, and Biggles made two appearances in *Biggles in the Blue* and *Biggles in the Gobi*.

The school serials unique to Eagle, however were those of Northbrook 'School. In 1952, Ellen Vincent, acting Editor of Eagle asked Peter Ling to write a serial for the magazine. He created the Northbrook school serials that began early in 1953 and continued to 1959. During those six years he wrote a total of 32 serials, five short stories for Eagle Annuals and a novel.

The serials were usually 12 to 15 episodes in length, and spread over two pages but there were shorter ones of four or five episodes to coincide with real time school holidays and at Christmas. The 3J's John Allen, Jacko Eccles and Jimmy(specs) Davis their leader, started off with *The 3J's of Northbrook* which introduced the main characters and their adversaries, bully boys Bradbury, Harlow and West, as well as Headmaster Mr Ravenshaw and form master Mr Wakefield. Peter Ling was an avid reader of the Magnet during its last years, 1935- 1940. He decided to make Northbrook a day school rather than a Greyfriars style boarding school. A Rex Milligan story followed, then Northbrook returned for an unbroken run.

EAGLE 24 July 1953

# The Three J's



in

# The Treasure of Northbrook



Join in the fun and excitement of this super school serial today!

Written by PETER LING and illustrated by DUDLEY POUT

Each episode had one or two line drawings to set the scene. The first serial was illustrated by Bill Dowsett, but Dudley Pout, a former poster artist for 1930s films, and Peter Kay took over for the remainder. *Treasure of Northbrook* was the next serial, Tom Coppernick was the new boy involved in a counterfeit racket at a travelling fair.

As the stories developed the school gradually filled with characters, Old Heather, the school porter; Irving Flynn, a considerable actor, useful for impersonating busy-bodies from the Ministry of Education, amongst others Paul Dupont, a boy of English-French parentage who after the 3Js foil a plot to kidnap him, invites them back to his home in the Pyrenees where further adventures occur. There are, of course secret societies, and a writer of school stories involved in others. In the *Spooks of Northbrook*, Jacko reveals his new hobby - ghost-hunting - while sitting round a blazing fire on Christmas Eve with Jimmy and John and a large bag of chestnuts, and we are launched into a Christmas tale.

In *Next door to Northbrook*, the sinister character Conrad Castle keeps Willi Jarman a prisoner in a house on the edge of Northbrook's school grounds and in *Northbrook at the Fair* the 3Js take a trip to the World's Fair in Brussels during 1958.

Other school holiday adventures took place in Spain, France or Germany. During the writing of the Northbrook stories, Peter Ling had been gradually writing more scripts for television. *Focus on Northbrook* featuring Mungo Burr, the T.V. presenter, was a reflection of this shift. The story involved Northbrook in a television quiz contest against St Anne's girls school. After the final story, *Network over Northbrook* (finishing in 1959), Peter Ling wrote mainly for television. This included 18 months of the soap *Compact*, followed by more than 20 years of *Crossroads*. He also scripted a *Dr Who* serial as well as 3 episodes of *The Avengers*, and he managed at least 8 novels.

I hope the above will put a few readers in touch with Northbrook School, I'm sure that they will enjoy what they find.





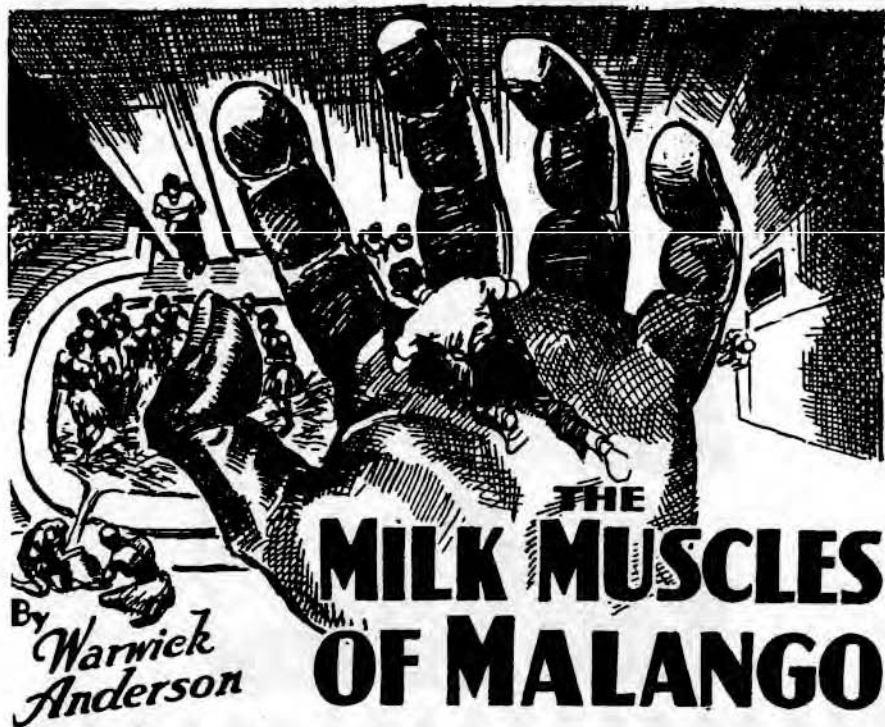


## RIPPING YARNS REVISITED

by  
**John Hammond**



It is odd how stories first read in childhood can sometimes remain vividly in the mind throughout life. I am now nearly 70, but some of the tales I read as a schoolboy have remained in the forefront of my imagination through the years. Such a story was 'The Milk Muscles of Malango' by Warwick Anderson, which I first read more than sixty years ago. It is an exciting tale of adventure and derring-do set on a remote Pacific island involving sinister natives, a gigantic idol, and an elixir which produces prodigious muscular strength. For years I could not get the story out of my mind. I could recall the plot vividly and the title, but had completely forgotten the name of the author and where I had encountered the story in the first place. After searching through various annuals and indexes without success I finally wrote to DC Thomson in Dundee and received a helpful reply from them, kindly enclosing a photocopy of the complete story! It turned out to be from *The Rover Book for Boys* for 1937. Since then I have managed to acquire a copy of the book in mint condition, so I can now enjoy rereading the story whenever the mood takes me.



Another example is *The Castaways of Disappointment Island*, a really gripping tale of shipwreck, adventure and exploration set on an island off the coast of New Zealand. At first I assumed it was a novel in the vein of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, but after a time I became convinced that the narrative was so compellingly written that it must be a true story. I then wrote to Lloyds in London, enquiring whether there had really been a ship called the *Dundonald* which had been shipwrecked in 1907. It was clear from their reply that the story was all true: there was actually such a ship, it really had been wrecked on Disappointment Island, and after many privations most of the crew had survived to tell the tale. *The Castaways of Disappointment Island* by H Escott Inman is one of the most exciting tales of adventure I have ever read, and can be strongly recommended. It turns up occasionally in second-hand bookshops.

When my wife was a girl she read a splendid "ripping yam" called *The Queen of the Extinct Volcano* by C Dudley Lampen, an action packed yam after the manner of Rider Haggard or Charles Gilson. As often happens in childhood, the book was lost but she never forgot it and for years she sought another copy. Finally a copy turned up in a junk shop in Darlington for the unbelievable sum of 10p.

These examples illustrate the point that the reading of our childhood often remains with us long after schooldays have been left behind. The staple diet of my own boyhood - *Dixon Hawke's Casebook*, the Sherlock Holmes stories, *King Solomon's Mines*, *Treasure Island*, *The Prisoner of Zenda* and *The Thirty Nine Steps* - not to mention *The Rover Book for Boys* and *The Children's Encyclopaedia* - still have the power to interest and inspire, and can still evoke a thrill when I come across copies today.



## THE COMIC THAT WITNESSED MURDER

### Butterfly No 215 and the slaying of Teddy Haskell

by Ray Moore

This is the story of a killing and of a comic bought that was never read. It's also the story of a police investigation and a trial for a capital crime. A trial that, maybe uniquely in the annals of British justice, introduced into evidence a children's comic.

The story begins, perhaps somewhat appropriately, one long ago Halloween at 8.30pm on Saturday 31st October 1908 in Salisbury, Wiltshire. The night was misty but not too cold and the spire of the great cathedral had already been lost in the darkness as a mother and her crippled twelve year old son made their way to the local corner shop where the lad bought himself a 1/2d copy of 'Butterfly'.

He may already have been a little too old to appreciate the antics of 'Little Willie Winks' and 'Bobby and the Woolly Bears' but then there were still the exciting serials to enjoy and 'Portland Bill', the old lag endlessly seeking employment, on the cover

to raise a smile. Still, whatever the lad preferred it would make no matter for he would never get to read his purchase, for in two hours he would be dead. His throat cut as he slept in his bed and his copy of 'Butterfly', which he had intended to read in the morning, lying on the chest of drawers by his bed.

The boy was **Edwin Richard Haskell**, who was invariably called Teddy, and he lived with his widowed mother **Flora Fanny Haskell** at 40, Meadow Road, a two storey terraced cottage in the Fisherton district of the town.

Teddy was a popular, very cheerful lad despite having lost his right leg below the knee to a bone disease when he was five years old, the same year that his father had died of consumption. And while he perennially used two crutches to get around he was renowned and admired for his agility in spite of them, even being remembered in later years as having been a skilful footballer despite his handicap.

Since her husband's death Mrs Haskell had scraped a meagre living for herself and her son, who was an only child, by taking in washing and going out as a laundress to upper class homes, and as for her relationship with her son, as one neighbour said at the time 'Everything a mother ought to be, she was'.

