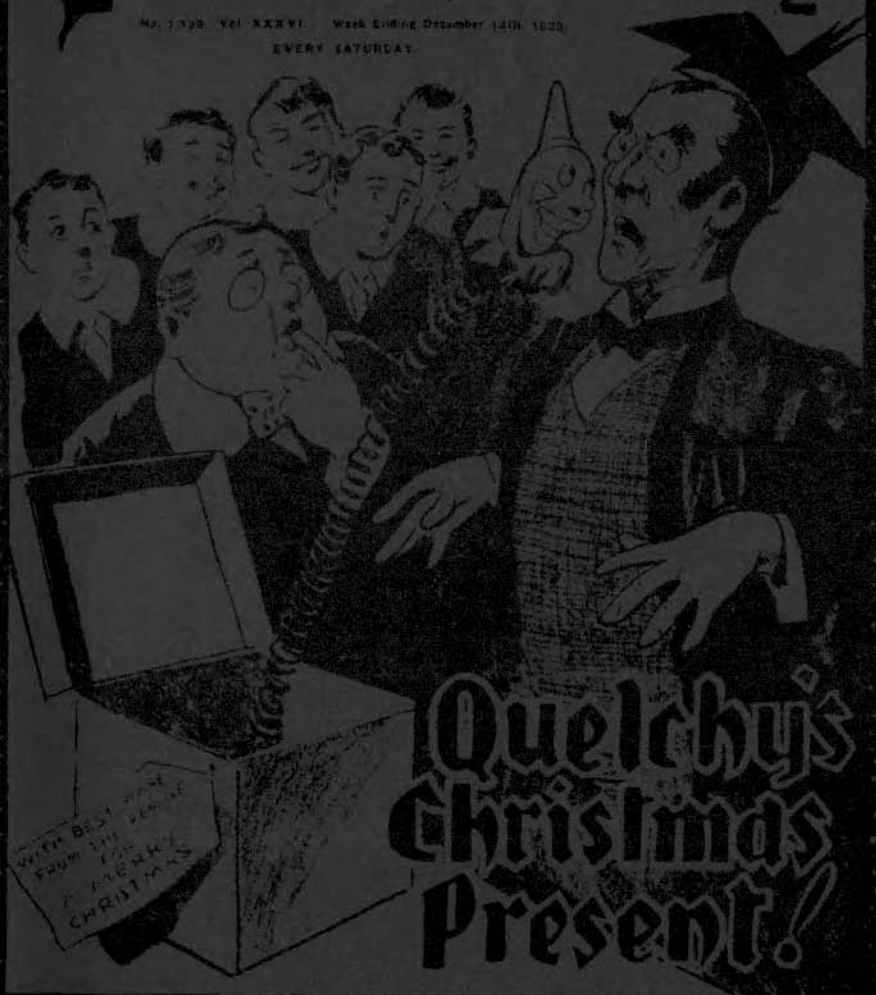


COLLECTORS' DIGEST
CHRISTMAS SPECIAL 2002

The MAGNET

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No. 1,198 Vol. XXXVI. Week Ending December 14th, 2002.
EVERY SATURDAY.



Queichy's
Christmas
Present!

What was the Mystery of the Painted Room? Arthur Augustus D'Arco Solved It—and then Completely Vanished!



With a hammer reaching through the door, and a cold sweat dripping on his forehead, Arthur, knowing the door would open at the instant of his death on the ceiling, suddenly he sprang to his feet with a cry. "It is done!" "Thank Heaven!"



FOOTER VERSUS SNOW! Fighting at a fierce pace in the blinding snow-storm, Tom Merry & Co. began to feel that they were on the verge of disaster. But they stuck it out manfully.

COLLECTORS' DIGEST CHRISTMAS SPECIAL 2002

Editor: MARY CADOGAN



I have great pleasure in presenting this first *Collectors' Digest Christmas Special* which I hope will bring you all an appropriately warm and seasonable glow, and something of the true spirit of Christmas.

I feel you will agree that our contributors have "done us proud", and that many facets of our wide-ranging hobby are covered in these pages.

At this time of year we usually give special thoughts to the absent friends of our circle, and remember with gratitude and affection their contributions to our magazine, and their help and generosity to fellow-collectors.

It is also an opportunity to thank Mandy, Freda and everyone else at Quacks, our printers, and, of course, to express our deep appreciation to our enthusiastic and talented contributors. Without their help, and the ever-loyal support of C.D. readers everywhere, the C.D. would not continue and flourish.