In the early evening of Teddy's murder Mrs Haskell had gone out shopping and as usual had left Teddy in the care of his uncle who lived next door at 38 Meadow Road. Returning at 8.30pm she had then picked Teddy up and they had gone together to the corner shop where he bought himself the copy of 'Butterfly' that he would, sadly, never get to read.

According to Mrs Haskell's later testimony, when they returned home she and Teddy had had their supper and then the boy had went to bed, taking his comic with him, at about 9.45pm.

Nothing more of significance then occurred until 10.20pm when Mrs Haskell answered the door to a Co-op delivery boy named **John Wright**. He had been sent to deliver a parcel to a Mrs Manning who lived at No 42 Meadow Road and, finding no one at home, went next door to Mrs Haskell's to ask if she would take in the parcel for her neighbour. According to what he later said in court Mrs Haskell answered the knock on her door promptly and quite happily agreed to take charge of the parcel. He further added that he noticed nothing suspicious about either Mrs Haskell's demeanour or appearance at this time, and nor could he remember seeing anyone hanging about in the street.

Then, only ten minutes later at 10.30pm, **Percy Noble**, a nephew of Mrs Haskell who lived next door, came to the back door of his aunt's house with the intention of repaying a shilling he had borrowed from her earlier. Within seconds of knocking on the door he heard from inside his aunt's house what he later described as a 'jumping sound' which he took to be someone leaping down several steps of a flight of stairs at once. This noise being almost immediately followed by his aunt opening the door and shrieking at him 'Go stop that man! He has killed my poor Teddy! Go for a doctor quick!'.

Responding to his aunt's screaming Percy Noble rushed into the kitchen and through to the hall where he found the front door open and noticed a bloodstain at



### **The Haskell Murder**

Teddy Haskell, the murdered boy  
*Photo Radio Times Hulton Picture Library*

*Bottom left*  
Mr Justice Ridley, who conducted the first  
Haskell Trial  
*Photo Radio Times Hulton Picture Library*

*Bottom right*  
Mr Justice Darling, who presided over the  
second Haskell Trial  
*Photo Radio Times Hulton Picture Library*



the bottom of the stairs. As he ran on into the street his aunt's screams were already drawing the other occupants of Meadow Road to their doors and windows and by the time he returned fifteen minutes later with **Dr H L E Wilks**, who declared the boy dead, vigilante groups were already scouring the neighbourhood for any would be assailant.

When he examined Teddy's body, and which was later confirmed at the autopsy, Dr Wilks found no evidence that the boy had struggled in any way with his murderer. The only reasonable conclusion to be drawn from this was that the boy had been murdered as he slept and had died almost instantaneously, the actual cause of death having been a single deep knife wound about 2 1/2ins long which had severed both the main artery in the boy's neck and also his windpipe. The severing of the artery had released a spray of blood which had travelled at least a yard upwards and outwards and had spattered not only the chest of drawers by the side of the bed and the comic which lay upon it but also presumably the person who had perpetrated the crime.

A local woman called Mrs Chivers had taken on the role of trying to comfort the distraught Mrs Haskell, and it was she who first noticed that she had a blood stain, or rather a number of spots of blood, on the sleeve of her blouse. Bloodstains that Mrs Haskell would later tell the police had been caused by her son's murderer having thrown the murder weapon at her as he came down the stairs and ran past her into the street.

Overnight, with her son's body still lying in the bedroom upstairs, Mrs Haskell and her chaperone Mrs Chivers stayed on in the house accompanied by Mrs Haskell's own mother, Mrs Carter, and a police sergeant named Golding. Sometime during the night Mrs Haskell suddenly inquired of the policeman 'Is the money alright?', further explaining that Teddy had had eight pounds in gold and a 2s piece in the locked top drawer of the chest in his room (money he had saved in dribs and drabs, given him by his grandmother over several years, towards the purchase of an artificial cork leg which he had intended to buy just as soon as he stopped growing).

When Sgt. Golding checked the drawer he found that the lock had indeed been forced and that some of the money, amounting to £4 12s, was missing, if Mrs Haskell's reckoning could be trusted.

By the next morning when all attempts by both police and locals had fail to track down the assailant the Chief Constable of Salisbury called in Scotland Yard in the shape of **Chief Inspector Walter Dew**.

Twenty years before, Dew had been one of the investigating officers who had scoured Whitechapel in the vain search for Jack the Ripper but here, in Meadow Road, his initial feeling was that the culprit in this crime would turn out to be a lot easier to identify and bring to book. And so, after questioning her for two days at 10.30pm on Tuesday 3rd November, exactly three days after the death of her son, Dew arrested Mrs Haskell for his murder.

As far as Dew was concerned a number of things had told against Flora Fanny Haskell, most incriminating of all being the pattern of bloodstains on her blouse



which did not seem to fit with the idea that the knife that had killed her son had been thrown at her. Then there was her all too vague description of the assailant whose features she said she could not see in the unlit hallway and, when pressed, her uncorroborated story that it might have been the same man who had come seeking lodgings at the house the day before the murder. He, although a stranger to her, referred to her by name. And then of course there was the rumour that she was thinking of marrying again, and that Teddy may have been a barrier to her plans.

After her arrest on Tuesday night Mrs Haskell was incarcerated in Devizes Prison and the following afternoon she was one of scant few local residents who didn't attend her son's funeral, an elaborate occasion attended by the great and the good of Salisbury and including twelve of Teddy's schoolfellows walking behind the mourning coach, each carrying a white chrysanthemum.

It was plain that local opinion was firmly on the side of Mrs Haskell, despite her arrest, and a defence fund was set up for her immediately following the funeral, a fund that would be put to good use when after an coroner's inquest that lasted eight days, she was remanded in custody and committed for trial at the Winter Assize of the Western Circuit in February 1909.

The judge presiding at the Winter Assize in February 1909 was **Mr Justice Ridley**, and leading for the prosecution in the Haskell case was **J. Alderson Foote K.C.** and for the defence a barrister named **Rayner Goddard**.

In the time that had elapsed since the inquest the police had traced Mrs Haskell's gentleman friend, a ship's steward called **Alfred Mold** who had been at sea at the time of the murder. It soon became clear, after questioning Mold and from corroborating statements, that far from seeing Teddy as a burden that he would have been unwilling to bear had he and Mrs Haskell married, he actually was fond of the lad, and would often be seen playing with him when he was home on leave. In light of this, if Mrs Haskell had killed her son the motive that she had done so to secure her future with Mr Mold had become rather spurious.

Indeed, in his opening statement at the trial prosecution counsel Mr Alderson Foote severely undermined the Crown's chances of a conviction by limiting its suggestion of a motive to the following. 'The only theory the Crown are able to present is that this woman committed this act in one of those extraordinary abnormal conditions of mind which overtake human beings sometimes, and which it is impossible for medical men or legal experts to give any adequate explanation of. In other words although sane in every other respect Mrs Haskell had killed her son in a moment of psychopathic madness.'

With such a tenuous motive the prosecution case could have fallen apart there and then but for the forensic evidence of the Home Office pathologist **Dr Pepper** who was adamant that the pattern of bloodstains on Mrs Haskell's blouse was much more likely to have been the result of spraying than of the murder weapon having been thrown at her.

In his turn, defence counsel Rayner Goddard also raised some telling points. Nothing in Mrs Haskell's manner that dreadful day had hinted at anything out of the



ordinary, not even at 10.20pm when John Wyatt, the delivery boy, had unexpectedly called at her door. Also if she had been spattered by the blood gushing from her son's wound as she committed the crime, why so little and why was there none on her hands? Is it conceivable that she could have washed her hands so thoroughly before she answered the door to her nephew at 10.30pm that the police found no evidence of it either on her hands or in the household sink or indeed anywhere else in the house? Defence counsel further posited the alternative solution that maybe Teddy himself had been unwise enough to tell someone about the savings that he kept in his room, perhaps the man who had sought lodgings at the house the day before the murder and called Mrs Haskell by name, and who had returned the following night and coldly murdered the boy to prevent him subsequently revealing his identity to the police.

In the end the jury could not reach a verdict on which they were all agreed and a retrial was scheduled for two months later with **Mr Justice Darling** presiding and here, after only ten minutes deliberation the jury found Flora Fanny Haskell 'Not Guilty, on the grounds of insufficient evidence'.

After the trial Flora Fanny Haskell returned to the poor obscurity from which she came and is now lost to the pages of history. As for Chief Inspector Walter Dew of Scotland Yard, he would gain lasting fame two years later as the man who brought **Dr Crippen** to justice, apprehending him and his mistress **Ethel le Neve** as they tried to make their escape across the Atlantic aboard the S S Montrose, thanks in part to messages sent by the newly invented wireless telegraph. And lasting fame too, although some would call it infamy, came also to defence counsel Rayner Goddard who would climb the ranks of the British legal system to the very top, becoming a High Court judge in 1932 and ultimately Lord Chief Justice in 1946. The cases over which he presided including the Chalk Pit Murder, the Laski libel trial and the case of Craig and Bentley, for the handling of which he is now almost universally criticised.

And as for Teddy Haskell, no one was ever brought to account for the murder of the lad who spent a 1/2d on a copy of 'Butterfly' No 215 that he never got to read.

**(Editor's note:** The heading and pictures from *The Butterfly* reproduced here are not from No. 215 but from an issue some years later. The adventures of 'Portland Bill' still occupy the front page, but he is, by No. 227, known as 'Butterfly Bill'.)