I hope that this *Christmas Special* will be the first of many, and I send to you all my warmest greetings for A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY, PEACEFUL AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR.

Mary Cadogan



Billy Bunter's Christmas Dream



FESTIVE DILEMMAS

by Ted Baldock

The lessons are done and the prizes won,
And the counted weeks are past;
Oh the holiday joys of the girls and boys
Who are 'home tonight' at last.
So much to tell and to hear as well
As they gather round the glow,
Who would not part for the joy of heart
That only the parted know -
At home tonight.

F. RIDLEY HAVERGAL

The ultimate goal. Billy Bunter had set his fat sights firmly and irrevocably on Wharton Lodge as the setting for the Christmas festivities. With his fat head buried in his pillow in the Remove dormitory he slept and snored with a serene smirk irradiating his features as he had glorious visions of Christmas, a real old fashioned Yule-tide, the genuine article with limitless supplies of 'tuck': turkey, plum-pudding, mince-pies, cakes, crackers and, of course, a Christmas tree, snow, holly and mistletoe. At the thought of the last item the smirk grew rather more pronounced upon the sleeping features. All the delights of this wonderful season were present in his dreams. It was a happy and expectant Owl whose snores were awakening the echoes in the old dormitory.

It was an exercise which would require astuteness of the highest order, and considerable guile; nothing less than Machiavellian deviousness was likely to work the oracle. It has been said that hope springs eternal and Billy Bunter was hopeful of success.

It has been said by some wise old sage back in the mists of time that popularity has its frontiers and limitations, its high and low points, its summers and winters. At times it can, and does, manifest itself in very fickle and unexpected ways. Upon some it settles its mantle quietly and naturally, upon others it is rather the reverse. One of these 'others' was William George Bunter of Greyfriars school.

There is one characteristic in Bunter's make-up which is worthy of note. He is the epitome of the eternal optimist, always quite certain in his own mind that he is a

splendid fellow - attractive and interesting not merely to his friends at Greyfriars but to the wider world beyond.

A high wind blowing from an easterly direction was tossing the branches of the old elms in the quadrangle at Greyfriars causing much creaking and tossing among the ancient limbs. High above their normal resting places circled the resident rooks, cawing harshly at being so rudely disturbed. It was a wild and windy December day. Not a day for elderly gentlemen to be abroad. No gowns were to be seen fluttering along Masters' walk. It was not suitable for those whose joints were susceptible to keen winds, particularly those of an easterly tendency.

Mr Quelch was closeted comfortably enough in his study before a glowing fire with a table drawn up close. He was happily searching through a sheaf of yellowish old documents. Further along the passage another gentleman, Mr. Prout, master of the fifth form, was also enjoying the heat of a cheerful fire. Being out-stretched in his armchair in close proximity to the blaze, his hands folded over a well-filled waistcoat he presented a picture of mature contentment. Two gentlemen, two Masters, each indulging his own particular whim on this wild December afternoon - a half holiday.

A fat figure with an up-turned coat collar and a cap pulled down well over his spectacles could be observed making his way rather heavily against the boisterous elements across the quad in the direction of the school tuck-shop. A rumour had been circulating that Mrs Mimble had received a consignment of very special almond biscuits topped with marzipan. Only such information could draw the Owl away from the common room fire on such a day. Although times were hard, as they usually were with the Owl, he was determined to put his luck to the test and attempt to persuade Mrs Mimble to extend a little credit in his straitened circumstances. Mrs Mimble was a kindly soul who had a long and deep experience and understanding of boys and their desires. Thus there existed a hope, albeit faint, that he would not go biscuitless.

As Bunter entered the tiny tuckshop the first thing which caught his gaze was a large dish of biscuits upon the counter protected by a glass cover. There they were in all their succulent glory, prime almond biscuits. Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed.

"I say, Mrs Mimble, don't they look splendid", he squeaked.

"Yes, Master Bunter they do", Mrs Mimble's tones were far from encouraging.

"I say, Mrs Mimble"

"Yes, Master Bunter".

"Did I mention to you that I was expecting a postal order the other day".

"You did. Master Bunter".

"Well, I say, I was wondering".

"No, Master Bunter".

"It is coming from one of my titled relations you know ..."

"NO, Master Bunter, Mr Quelch has issued strict orders, there is to be no credit".

This was not a very auspicious beginning. But the tenacious Owl had no intention of 'throwing in the towel' yet and he returned, as it were, once more to the attack.