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# TEA WITH 'MAULY'

by Johnny Burslem



"How about tea at Chunkley's?  
said Mauly with a smile  
"After all' tis Christmas.  
A treat, once in a while".  
Five long faces broke to grins  
Bob Cherry slapped his back  
"His lordship" was surrounded  
and up-ended like a sack.  
"I say you fellows" squeaked a voice  
"SCRAM" roared Bull "Vamoose!"  
"I'll come." "You won't", and Nugent kicked  
Backed up by Wharton's shoes.



By 4 p.m. the happy six  
sat resplendent at a table,  
Butter could not melt their mouths  
as far as they were able.  
"What's going on?" asked Mauly  
"That's a film crew at the back",  
Excitement kindled, Cherry said  
"ZOOM, camera's there on track".  
"I see people dressed in costume"  
Nugent stood, surveyed a crowd  
"A sort of ball scene in fancy dress.  
Chap with phone shouts loud".  
"Thrilling, ain't it?" Mauly yawned  
"Big marquee of Chunkley's too".  
"Fancy filming a scene" gasped Bob  
Wharton punched him and said "A DO?"  
"I say you fellow's!", the sextet froze,  
"SCRAM BUNTER!" "That's gratitude" answered a squeak  
"walked my legs off to see you, I need some food  
enough to feed me a week".



Then suddenly, there was an angry face,  
"Six hours!" it bawled. "I'm pleading,  
"Cannot wait longer...nerves out of place  
Would "E" be dames? that I'm needing?"  
He glared at the seven with swollen eyes  
Six pairs of same stared him back  
"You mean?" gasped Cherry, "I do" he said,  
"Bunch of bridesmaids, you lot... Off the rack"  
"One of 'em's fat as my mother".  
His head bumped direct Bunter's way  
"With a thick red wig, the goggles below  
"His mother won't know 'im, I'd say".  
Fifty quid each. I'll offer you all  
six "Bridesmaids and the fat one's me Mum.  
All types represented." He stared at pained faces  
"But I warn you..." you gotta keep STUM".  
He took the tense silence as agreement  
It was obvious that no one complained  
"Grab 'em fella's, they'll replace absentees"



Much haste was required 'fore it rained.  
 They were all grabbed and stripped  
 Faces sponged, pushed and prodded  
 Bunter bewildered, was so far gone  
 Whatever was asked he simply nodded  
 "INKY" resembled the "Queen of the Nile"  
 Cherry..."Madonna" who lost her smile.  
 Nugent was "Cathy" of Wuthering Heights  
 Bull (entirely unhinged) trouble with tights  
 Wharton serene, a wornan to hate,  
 Mauly...was straight out of "Kiss me Kate".  
 And there was Bunter...legs splayed apart  
 his gown about to come apart,  
 A nasty old soul with a heavy jowl  
 enhanced of course with ferocious scowl.  
 This group stood dejected  
 bewildered and tired



Big stalwart men pushed 'Props' as required  
 Lights flashed. Rough hands twirled them round  
 At one point crawled Bunter in without sound  
 Four minutes of agony  
 Then a voice roared "CUT"  
 "I've got it" it echoes  
 "Now, back to the hut"  
 They staggered through debris  
 back to the shed  
 silent and gasping  
 eyes smarting with dread  
 "Get the drags off fellas  
 get back to your school  
 You're TROUPERS tell the Boss  
 so break the golden rule  
 One word he barked... the seven stopped dead  
 "Say nought to no one, I'll lose my head  
 His last words snarled...Bunter took the stare  
 "What you've done's agin the law, mind that E' don't square."



They stood in a group in front of Chunkleys  
 A taxi came up and got them all in  
 The Taximan moaned his tyres might bust

But Mauly did wonders with lots of "Tin"  
 They had to meet Skinner at the gates  
 "You lot, been on benders?" he sneered.  
 They left him a wreck and to the "remove"  
 Where sanity restored they quietly cheered.  
 The last laugh came when Johnny Bull  
 Said from the bottom of his heart  
 The Film producers farewell line  
 that Bunter was the "Fat old TART"

What was the film I hear you ask?  
 At your "LOCAL" you might miss  
 Twas a whoop up version of the old classic  
 A remake of PRIDE 'N PREJUDICE





## COLWYN DANE AND CURRANT BUNS by Derek Ford



Going back a bit, by Friday, I had read my way through all the four Thomson story papers and there remained only *Champion* for tea-time reading. Invariably, over four ha'penny currant tea-cakes from Miss Bamford's bakery on the corner of our street, I read the latest case of Colwyn Dane and Slick Chester, written by Mark Grimshaw, the other stories of minor interest to me. Alas, Miss Bamford's well-remembered tea-cakes, along with her bakery, have long since vanished, as has *Champion* – incorporated into *Tiger* in March 1955 – but I shall always associate them with Colwyn Dane. And recently I have had another 'fill' of his investigations with a look-back through my collection.

The first *Champion* I have, for August 6, 1927, features the Duke Street, Adelphi, detective Derek Fox, with his assistant Chick Carew, one-time theatre call-boy, in the first of a serial "The Wanted Detective". It was by John Ascott, and according to a glaring placard, "Marcus Osborne Sues Famous Detective for Libel", and Fox is later framed for murdering Osborne. In the first issue of the *Champion* for January 28, 1922, however, it was Curtis Carr, the Flying Detective, by Geoffrey Rayle, who was the first investigator. He was followed by Panther Grayle, who had first appeared in *The Empire Library*, the author then given as Jack Lancaster, otherwise Alfred Edgar. By 1932, I found Colwyn Dane appearing in a serial versus Al Carelli, Chicago millionaire gang leader, but by 1935 he had settled down to a weekly complete case.

What titles to stimulate the digestive juices on Fridays: *The Cracksman Who Stole Goats' Beards*, *The Case of the Kidnapped Snowman*, *The Horse That Hated Cats*, *The Masked Skater of Fenland*, *The Boomerang of Sin Fu*, *The Screaming Sphinx*, *Riddle of the Coronation Flags* (1953), *The Unlucky Horseshoes*, not forgetting *The Man Who Collected Wooden Legs*.

And a right lot of villains Dane found himself up against, including 'Shoddy' Coutts, Dipper Firth, 'Kipper' Carr, Ratsey Figg, Foxy Tigg, 'Knife' Nelson, 'Cat' Hicks, 'Ferret' Simpson, 'Tike' Mullins, 'Rabbit' Sykes, 'Fairy' Glenn...

Thud! Bash! Wham! Or Crash! Thump! Thud! welcomed them all. But if he found himself their prisoner: "The Tec tugged at his bonds. The ropes were far too strong to break, but that didn't trouble Dane. Always prepared for a situation like this, he carried a keen razor-blade slotted into the heel of his shoe. He tucked up his bound legs, and soon made short work of the rope." Or Slick Chester would get busy with his catapult, and he was a dead shot.

The captions told us about the following: The boy who bought 20 white mice in a cage for 12/- for a man who then released them; the 'tec who blew up a balloon to catch a killer; They paid a magician to make Dane disappear, but it was the magician who vanished; Armed only with a fountain-pen against death-dealing spiders; Suspect spectre didn't expect a 'tec to inspect a speck of wax.

# The Case of THE PHANTOM COACH



*By Mark Grimshaw*

And then there were a rhyme or two:

What was the riddle of Priory Farm?  
Who wanted to do Grey Prince some harm?  
Read this story and you will see  
How Dane soon solved the mystery.  
To steal an ostrich seemed insane.  
No wonder Slick was baffled;  
But nothing baffled Colwyn Dane-  
Those crooks he quickly snaffled.

Like the rest of his brother A.P. 'tecs of the weekly tight columns, Dane seldom had time for a consultation at The Turrets, his North London home, as we shall see. From here he operated in a sports car or helicopter, assisted by Slick Chester and Tiger Gates, the reformed crook batsman, who looked after his bloodhounds, Nero and Caesar. When he went on a case he was always equipped with handcuffs and rope, which would always be required at some part of the case. He had a gadget on his pocket knife for picking locks, and which came in useful for the secret doors, panels and staircases he encountered. Once he found a lift accessed by turning a gas jet, leading to a cellar that immediately flooded.

Now for the "incident prone" Dane's cases... A few paragraphs below my heading for "The Phantom Coach" we are reading: "Around a corner of the road, a few hundred yards ahead a vehicle had appeared, heading straight towards them. But it was no ordinary vehicle ... Slick gasped at it. For it was an old-fashioned stage-coach, at least a hundred years old, drawn by two horses... And that wasn't all. Both coach and horses, glimmered and glowed with an eerie white light that made the young 'tec feel rather scared." No sound came from the coach or horses. Then it suddenly turned off along a side-road.

Late at night, a flat tyre, the jack missing, a big American saloon pulls up. A

request for the loan of a jack, opening the luggage locker a dead body falls out and the driver dashes for the cover of a wood.

“Well, guv’nor, you wanted a quiet weekend and I reckon you’ll get it. I shouldn’t think anything ever happened in this village.” They were about to meet the phantom rider.

The Man Who Sold £1 Notes for one penny was soon encountered walking along a crowded pavement in the West End. There was the gipsy running down the road into the head lamps of Dane’s car, fleeing from Marengo, the killer of ‘Highwayman Jode’, whom he’d just seen by Hangman’s Corner, riding on a flaming horse (all done with an accumulator).

They find their client, Farmer Beetle, in the village stocks, accused of selling milk from blue cows, and the vet eaten by them.

At home, Slick eating a gooseberry pie, made by Tiger, suddenly has an Egyptian scarab, two thousand years old, on his spoon, stolen from the Oriental Museum by the Phantom. It is identified by Det. Inspector Woods of Scotland Yard, when Dane holds it up to his television link in his consulting-room (1946). Incidentally, Woods is the only Scotland Yard man ever mentioned in the cases.

And I can’t conclude without mentioning the dead man on the floor covered with butterflies. The butterflies were all dead, too. Or the dozens of cats laying siege to a pillar-box, from which, when it was opened, a stream of a dozen frightened pigeons flew out.

Although it is getting on for fifty years since Colwyn Dane and Slick Chester solved their latest case – “The Big Top Rivals” – in the *Champion*, I still fancy they are lurking around. Only this morning I read in my paper that thieves had stolen puppets from the children’s television show *Rainbow*, and three men dressed as clowns had raided a wine bar, handcuffed the manager and threatened him with a saw-off shotgun and knife before escaping in a white van. I expect the pair were just coming round the corner.



 Merry  
**CHRISTMAS**



## MORE OF PETE HANGER'S GEMS OF HAMILTONIA



Bunter had, his faults - unknown to himself, but leaping to the eye, as it were, of every other fellow in the Greyfriars Remove. But among them "bad temper and malice were not included. Bunter was as quick to forget offences as to forget his lessons or his little debts. A fellow might kick Bunter one day, and be claimed as an old pal by Bunter the next day - especially if he had had a remittance in the meantime. A fellow might call Bunter all the names he could think of, and still the fat junior would meet him next time with an affable fat grin and roll into his study at tea-time in the most friendly fashion. MAGNET 1078

A ten-shilling note appeared in the Bounder's hand. Gosling eyed it longingly - indeed, lovingly. Gosling liked ten-shilling notes, exactly half as much as he liked pound notes. MAGNET 1146

..."I say, Coker, will you go in and see where Quelch is, and bring me word if the coast is clear for me to dodge into the school."

Coker almost fell down in his astonishment at such a request from such a negligible microbe as a Lower Fourth fag.

He gazed at Bunter speechlessly.

"You can do it all right," said Bunter. "You ain't very bright, Coker, but you've got sense enough to do that." MAGNET 1076

He was shown into a room, where the commissionaire addressed a fat gentleman, who Bunter supposed to be the manager of the hotel. To Bunter's relief, this gentleman addressed him in English. Bunter was sick of talking to French people who did not understand their own language. MAGNET 1178

Bunter had no desire whatever to see an increase in his store of knowledge. He did not, perhaps hate history with the deadly animosity he felt for mathematics and Latin. Still, he loathed it. The glories - and otherwise - of the past, had no interest whatever for Bunter.

There had been altogether too many kings and queens, in Bunter's opinion; he was not interested, or in anything or anybody who had preceded William George Bunter in the land that was now so happy to possess him.

Indeed, it might have been supposed that Billy Bunter regarded history, in the

proper sense of the word, as beginning with the birth of W.G Bunter. Geography, properly speaking, should have been confined to the area where W.G Bunter lived and moved and had his being. Arithmetic was superfluous, except in so far as it was useful to Bunter in counting his change at the tuckshop. Grammar was merely rot, and Latin Grammar particularly troublesome rot.

MAGNET 1144

"I say, old chap, be a sport I" urged Bunter. "I'll give you fifteen to one on St. Jim's."

"Fifteen postal-orders?" asked Skinner humorously. "You must be expecting as many as that by this time."

MAGNET 1068

Obviously, the fellow couldn't refuse to foot the bill, and that was the main point. Having disposed of the spread along with Bunter, he was equally liable. He couldn't refuse. If Bunter had no money, the other partaker of the feast was bound to pay. And Bunter hadn't any! So that was all right.

He might be annoyed, irritated, exasperated. He might call Bunter unpleasant names. That would be no new experience for Bunter. He was accustomed to thanklessness and want of proper feeling.

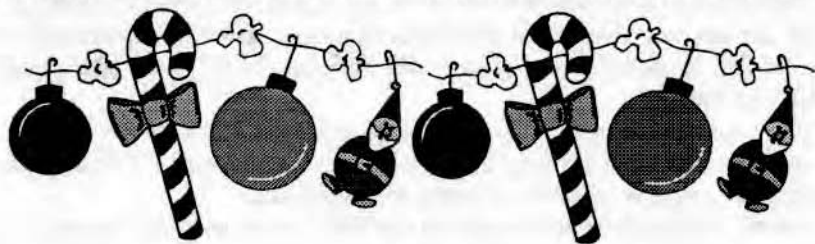
MAGNET 1078

Then they walked cheerily up to the inn, where Billy Bunter, at last was able to surround an extensive and excellent lunch and where, it transpired, fruit and cream were to be obtained - fresh fruit and rich cream - which brought a smile to Billy Bunter's fat visage that looked as if it would never come off!

MAGNET 1649

Indeed Billy Bunter would have chucked the river party there and then if the landlord of the Golden Trout would have put him up for the rest of the hols for the moderate sum of three-halfpence! That was the total of Bunter's wealth! He had spent nothing, so far, on the trip - so he still had all the money he had started with!

MAGNET 1649



# THE CASE OF THE WRONG VICTIM

by Ray Hopkins

Sexton Blake was called in on this case following the end of WWII. It wasn't until the proprietress of the Battenbury Hotel mentioned that the murdered man, so battered about the head that he was totally unrecognisable, was not the original booker of Room 7, that Sexton Blake wondered if he had been killed in mistake for somebody else. The crime happened during the night. The head had been smashed beneath the bloodied bedclothes which covered it,

This motiveless crime took on a different aspect several days later when Mrs Timmins indicated that she had originally booked the room to a Miss Ethel Wainwright who paid the booking fee of ten shillings for one night only. She said she was going to retrieve her overnight bag from Euston Station. That was around two o'clock. When she had not returned by six, Mrs. Timmins decided that she had gone elsewhere and wasn't coming back. She let the next caller have the room, it being the only one that was vacant. This was the murdered man, George Wilson.

As Miss Wainwright had signed the register prior to leaving to pick up her bag, Blake was able to ascertain that she had come from Drayton, Notts. There were only three bags left from those deposited at Euston on the relevant day and it was easy to discover which one belonged to the young woman. No further evidence of the owner was found among the contents. Drayton police were able to inform Blake that there was no Ethel Wainwright living there now, but there had been during the war. She had married an American G.I. and moved south several years ago.

As it was now a week since George Wilson's body had been found, it was apparent to Blake that Miss Wainwright must still be in London, and probably being held against her will, Somerset House was able to reveal that she had married a USAF Sergeant, Gene Lieber, in November 1942. Presumably she had severed her connection with the Sergeant and had reverted to her maiden name. But if she had been the intended victim she must have told the murderer where she had booked a room for the night. At Somerset House he was told that Ethel Wainwright, pinpointed because in both entries she was given as the daughter of Jonathan Wainwright, Engineer, had married Stephen. Grant, a civil servant of Boughton, Staffs. Blake suspected bigamy as the reason for the use of her maiden name in the hotel register. Bigamy, that is, if the American husband still lived.

A check with Stephen Grant reveals that he did not know that his wife was missing. His work in Leeds means he is only home every other weekend. He says that his wife had come to London for the day to attend a friend's wedding. The woman next door had received a telegram from Ethel saying that she had decided to stay on with friends for a few days longer. It was an odd thing, he continued, that she had fainted at the pictures the previous weekend, something she had never done before. Blake reassures Grant that nothing can have happened to his wife but privately feels that her continued absence could mean only that Ethel must be dead. But Grant shows signs of panic when Blake shows him the original of the telegram sent to Mrs.

Huggins. Blake stops Grant from seeing the name 'Wainwright on the reverse side but shows him the message. Grant says the original telegraph form is not in Ethel's handwriting!

Blake wants to know what the Grants were looking at when she fainted in the cinema. It was a newsreel showing the arrival of an American film star in London with her producer and her fiancé. Ethel suddenly gripped his hand quite tightly, drew in her breath sharply and then fell forward in a faint.

Blake's next stop is actually to view the piece of film. The film star's fiancé appeared to be trying to keep out of the limelight but the star pulled him forward. Blake was suddenly struck by the notion that though the man's name was given as Edward P. Harrington he may, in fact, have been Ethel's first husband, Gene Lieber, who had left her and returned to the U.S.A. However, a U.S. Army Department report requested by Scotland Yard revealed that he had been killed in action in Africa on 14 April 1943.

Blake shows the film star, Flower Fall, a photo of Ethel Wainwright but she says she is unknown to her. Asking to see her fiancé, she tells him that Harrington is not staying at her hotel but at the smaller Hotel Maurise in a dead end street which backs on to Euston Station. Because of the location, Blake expects to find himself in another Battenbury Hotel but finds, to his surprise, that the interior is rather plush and upper class in tone. The owner explains that it was the idea of her husband, an ex-RAF man, and the hotel mainly catered for Americans from New York. (The closeness and noise of the Euston trains reminded them of the Elevated Railway in New York City!) Discovering the super comfort and class while in the Armed Forces they tended to return with their wives after the war. The hotel, Blake surmised, was a little gold-mine. She tells Blake that Harrington is not an old customer but a new one who spotted the hotel's advert in a New York newspaper. As far as she knew, this was Harrington's first trip to England. From an old register she is able to tell Blake that Sgt Lieber and his wife stayed in the hotel in November 1942.

Harrington tells Blake he doesn't recognise Ethel Wainwright's photo and he had never known a Sgt Lieber. He tells Blake he can't stand all the razzmatazz that accompanies his film star fiancée's every move and that's why he's staying alone in this out-of-the-way hotel. What does he do in between the times he spends with Miss Fall? He likes to go around old bookshops, mostly those in Charing Cross Road. How about Crombie's in the Euston Road? Oh, yes, Crombie's is great, Harrington agrees.