“I say, Mrs Mimble ...”

Mrs Mimble stood very stiff and forbidding and Bunter realised that he had a fight on his hands. It was becoming very evident to him that all his powers of persuasion were going to be stretched to the limit if he was to succeed in ‘winning over’ Mrs Mimble to a credit extending mood. Then, quite suddenly, rather like the sun appearing from behind a passing dark cloud, she appeared to soften and reach out and extract a biscuit from the dish. She offered it to the Fat Owl. “There Master Bunter, take this and go away like a good boy”.

There being little more to be said or done in the matter, Bunter grasped the biscuit and, telling Mrs Mimble that she was a jolly good sort, ‘went away’ as instructed masticating happily, leaving Mrs Mimble looking after him with a far from severe expression on her face.

Billy Bunter had other pressing matters on his mind as he made his way back to the house consuming his biscuit. Term was drawing to a close, Christmas holidays were looming and something had to be done about it.

There was a fairly large gathering of fellows on the Remove landing as he approached. They were all talking at once.

“I say, you fellows, about the holidays ...” But nobody heeded his squeaks, they all seemed to be terribly excited about a football match.

“That final goal by old Smithy was a stunner”

“I say,....”

“Yes, old Smithy saved the day for us”.

Such was the tenor of the animated discussion in progress on the Remove landing. Nobody heeded Bunter. That afternoon had seen a keenly fought match against their old rivals, Rookwood School on Little Side which had ended with victory for Greyfriars by a splendid last minute goal from Vernon Smith, which had set the spectators in an uproar. There was an excited clamour of voices, all giving individual praise to Smithy for ‘saving the day’.

Billy Bunter was making repeated attempts to break into the noise and chatter. He wished to approach, in his view, a far more pressing matter, the fast approaching Christmas holidays, now only a few days distant. Something had to be done, and quickly...

“Wasn’t it a wonderful game, Bunty, my boy”, cried Bob Cherry giving the Owl a vigorous clap on his podgy back. Bunter’s interest in school football held an almost non-existent place in his list of priorities, although he was ever trying to impress Harry Wharton with the extent of his prowess and demanding to know why he was always excluded from the Remove eleven. His fat intellect - such as it was - worked in weird and wonderful ways. His knowledge of the technicalities of the great game could be comfortably accommodated on the back of a postage stamp, leaving some little space to spare. Yet he was ever pressing upon the other fellows the extent of his vast knowledge of the game.

“Oh, yes ..I er...did we win?” was his vague reply to Bob Cherry’s information.

“Kick him somebody”, said Frank Nugent.

“Oh, really Nugent, I wish you fellows would stop rotting about football for a moment and give a fellow a chance”

The Owl had weightier and far more important matters on his mind than such trivialities as whether or not a football match had been won - what did it matter anyway?

“About the holidays, you know. The Pater has practically insisted that I spend the Christmas vacation at Bunter Court to help with the festivities. We are expecting several of my titled relations, you know, and the Pater rather relies on me to lend a spot of tone”. Billy Bunter may be said to be warming up as he proceeded. “But I was adamant, I told him I could not possibly let Harry and my other friends down, they depend on me seeing them through”. “Why, you fat prevaricating porpoise...” began Johnny Bull. Bunter held up a deprecating hand. “That will do. Bull, I hope I have a sense of responsibility and loyalty to my friends, a feeling with may seem a little strange and unfamiliar to you”.

Johnny’s face was a picture, and he was certainly speechless. Quite suddenly he became very active. Grasping the Owl and twirling him round he raised his foot and kicked. “Yarooohh”! Bunter’s roar was heard far and wide as Johnny’s boot made contact with his tight trousers. “Yaroooh, you beast ..”

We know from long experience that there will be the usual series of upheavals but that finally the spirit of Christmas will prevail. But there is rather a rough - and exciting road to travel before that much desired situation is reached.

Sticking manfully to his guns and having recovered somewhat from Johnny’s kicking Bunter returned to the attack.

“My friend, D’Arcy at St. Jim’s is being most insistent, he has intimated to me that he is relying on my presence at Eastwood House to help out over the holidays. What is a fellow to do?” Billy Bunter frowned with perplexity as he gazed at the Famous Five. “You fellows are lucky, you don’t have the social problems which confront a fellow of my standing. Old Mauly says that he will not accept any excuses for my not spending Christmas Day at the Towers, he says that he is counting on me to maintain the social tone of the party. You fellows get off lightly at your little gathering at Wharton Lodge.”