In the Euston Road, Blake tells Tinker to return to the hotel and follow Harrington. He should be trying to find Crombie's bookshop. Why should he when he knows where it is? Crombie's doesn't exist, says Blake, I just made it up.

As Blake suspected, Harrington walks up and down Euston Road in a vain attempt to find Crombie's. Then Tinker sees him make a telephone call from a public call box from which he emerges enraged. By a roundabout route Harrington returns to the Hotel Maurise closely followed by Tinker. But Tinker doesn't see the end of the trail. He is hit over the head by a heavy instrument in a narrow side street.

Blake phones an old friend of his who is a columnist in Hollywood and will know about Flower Fall and her fiancé. Harrington, it appears, was in the USAF and his plane was shot down in Africa and he was the only survivor. He fell in love with and married the nurse who took care of him, but she was transferred to another hospital in Italy and the ship she was on was torpedoed in the Med. Apparently the nurse was from a wealthy family. Harrington inherited her estate and has been living on the proceeds ever since. Blake asks his columnist friend to contact the Washington Bureau for more information about Harrington's shooting down in Africa and tie that in with Sgt Lieber's crash which resulted in his death. Blake tells her this is a murder enquiry and she will get full details to publish from him when he solves the case.

Concerned by the fact that Tinker has not returned from shadowing Harrington, Blake returns to the narrow streets around the Hotel Maurise in search of him and discovers a group of boy scouts gazing down at bloodstains on the pavement. He fears they may be Tinker's and looks for a body. Remembering the iron fire escape he had seen through Harrington's window, he makes his way round the back of the Hotel Maurise to the Long alleyway and realises that it also services the back entrance of the Hotel Attenbury. So the murderer of George Wilson could have made his entrance through the window and, a startling thought, could have begun his murderous journey from the fire escape at the rear of the Hotel Maurise.

Blake climbs up the fire escape intending to enter Harrington's room but a sound behind warns him that he has been followed. He hears a gunshot and collapses on the steps, hoping this will delude the gunman into thinking he has been hit. Blake watches the man through almost-closed eyes and realises he is not Harrington. But the man evidently knows him as he continues up the fire escape to Harrington's room. Blake remains motionless. The two men return to Blake's inert body, Harrington's voice betraying his terror and fury at his cohort's action. Then, to Blake's astonishment, they carry him through a dark alley and place him across the railway lines at the end. As a train approaches, they hasten back through the narrow passage not waiting to witness their victim's bloody demise, Blake, too late to save himself lies fiat between the lines and prays as the train screams above and beyond him, that the two villains won't wait to survey his grisly remains.

Wiping the dust from his eyes he is relieved to see the backs of the two would-be-murderers vanishing into the dark passage through which they had carried their victim's body. Blake observes Harrington returning to his hotel room by the fire escape. The other man leaves him, continues along the back alley and weaves his way to and fro through a series of narrow turnings and alleys.

Blake is amazed at the man's knowledge of these narrow byways, completely hidden but so close to the busy Euston Road, and a sudden realisation comes to him that the man is going to the place where Ethel Wainwright is probably being kept a prisoner. By this time, he is sure that it must have been Harrington who killed George Wilson, mistakenly thinking that the covered sleeping body in the bed was Ethel's.

Blake slips into a doorway as the gunman stops at a boarded-up house and knocks at the door. When the door is opened he slips inside. Via an obliging nearby



shopkeeper Blake sends a message to Scotland Yard to arrest Harrington for Wilson's murder and to send reinforcements to the house he intends to break into. The message continues to the effect that he believes he has discovered where Ethel Wainwright is being kept prisoner, and where the man who shot him can be arrested.

Because he can see no light through the window he slides his paper-thin knife to release the catch. Voices are coming from the back part of the house. Blake tip-toes into the passage and finds himself facing a door that may be a cupboard or the entrance to a cellar. It turns out to be the latter. Counting sixteen steps and using his cigarette lighter he discovers another door sealed tight with a lock and chain. This must be where he will find the imprisoned girl or her dead body. He receives no reply to his faint knock and whispered question.

Trembling, he pockets the lock and chain after he picks it with his magic miniature tool kit, draws the heavy bolts at the door's top and bottom and opens the door to a room he can barely see within. He whispers the question again. His scalp contracts and his ears are blasted by a hair-raising scream!

Aware of cries and footsteps running down the cellar steps Blake tells Ethel who he is and that help is on the way. He has no more time than to thrust her out of the way as the door is burst open and Blake sees that the two of them are faced by three men, two he hadn't seen before, the third the gunman who had shot him on the fire escape. Blake repels the first two with the aid of the swinging chain. Slamming the door shut he exerts all the strength of his doubled-up body to prevent any of the men from entering.

Surprisingly, the pressure is taken away and Blake hears the three pairs of footsteps racing up the stairs. Trying to open the door he discovers that they have pushed the two heavy bolts back into position. He and the terrified girl are now imprisoned.'

They hear sounds of the men running back downstairs and the clanging of metal cans on the cellar floor. Blake flicks his cigarette lighter but puts it out quickly when he observes thick liquid with a pungent odour pouring under the door. A sudden bright light caused by the striking of a match is followed by an explosion. Blake and Ethel back away as "the flood beneath the door became a river of fire."

The fumes and the heat make them both cough, Blake's head began to swim. Ethel, overcome by the fumes, would have fallen had not Blake supported her. A sudden commotion overhead and the sound of many voices, the noise of footsteps on the cellar stairs are followed by the sound of the door splintering. "They haven't got away. We've nabbed 'em." Blake through his coughs recognises. The voice of Tinker who is bending over him, his head bandaged, but otherwise unhurt.

Ethel was sent to hospital where she was reunited with her husband, Stephen Grant, but not before she had gasped out to Blake the details of her travails. She real Harrington had been killed in the plane crash and Lieber, who survived, had taken over his name as a way to get himself out of a marriage which he felt had been a mistake. Thinking herself a widow, Ethel had remarried, she had not told Stephen that she was an American airman's widow because Grant hated all Americans and looked

upon as trash the girls who went out with them, due to his own sister's unfortunate liaison with one.

After registering at the Battenbury Hotel where Lieber had told her to register, she, on the way to retrieve her bag from Euston Station, was approached by Lew Jewell. He had been Lieber's co-pilot at the time of the crash. He told her Lieber planned to murder her because he feared the actress would dump him if she knew he was a bigamist. Lieber needed her millions to keep up his expensive life style, having already used up the fortune left to him by the wealthy American nurse who had been killed soon after their marriage. Jewell seemed entirely above board to Ethel and she fell in with his plan not to return to the Attenbury and allowed him to give her a drink to calm her down. He didn't tell Ethel that his only purpose in aiding her was to blackmail Lieber. But the drink was drugged and Ethel woke up in the darkened cellar where she had been imprisoned all the time she had been missing.

At Scotland Yard after his arrest, Jewell can't believe his eyes when he is confronted by Blake. Accused of killing Wilson, he tells them Harrington is the killer though he believed that he was, in fact, murdering his own wife. Jewell had only continued to keep Ethel imprisoned because she had refused to keep quiet after recovering from the drugged drink. She wanted to go to the police which Jewell knew would effectively stop him from blackmailing Lieber.

But his information comes too late. when the police go to the Hotel Maurice to arrest Lieber he is found with his head shattered. He had committed suicide by holding a gun to his mouth.

"The Euston Road Mystery" by Anthony Parsons, .SBL 148 (Third Series). July 1947, was the oasis for the above retelling of events in this Case.



## MY FAVOURITE ANNUAL

by Bob Whiter

### DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE ANNUAL?

Although as a boy I wouldn't receive my copy of the *Greyfriars Holiday Annual* until Christmas morning, several of the larger stores had them on display (in Wood Green my home town, it was Edmonds Bros.) and sometimes it was possible to steal a quick look at the contents, whetting the appetite as it were!

But to come to the present – I suppose most of us have a selection of those grand old annuals. I have quite a decent collection that I love dearly and among them the *Holiday Annual* for 1929 is a special favourite.

Oh, I know my good friend Roger Jenkins (you may remember he wrote an excellent article on the complete run of the *Greyfriars Holiday Annual* 1920-1941 in the 1971 *Collectors' Digest Annual*) is going to jump on me and say "But that was the first of those awful annuals with thick cardboard-like pages!" Roger would be perfectly

right of course. Personally I would like to have seen them adopt the type of material used in the late twenties and early thirties *Champion Annuals*.

Although the early *Holiday Annuals* with their thin pages, gave more reading matter and probably more value for money, they haven't stood up to the ravages of time as have the thicker pages. But the main reason for the 1929 Annual being my favourite is because it was my introduction to the famous schools – Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood, and thereby started my life-long love-affair with the works of Charles Hamilton. I also have a happy memory of one of my sisters reading to me the George E. Rochester story, "The Haunting of the Herr" during a bout in bed with the 'flu! This I remember cheered me up no end. Little did I think in those far off days, that one day I would be in touch with the author's two daughters, who would give me photographs and other memorabilia, including a special Royal Air Force plate in its case that the squadron had presented to their father.

My original copy began to fall apart, so I had it re-bound in blue cloth and leather, the spine lettered in gold; the front fly-leaf bears an original sketch of Harry Wharton drawn by C.H. Chapman. He did this for me at my house in Wood Green, whilst we were waiting for the members of the Old Boys Book Club to arrive. But let us now take a look at the rest of the contents of 'my favourite annual'. For the Greyfriars enthusiasts there were two stories, the first, "When Billy Bunter Forgot", was a reprint from *Magnet* 160. A very amusing story about how he lost his memory after diving into an empty swimming-bath. This tale has a couple of interesting little tit-bits, for instance, in order to try and restore Bunter's memory, Harry Wharton and Marjorie Hazeldene sing a duet. The song they use was one of Frank Richards' own compositions, "Tell Me What is Love", written in conjunction with his brother-in-law Percy Harrison. We are also treated to a funny account of John Bull (as he is called in the story) playing his concertina in another attempt to help Bunter regain his recollections. Bunter doesn't like it a bit and, when some of the fellows grab hold of Bull to stop the "noise", Bunter pounces on the offending instrument and jams it on the fire! In later years we were told Johnny Bull played a cornet – I wonder what happened to it?

The other Greyfriars story was a three chapter shorty'. Entitled "Chequemate", it dealt with Bunter's father sending Billy a £50 cheque which he was instructed to show around and then return. On the strength of this display of in-the-near-future anticipated wealth, the fat junior borrows right and left, until he inadvertently gives Fisher T. Fisher an I.O.U. on the back of his father's letter which had accompanied the cheque!

I realize that I am back tracking, as it were, but perhaps mention should be made at this time of the opening feature. In his "Editor to his Friends" feature, the editor states that the 1929 Volume appears in "an improved form to mark the occasion of the annual's tenth birthday – the more substantial paper used... makes the Holiday Annual a more imposing volume than ever". Such was the 'artful' way the change was explained!

The opening salvo, to coin a phrase, was entitled "A Grand Tour of Greyfriars.

This gave a rather clever potted description of the leading lights and a brief history of the school.

George E. Rochester has already been mentioned – other authors (apart from Charles Hamilton and his many nom-de-plumes) included Gilbert Chester and his “Bob the Airman” which was described in the explanatory two lines which preceded the story as “An exciting yarn of a lad’s dash from London to Prague by aeroplane and motor cycle, with some important papers”. This was illustrated with five black and white drawings by J.C.B. Knight and a coloured plate by Serge Drigin.

Our old friend Cecil Fanshaw was well to the fore with one of his adventure tales, namely “The Rogue” which dealt with a nephew and his uncle trading a rogue elephant. Both line drawings and the coloured plate were by Saville Lumley.

“The Smugglers of Poldrewynn”, as the title suggests, was about old time smugglers and again had Mr. Lumley wielding his pen to provide the black and white illustrations. This was followed by one of Alfred Edgar’s racing stories – in my opinion one of his finest. “The Ghost of the Grand Prix!”. I’ve read, and re-read it many times. I always regretted just missing meeting him when I first came to Hollywood, as I’m sure most of you know, under the pen name of Barre Lyndon he did quite a lot of script writing over here. His famous play, “The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse”, was later made into a movie featuring Edward G. Robinson. The coloured plate illustrating a tense moment from the story was by Arthur Jones, entitled “Going All Out to Win!”

Another author well known for his historical tales, supplied the last non-Hamilton story – this was Morton Pike, and his tale bore the title: “Dispatches for the King”. Set during the English Civil War, it was illustrated by Harry Lane. Bringing up in the rear, as it were, was one of the familiar ‘end of annual’ plays in verse, “The Tuckshop Raider” which told of the adventures of Billy Bunter locked up in Mrs. Mumble’s refreshment establishment.

The annual also included among its contents lots of allusions to happenings past and present at the famous schools; these were either in the form of sepia prints accompanied by a brief explanation of the incident, or articles and poems purported to have been written either by one of the masters or the boys themselves. There was even a copy of *Billy Bunter’s Annual* which, among other items, contained one of Dicky Nugent’s Saint Sam’s “shockers”!

Clive R. Fenn contributed one of his interesting nature articles on the daily life of a fox. Illustrated with a wash drawing (Wawick Reynolds?) and two photographs, it bore the title, “A Long Run Home”. I’ve already mentioned the inclusion of two Greyfriars stories – St. Jim’s and Rookwood also had a good representation. But whereas the Saint James College story was a reprint from *Gem* 296 “Tom Merry’s Minor” (the minor being a monkey that had been taught to steal) Rookwood was honoured with a specially written story – namely, “A Rift at Rookwood”. This recounting of how Lovell refuses to admit his knee injury, sustained during games practice, is severe enough to keep him from playing in the Greyfriars match, is a splendid story. It is considered by many to be the finest Rookwood story to have

appeared in any of the *Holiday Annuals*.

It is interesting to see how Wakefield (who is surely to Rookwood as MacDonald is to St. Jim's) portrays the Greyfriars juniors, especially Hurree Singh (dear old Inky) in the picture where Bulkely is ordering Lovell off the field. When Howard Baker wanted a decent length Rookwood story for his 1977 Greyfriars Holiday Annual it is significant that this was the one he chose.

I'd like to close this brief dissertation on "my favourite annual" with a few remarks on C.H. Chapman's work. In my humble opinion the 1929 annual contains some of his best work, not only his illustrations for the school and related features, but his full page drawings on other topics. Two in particular, I think are very well drawn. The first one entitled "A Few Holiday Recollections" (on page 44) together with "A Day in the Life of a Cowboy!" have never ceased to arouse my admiration.

Whereas the first set of drawings must surely evoke among most of us our own happy holiday memories, I make no secret of the fact that the cowboy drawings were the inspiration for my own page of "All About the Cowboy's Kit" - my first work to be accepted by "The Hotspur". To add weight to my assessment, I know for a fact that 'Chappie' always included a copy of "A Few Holiday Recollections" among his artwork when showing a new editor his capabilities. I'll end this article with the question I asked at the beginning:- "Do you have a favourite annual?"



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## IN MEMORIAM

### REVEREND ARTHUR BRUNING

by  
**Bill Bradford**

It is sad to report the death of Arthur Bruning, aged 84, at his home in Grimsby, on the 27th October. A member of the London O.B.B.C. for over 35 years, he frequently attended meetings until moving to a rural parish in Norfolk. On retirement he with his wife, Jean, moved into the outskirts of Norwich, still supporting his local Methodist Church, and being, for a time, a chaplain at Norwich Jail.

Following a motor accident some 10 years ago, Arthur was partially disabled and semi-housebound, although with difficulty he did manage to travel to my house, for meetings, on two occasions.

Last year, they moved to Grimsby where their son, Timothy is a G.P. Some of you will recall Timothy and his sister, Miriam (now living in Australia) who jointly presented a quiz at several club meetings in the distant past.

Arthur was an outstanding Christian, and my family and I have never forgotten his participation at my wife's funeral service, although he had only returned the previous day from holidays in Devon. Arthur's funeral was on 31st October, and the London Club sent a suitable donation to Christian Aid, his preferred charity. Our sympathy and love go to Jean and the family. As Arthur always said on parting "God Bless".

### CHRIS SCHOLEY

by  
**Mary Cadogan**

Chris was an enthusiastic member of the Northern Old boys Book Club. His recent death was a sad and bitter blow to us all, made all the more poignant by the fact that it came about through a violent "mugging". (I understand that, so far, the killers have not been apprehended.)

A solicitor by profession, Chris had only a few months ago taken early retirement. After the passing of Darrell Swift, he had agreed to become the Club's Treasurer, and his willingness to become an officer of the club was much appreciated.

Chris was living in Leeds with his mother, to whom we send our warm and heartfelt condolences.



## NEWS OF THE OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUBS

### CAMBRIDGE CLUB

For our September meeting nine members gathered at the Longsanton village home of Tony Cowley.

After a short business session - which included our AGM - we listened intently as Tony continued his series of sound memories from half a century ago [My Early Wireless Memories].

Part Three of Tony's talk considered the period 1952 and the following few years of the Fifties, and some of the pivotal programmes on both the BBC and Radio Luxembourg.

We heard substantial excerpts from a great many programmes ranging from Two-Way Family Favourites, The Billy Cotton Band Show, through Appointment with Fear, Take It From Here, The Goon Show, and concluding with Top of the Form, Hancock's Half Hour, Journey Into Space, Dan Dare and Eric Barker's Just Fancy.

ADRIAN PERKINS

### NORTHERN OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

We would all like to thank Andrew Pitt for being our guest speaker in September. He spoke for both sessions about Those Beautiful Ballads. A ballad is a story that is sung and was very popular in Victorian times around the time of the start of the recording industry. They were sung in music halls and the parlour, and we heard examples such as Waltzing Matilda, The Road To Mandalay and The Boys of The Old Brigade. Andrew stressed the importance of the words and told us the origins behind many of the ballads. He also admitted that many were "dripping with sentiment".

I would again like to thank Andrew for speaking in somewhat difficult circumstances, being the first meeting after Darrell's passing away. To quote our secretary in the club notes, A light has gone out of our lives and neither we nor our club can ever be quite the same again.

PAUL GALVIN

The October lunch was a happy occasion, though somewhat marred by the further great loss to the Club of Chris Scholey's passing. Geoffrey Good, our Secretary, made a most moving tribute to him. The luncheon was attended by several guests as well as Club Members. Our special guest and speaker was Brian Sibley. He was introduced by our President, Mary Cadogan, who said he was one of the most inven-

tive and entertaining writers and speakers whom she knew. Brian's talk was inspiring and very lively. He spoke of the books which had been influential in his own life, from early childhood to the present day, and, in several atmospheric readings, conveyed the quality of stories which most of us recall with tremendous affection. Despite the recent sad events which have affected our Club, this annual Luncheon meeting was a great success. M.C.

## LONDON O.B.B.C.

There was a splendid turn-out for our annual luncheon at the Brentham Club, Perivale in October. We were particularly happy to welcome our special guests, Una Hamilton Wright and her daughter, Felicity, as well as our President, John Wernham, and Gail Roots. After the excellent meal John made the Loyal Toast, Len Cooper proposed the Toast to the Guests and Andrew Pitt led the Toast to the Club. Finally, founder-member Bob Whiter proposed a moving toast to Absent Friends, making special mention of Eric Fayne, Bill Lofts, Betty Hopton, Darrell Swift and Gerald Campion.