The Owl paused while Harry Wharton and Co. were having problems in keeping concerned and sober faces. “The fact is, you fellows, I don’t like letting my old pals down, it goes against the grain, you know. It would be rather dull at the Lodge if I were not there to keep things going, I know Colonel Wharton would be most disappointed if he heard that I was unable to come. He rather relies on me to keep an eye on the social standing and behaviour, you know, and I know you fellows would be bucked if you could be sure that I would be with you at the Lodge. As you know, I always receive a very warm welcome, allowing for social distinctions, from Wells and the other servants. This is the impression given, you know, from generations of good breeding. Bunter’s fat visage creased into a smirk of satisfaction as he continued.

“You fellows are rather clod-hoppers, you know where social graces are concerned. We Bunters have centuries of experience in these matters and know just how

to handle any delicate situation which may arise with tact, easy assurance - and I may say - aplomb... you fellows are like so many bulls in a china shop, especially you Johnny - He He He". Billy Bunter wound up his remarks with a fat cachination, being much taken with his final charming reference.

Christmas was approaching and something - or some one - had to be done about it. Surely this was a fellow's duty to himself. It was his avowed intention to get himself installed at the home of a willing or unwilling 'Pal'. He was not in the least particular which, it being all the same to him. But a fellow must act before they all scattered to the four corners of the Kingdom.

Thus it was a somewhat anxious Owl. There was one point upon which his fat mind was irrevocably made up. He was not going to spend the festivities at Bunter Court alluring though that vast pile might have been.

If only the fellows would get things in their proper perspective. Holidays and food were two extremely important items, both of which required - indeed - warranted - the closest attention. Yet here they were getting over-excited and voluble over a mere football match. Bunter found it difficult to understand. That French fellow, Nap... something or other knew what he was talking about when he said that 'an army marched upon its stomach'. Bunter fully understood this, and fully agreed with the sentiment.

But the horizon was not completely roseate. There were certain aspects - one in particular - which gave rise to much anxious thought. At Christmas time there was sure to be a ghost or two lurking about. Billy Bunter had no fear of ghosts or those other strange things which go bump in the night, at least no fear in the broad light of day, with the wintry sun making the snow sparkle outside. That which did worry him above all else was the dreadful fear that through some form of mismanagement on the part of Wells, the butler, the food supplies might not prove adequate, or that Wharton Lodge might be cut off and snowbound and 'run short'.

This was a very real and nagging thought which gave the Fat Owl uneasy thoughts and sleepless nights. The mere thought of dates, chocolates, glazed fruits and, dreadful thought, Christmas puddings and mince-pies running out, quite banished sleep. For long periods there were no familiar snores or rumblings from Bunter's bed.

Suppose, just suppose, for a moment that the cook had forgotten to order the turkey, or the village store had forgotten to deliver it. These were dire and fearful possibilities which gave him anxious thoughts. Suppose that old ass Wells had forgotten to arrange for the Christmas cake to be sent. Ghosts came a very poor second in relation to such disasters.

Indeed Bunter felt that he could have accepted with equanimity the rattling of ghostly chains at midnight, groans and shuffling feet along passages, and any amount of floorboard-creakings, plus a host of grimacing goblins and witches, providing he had the comforting assurance that the larder downstairs was amply stocked with good traditional fare - and that the supply lines were safe.

A long acquaintance with William George Bunter enabled Harry Wharton and Co. to accept many of his rather dubious foibles. In short they knew their Bunter. They



were not unaware that deep down, hidden beneath all his less desirable habits, there did exist a vein, but certainly not a very extensive one, of better things. Evidence of this, once in a while at long intervals, circumstances revealed.

His fat squeak, "I say, you fellows!" had become as familiar to them - and to the rest of Greyfriars - as was the coming of the seasons. Colonel Wharton, whose wide experience of life and people made him no mean judge of character, had caught a brief glimpse of these glimmerings upon the strength of which he was prepared to tolerate the fat Owl's presence at Wharton Lodge for the Christmas festivities. It is interesting to note, that for once, Wells was not in complete agreement with the Colonel's opinion but was far too well trained in his calling to display any evidence of his feelings.

It seemed very likely that Harry Wharton and Co. were to have the honour of Bunter's company. This was nothing new or strange to them. Many times in the past they had suffered a similar fate, and had come to accept it with a commendable degree of equanimity. They had reached the conclusion that nothing could penetrate the armadillo-like texture of Bunter's skin. He was a 'man' who saw and heard just what he wished to see and hear - and nothing more.

They accepted the inevitable with such grace and humour as they could muster. "After all", commented Bob Cherry, "Bunty is not such a bad old ass after all". Which comment coming from the cheery Bob sums up the happy nature of a good fellow. He added, "A good kicking now and then did Bunter no harm whatsoever", a theory which, it may be said, the Owl singularly failed to understand, or appreciate.

Time moves on and we know that Billy Bunter will be taken into the fold, into the fat lands of Egypt as it were.

Happily that sturdy old retainer Wells has full responsibility for the commissariat department and has 'laid in' ample supplies, enough in fact to withstand a lengthy siege. So all is well. The lights of Wharton Lodge will be twinkling a welcome once more. Jolly times will be the order of the day.

Here we see the traditional scene we recognise so well, a scene which does not pall or lose its charm with repetition. Dinner is drawing to a close. A gargantuan feast at which Billy Bunter has performed prodigious feats of mastication, and wrought much havoc among the many tempting dishes under which the table had groaned, with much chatter and laughter from the other members of the party.

At the head of the table sits Colonel Wharton who is in deep conversation with none other than Henry Samuel Quelch, the master of the Remove at Greyfriars, whose long-time custom it has been to spend a few days of the festive season with his old friend. Two seasoned warriors, the one scholastic the other military. They have much in common. The Colonel being a member of the governing board of Greyfriars school.

Then, the feast concluded, they are gathered round the large fireplace in the hall before a splendid blaze, with the exception of the Colonel and Mr Quelch, who have retired to a private sanctum close by, there to toast their toes before an equally pleasant fire. Each has a glass at his elbow, as they mull over old times and old adventures which they have experienced over the years.

From the hall a fat squeak is heard. "I say, Wells, bring another dish of sugared almonds will you, and look to those dates, they are getting rather low, look alive". "Yes, Master Bunter", replies Wells with slightly compressed lips but with his dignity unimpaired as he duly looks 'alive' and passes the order on to John, the footman.

The Owl is in his element, sitting in the seat of the mighty, as it were, making endless requests and issuing orders as to the manner born to Wells and John. This is life. In such an environment Bunter expands to his full glory. Bunter Court with all its blandishments has faded into complete oblivion. Another Christmas is in process of gliding by into history. Always there will be seasonable weather with snow, ice and high winds combining to create the traditional conditions of the season.

Always will there be Wharton Lodge with its ever-open door framing the portly figure of Wells, that doyen of butlers welcoming our heroes.

Ever in the background will loom the grey pile of Greyfriars School, steeped in its long and off-times turbulent history, and the hosts of diverse characters, and the enduring quality of its charm which even the acidity of Mr. Hacker and the crustiness of old Gosling cannot dim. May the spectacles of William George Bunter continue to flash back the rays of the westering sun, and the boomings of Paul Pontifex Prout continue to reverberate through the passages and form rooms. And may the Yuletides of our youth ever be reflected in the future.

May all the friends gathered around their Christmas fires give a thought to those three travellers of so long ago who left their homes and ventured forth to follow the star which led them to the awe-inspiring and wonderful event of the very first Christmas.

So let us leave our long-time heroes at Wharton Lodge in their eternal youth,



laughing and japing and ever projecting a sterling spirit in their unchanging world.

Colonel Wharton and Billy Bunter for the moment have 'buried the hatchet' and are chatting amiably together. Bunter is actually holding out to the Colonel a box of chocolates over which the old warrior is bending, making his choice. In the background Wells is sporting a broad smile as he attends to the needs of the gathering.

Look closely at this merry scene and perhaps you may discern a shadowy figure sitting silently beyond the glow of the fire. He is smiling benignly. It is Frank Richards, the founder of the feast, the creator of so many similar scenes of Yuletide jollity over the years, and of those splendid Greyfriars fellows who play their part so convincingly.

Outside the snow is falling, weighing down the leafless branches of the elms. Frost is sparkling. Within, harmony reigns. All is well. Pray that such a vision will be long in fading.





WELL THUMBED PAGES



by
Bill Bradford

Long before I was able to read, on Sunday evenings, my Father would read to me from his boyhood copy of the CHUMS annual for 1909 (Vol. XV11). Between times and for many years afterwards I would avidly thumb through the pages, scouring the illustrations, which are still indelibly imprinted in my mind. This is where I first encountered those two outstanding illustrators, Paul Hardy and Fred Bennett. In due course I started to take the weekly issues of CHUMS and still have my first purchase, for week ending October 31st 1931. This was and still is my favourite boys' paper of all times!