Derek and Jessie Hinrich were thanked and congratulated on the excellent of the Luncheon arrangements. We all went on to Bill Bradford's house for chat (and more refreshments provided by our ever-hospitable host).

Our October Newsletter was graced by a fine drawing by Bob Whiter, to mark the fact that it was the six hundredth issue

In November our special guest, the actor Nigel Anthony proved to be an entertaining and fascinating speaker, with plenty of good natured anecdotes about the glory days of television and radio entertainment. Roger Coombes did a splendid job of interviewing Mr. Anthony, in a relaxed but well-structured question and answer session. The son of a Bunter reader, Nigel spoke about his career from his years as a child actor right up to his most recent job as "the voice of Tesco" ("Every Little Helps!"). Nigel's Grandfather was a cinema manager, and Nigel's first professional engagement was as the boy who shook the tin when the lights came up, with the cry "please give your pennies to the sailors!" Ap-



pearing in an early radio version of Jennings At School", Nigel went on to play Johnny Bull in the Bunter television series in the early 1950s, appearing alongside such acting luminaries as Michael Crawford and David Hemmings, as well as the definitive screen Bunter, Gerald Campion. Apparently, though he ad-libbed a lot and was never entirely sure of his lines, Mr. Campion was an amiable chap. However, he was rather fearful for the hairpiece that he wore for the role, which was precariously balanced upon his head. In the midst of scenes, when the other boys were supposed to "rag" Bunter, Campion would whisper "don't come anywhere near my hairpiece!" "We had to scrag him delicately," said Nigel. After some years in radio rep, Nigel discovered that his interest in jazz records was shared with producer Dennis Preston. The men became friends, and Preston invited Anthony to record material for the Floreat Greyfriars L.P. in 1965. These days, as well as being Mr. Tesco, Nigel turns up all over the place on the radio. He'd like to do more comedy, but doesn't hold out much hope for a Bunter revival. "You couldn't do Bunter today," he said, "because half of the jokes are about someone who's fat. Sorry, but that's the end of that!" Harking back to Nigel's days as Johnny Bull, Tony asked if Nigel had made any attempt at a Yorkshire accent for the show. "No, that didn't come into it," he replied. "The supporting characters were all very much interchangeable, except that Bob Cherry said 'Hello, hello, hello' all the time!" Nigel kindly presented the Club with a video tape of an extremely rare episode of the Bunter television series, which is to be screened at the January meeting. I'm looking forward to it already!

The second half of the meeting was devoted to girls' school stories. Mary Cadogan spoke first, providing an interesting assortment of background snippets about those elusive writers at the Amalgamated Press all those years ago. Although Frank Richards got the ball rolling with the first handful of stories about Bessie Bunter and Co, his material was not always appealing to female readers and other hands took over as "Hilda Richards". These writers were all men. "They studied girls," Mary observed, to which Chris could not resist adding "without getting arrested!" Mary talked of meeting A.P writer Eric Lyth Rosman, who told her "you'll recognise me by the fact that I'll be wearing a monocle", as well as John Wheway. This informative introduction led into Ann Knott's lively and entertaining reading of a Morcove story, "Study Against Study", from a 1939 S.O.L, which introduced many of us to Betty Barton and "The Study 12 Coterie". And that's all there was time for. Frances-Mary and Ray also had items ready, but time, the old enemy, was against us! But don't worry, these items will make their appearance at the January meeting.

Grateful thanks were extended to Audrey for her hard work, and to Tony...he did the washing up! Suzanne and Chris were also thanked for organising another very enjoyable Buckhurst Hill meeting. The next meeting will be the traditional Christmas Special, held as always at Bill Bradford's house, 5 Queen Anne's Grove, Ealing, W5 3XP.

VIC PRATT



## FORUM

### SYLVIAREEDWRITES:

In reply to Margery Woods' article 'Treachery and Class Distinctions at Cliff House' in the September C.D.:-

Literary Pundits - Who are they and what do they wearily know, geals, apart from what they have been taught, and who is to say their teacher was right?

Have these Literary Pundits churned out countless thousands of stories year after year like the authors they criticise, enthralling countless generations of readers - even after they have passed on, without the aid of computers and instant communication?

Because of the sheer volume of work that has gone into these stories (it would be hard to find such talent in authors of today, but that is my opinion) it is not surprising that inaccuracies creep in., The sheer imagination of Marjorie Stanton (Horace Phillips) for instance, and the amount of detail he has put into his stories (i.e., the characters, various plots, background of Morcove and Barncombe, the overseas locations) has just more or less blown me away.

Of course, my addiction is Morcove. Wather splendid, what? This addiction began, unknown to me, when I was a child. Started with Girls Crystal, Schoolfriend, June weeklies, the Annuals for Christmas presents, gradually progressing to The Schoolgirls' Own Library second series, discovering the first series and culminating in the Morcove stories within the last few years. My especial heroines are Betty, Pam and Paula.

Now that I have quite a collection of the Morcove saga (The Schoolgirls' Own Library, and The Schoolgirls' Own), I am now noticing these inaccuracies that crop up in the stories (who really cares anyway!)

I have thoroughly enjoyed all of the Morcove articles in SPCD, it helps 'researching the various characters'. It took me a long time to get used to Horace Phillips' particular style of writing, but I am now hooked.

### From RAYMOORE:

Re Mr Edwards request for info. on 'The Stormy Orphans' in the latest CD I can supply the following.

He is correct both in respect to their names and the boy's paper in which they appeared.

'The Stormy Orphans' were Tufty Gale, Blinker Bing and Chick O'Neill and they featured in at least six series in 'Wizard' between their debut in 1926 (175-192) and 'The Arizona Orphans' in 1931.

They were three boys who met on board an England bound ocean liner and found coincidentally that they were all headed for Danehurst College, a boarding school in Dorset. Leader Tufty Gale dubbed them 'the stormy orphans' not because they lacked parents but because they were going to spend so many months out of parental control.



Once at the school they all eventually end up in the house run by Mr Whitehead and he is the main disciplinarian in the series. As to whether, as Mr Edwards remembers, he was a vegetarian crank who once had the boys cut up old tyres for fuel I'm unable to confirm although I'm sure Derek Marsden may well be able to do so.

#### **From DEREK MARSDEN:**

I would like to make a couple of observations which should help your correspondent Arthur FG Edwards to reassess his memories of the Stormy Orphans.

Arthur is more or less correct about the boys' names (O'Neill not O'Neil) and they did appear only in *The WIZARD*. Their escapades over eight years constituted Thomson's first really successful school stories. The three boys were not actually orphans as they had parents who were working abroad, Blinker's being internationally acclaimed actors. The boys met on a liner which was taking them to England so that they could continue their schooling at Danehurst College, where they ended up in the Fourth Form. Disappointed that they were placed in separate Houses, Tufty Gale, a natural leader, came up with a plan to get Chick O'Neill and Blinker Bing transferred from Crane's House and Boomer's House respectively to Whitehead's House where Tufty had been placed. With a study to themselves and a desire to liven up the school, the stage was set for a long and successful saga that chronicled the boys' many japes and wangles and the difficulties they caused for Mr Whitehead, Danehurst's main disciplinarian. Other memorable characters who appeared regularly included Spitter, the appropriately nicknamed school porter who showered everybody he spoke to, and Bully Cope, another of Mr Whitehead's Fourth Formers, who was quite capable of getting into trouble for things he had not done, as well as for things he had - clearly not intelligent enough to be one of the Stormy Orphans who were singularly adept at creating mayhem without having any blame for the chaos laid at their door.

There were eight series as follows :-

- Series 1 175 (Jan. 23 1926) - 192 (Aug. 7 1926)
- Series 2 193 (Aug. 14 1926) - 205 (Nov 6 1926)
- Series 3 226 (Apr. 2 1927) - 232 (May 14 1927)
- Series 4 237 (Jun. 18 1927) - 250 (Sep. 17 1927)
- Series 5 269 (Jan. 28 1928) - 278 (Mar. 31 1928)
- Series 6 300 (Sep. 1 1928) - 311 (Nov 17 1928)
- Series 7 372 (Jan. 18 1930) - 386 (Apr. 26 1930)
- Series 8 422 (Jan. 3 1931) - 428 (Feb. 21 1931)

Normally each story had a different title, the main exception being the whole of Series 8. In addition to the above there were eighteen completes, the final one appearing in 577 (Dec 23 1933).

Arthur's query about the strange Headmaster and the tyres is not so easily answered. I have not read all the stories about the Orphans so I cannot be absolutely sure of my ground, but I am as certain as I can be that he is confusing two quite different schools. The Headmaster of Danehurst College does not actually appear all

that frequently in the stories and he certainly is not the sort of leader who would take advantage of his pupils. Even assuming that the passage of time has caused Arthur to mistake Mr Whitehead for the Headmaster, my response would be the same. It is also quite obvious that the focus is more on what the Stormy Orphans get up to and the resulting discomfiture of Mr Whitehead rather than on what Mr Whitehead does to the Orphans. I do however recall one story which does have a Headmaster of the kind that Arthur remembers, but I suspect that it falls outside his reading period. The title is *Our School Is Hardwork Hall* and it ran in *The ROVER* between July and October 1945. Dr Sneed was the miserly but entrepreneurial Headmaster of Hardwork Hall School. Not only did the boys at his boarding establishment have to do all the cleaning, cooking and general maintenance, but they were also initially unaware that many of the tasks that they had to undertake during their lessons were for the financial benefit of Dr Sneed. There was nothing educationally unsound about the approach, of course. As an example, after one Geometry lesson the theories learned were put into practice in the Woodwork room where the boys made window frames to strict measurements, but Dr Sneed was using his boys as cheap labour to produce the frames which he then sold on to a local housing scheme in order to line his own pocket.



## MY CHRISTMAS BOOK CHOICE

by Mary Cadogan

One of my first choices is *When Christmas Comes*, by Anne Harvey (Sutton Publishing, £9.99). Subtitled *An Anthology of Childhood Christmases* it is small and unpretentious in its presentation, but it offers depth as well as variety in its seasonable fare. There is atmospheric prose and poetry from Eleanor Farjeon, Alison Uttley, Washington Irving, Edmund Gosse, A.A. Milne, Frances Hodgson Burnett, Ernest Shepard, Dodie Smith, Walter de la Mare, Louisa Alcott, and others. It is not all sweetness and light, however. For example, as well as Clement C. Moore's classic *The Night Before Christmas* there is a parody in reply called *The Night After Christmas* from children who are dissatisfied with what Santa leaves for them!

The book is rich in black and white line illustrations, many of which evoke the traditional Victorian mood. There are also echoes of wartime Christmases which, despite austerity, rationing and air-raid hazards, were strangely satisfying and appealing. More contemporary touches include an effervescent poem, *The Computer's First Christmas Card* by Edwin Morgan.

This Anthology works both as individual and as family entertainment. Much of the prose and poetry can be read aloud and enjoyed communally, and there are one or two playlets for good measure. A book to savour and relish.

There is a new Lord Peter Wimsey novel for those of us who like mystery and detection. It is by Jill Paton Walsh and Dorothy L. Sayers, but, in fact, *A Presumption of Death* (Hodder £16.99) is mainly the work of the former writer. (She does, however,

take inspiration from some of Sayers' features. These were a series of letters purporting to be from the Wimsey family early in the Second World War, and published in the *Spectator*.

I do not generally like sequels by other writers than the original authors, but Jill Paton Walsh almost uncannily recreates Harriet Vane, Lord Peter, and their associates in a spirit which is entirely true to Dorothy Sayers' writings.

The setting is village life in wartime. There is murder, of course, and plenty of atmosphere of the period - RAF pilots, land-girls, blackouts, a sense of a close-knit community under stress, with its residents sometimes pulling together, but sometimes very much at odds with each other.

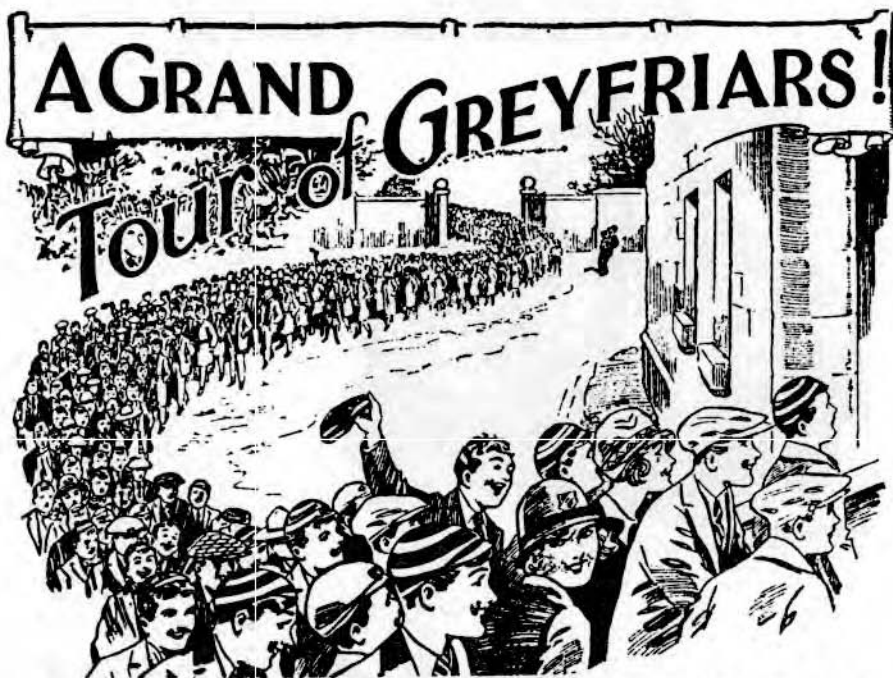
Lord Peter spends much of the book away from the village: he (and his loyal manservant, Bunter) are abroad on a dangerous Intelligence mission, but he returns to aid the final unlocking of the murder mystery. Harriet Vane successfully "holds the fort" in his absence and Jill Paton Walsh beautifully expands and enhances this character's personality without losing any of the quality of Dorothy Sayers' original. *A Presumption of Death* shares with earlier books in the Wimsey Canon the ability to make one re-read, and still enjoy, the story even though the answer to the murder riddle is known: a rare quality in a detective novel.

Those enterprising publishers *Girls Gone By* have come up with a positive jewel for Christmas: this is *The Girls of St. Bride's* by Dorita Fairlie Bruce, a well produced paper-back reprint of a 1923 school story which uses the original illustrations by H. Collier, and the picture from the first-ever dust-jacket as the front cover illustration. Not only is it great to have this D.F. Bruce story back in print, but all the other books in the saga of St. Bride's and Maudsley Schools are promised as further reprints from *Girls Gone By*. The "star" of the series (not featured in *The Girls of St. Bride's* because she doesn't come on to the scene until the second book in the saga) is Nancy Caird. She is one of Bruce's most engaging, realistic and likeable heroines - just the sort of girl anyone would have wished for as a "best friend". *The Girls of St. Bride's* mouthwateringly serves as an introduction to the further adventures of this series. The School is set in Scotland, and the girls have to battle, not only with some difficult relationships, but with stormy, turbulent natural elements. True to the traditions of the best girls' boarding-school sagas, in overcoming the hazards of wild and wind-swept seas, they learn a great deal about themselves and how to relate to their friends - and rivals.

Dorita Fairlie Bruce is particularly adept at describing friendships - both when they work well, and when they go awry, and her characters are always convincingly rounded-out. An absorbing and satisfying read for anyone who is intrigued by school-stories. Details of how to order *The Girls of St. Bride's* (and lists of their reprints by other classic "Schoolgirls" writers) can be obtained from *Girls Gone By*, 4 Rock Terrace, Coleford, Bath, Somerset, BA3 4NF.

Lastly, two stalwarts of our hobby, Norman Wright (the publisher) and Steve Holland (author and compiler) have produced *Zenith: Prince of Chaos*. This interesting 22-page booklet gives us the story of Anthony Skene and of his creation, Zenith

the Albino. Bibliographical listing occupies 6½ pages: there are 3 full page illustrations and the rest of the booklet covers Skene's biography,, and perceptively examines the complexities of the flamboyant Zenith. A 'must' for lovers of the Sexton Blake stories, it can be obtained from Norman Wright, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, Herts., WD19 4JL, at £3.50 for readers in the U.K., £3.75 for Europe, £4.50 for USA. and Canada, and £4.75 for the rest of the world. (Prices quoted include postage and packing.)



*Personally conducted by your Editor, who will show you all the principal sights of the famous old Greyfriars School and will introduce you to all the notabilities--whom many of you already know so well in print!*



We see the old tower of Greyfriars School looming on the skyline—a quaint old tower, ancient and ivy-clad, standing four-square to all the winds that blow.



George Wingate calls for three cheers for the readers of THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL, and three for its Editor, and the choir sing out loud and strong over the darkening Close.



## Chequemate!

By FRANK RICHARDS

When Billy Bunter receives a registered letter containing a big cheque, all Greyfriars agrees that the age of miracles is by no means past!



## Greyfriars Frivolities



### THE PILLOW FIGHT!

**T**HE darkness deepens in the dorm,  
Tense is the midnight silence;  
The dreaming youths in Temple's form  
Have not a thought of violence.  
When suddenly, all unaware,  
Rush Harry Wharton's raiders,  
Brandishing pillows in the air—  
A host of keen invaders!

The curtain rises on the fray,  
And all is noise and bustle;  
"A raid!" cries Temple, in dismay,  
"Turn out, you fellows—hustle!"  
Fourth-formers, bounding from their beds,  
Are soon seen smiting busily;  
And the Removites duck their heads,  
Or reel and stagger dizzily!

But Wharton rallies all his men,  
"Now, comrades! all together!"  
His strength is as the strength of ten,  
The fiercest blows he'll weather.  
Boldly he darts into the fray,  
Knocks Fry into the fender,  
Where Temple joins him, sad to say,  
With gasp of "We surrender!"

And now the victors bid farewell  
To the defeated mortals;  
And from the dorm they dash pell-mell  
With chuckles and with chortles.  
"Another feather in our cap!"  
Cries Harry Wharton merrily;  
"It was a really ripping scrap!"  
And all exclaim, "Yea, verily!"

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# THE BRUIN BOYS MEET SANTA CLAUS



The Bruin Boys, at such a rate, went sleighing down the hill.  
 "Oh, not so fast," Fido exclaimed. "I'm sure we'll have a spill."  
 Just then in front old Tim espied a dark and gloomy pit,  
 And down it they went one by one, not liking it a bit!



But they were glad when they were there, for 'twas Santa Claus' Cave,  
 And to every lucky Bruin Boy some jolly toys he gave!  
 "Oh, this is fine," young Joey cried. "I'm glad we fell down here!  
 I should not mind, if, Mr. Claus, I fell down twice a year!"

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