In the meantime my paternal Grandmother, for Xmas 1931, gave me the 1931-32 Annual, suitably inscribed. This, with 10 other CHUMS annuals survived the war years, despite salvage drives and my Stepmother's disposal of my large collection of sundry items. I think I detect my Father's hand in their retention. Over the past 30 years I managed to acquire all the other CHUMS annuals, some from Norman Shaw, the rest from all over the U.K., five with dust-jackets, two the work of Eric Parker. I have quite a large collection of annuals, books and story papers but that which I





value and treasure above all is the 1909 CHUMS Annual, not only for sentimental reasons but also for the quality and variety of stories. If you will bear with me I would like to describe this volume in some detail.

The striking crimson cover, embossed in gold, shows a 17th or 18th century horseman attacked by an enormous wolf. The spine indicates the year and depicts a soldier, wearing a topee standing over a wounded comrade. Within, we first have a coloured plate showing an incident in the Franco-Prussian war, and opposite, photographs of 8 authors, which include S. Walkey, W.B. Home Gall and Frank H. Shaw. Followed by an index of about 200 short stories, 11 serials and various articles. All this within 1044 pages, compiled from 52 weekly issues, mainly of 20 pages, priced at one penny each. Incidentally, there were also monthly editions, comprising 4 weekly issues plus a coloured plate; all of these were included in the annual. I cannot trace the price of this annual but presumably it was six to seven shillings - the monthly parts were priced at 6 pence. At the back of the annual are 4 pages listing other books and annuals published by Cassell, mainly priced at 2/6 or 3/6, cloth covering a few coppers more.

The first story is the start of **THE VENGEANCE OF THE MOTHERLAND**, a 35 instalment serial by Capt. Frank Shaw who was a genuine Royal Navy officer. This is a continuation of **PERIL OF THE MOTHERLAND**, a serial in the previous volume, which told of the invasion of Britain by Russia. This later story tells how our forces, led by King Edward, finally defeat the enemy. Brilliantly illustrated by Fred Bennett. Next we have a football tale by Jack North (John Nix. Pentelow) followed by the first of 11 tales of Denman Cross, detective, by Herbert Maxwell (W.J.LOMAX - creator of Tinker).

THE WITCH'S TREASURE by Alex G. Pearson is an 18 part serial of adventures in Zulu land, illustrated by Paul Hardy, then a short story **IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY**, by Stacey Blake. We then have **THE LUCK STONE**, a school story by Basil Windham, a pseudonym of P.G. Wodehouse, a serial with 18 instalments. This makes the 1909 annual very collectable and pricey! **PHIL GORDON-COWARD**, a complete school story by Frank Shaw is then followed by 2 pages on stamp collecting, and regularly thereafter. This then was a typical weekly content, and 52 weeklies appear in the Annual. Obviously space will not permit me to deal at length with the many short stories thereafter so I propose covering the serials which were always the backbone of **CHUMS**.



AN OUTLAW OF THE SIERRAS BY Julien Linley has 10 adventures of Captain Montane, a daring and heroic Mexican bandit-chief who had appeared in earlier volumes and reappears later in the volume, in 6 episodes entitled **MONTANA OF MEXICO**: all exciting reading.

The next serial, of 13 instalments, is **THE MYSTERY OF MELFORD MANOR** by Herbert Maxwell, telling of three chums at St Dunstan's School (which happens to be the name of my first school). On page 526 begins **YO HO FOR THE SPANISH MAIN**, one of Walkey's finest pirate stories running to 26 instalments, illustrated by Paul Hardy. This was later published as a hardback by Cassell, with a lovely pictorial cover, illustrated by Archie Webb and not, alas, by Hardy. Imagine my joy some 30 years ago at finding a mint copy in a small shop in Tavistock.

Another serial **THE SPY AT SEDGEMERE SCHOOL**, of 21 episodes was by L.J. Beeston, who specialised in school stories. Next, a thrilling serial **THE SECRET OF THE SARGASSO SEA** by Frank Shaw ran for 18 weeks, and gave the author 2 serials

running at the same time (but only just). This was also published as a hardback, by Cassell some years later. The book was illustrated by George Bates, but the original artist was H.L. Shindler, whose work appeared in boys' papers for 40 years. The last serial, or rather series was THE TERRIBLE THREE by W.B. Home Gall(SNR), just 4 stories of some mischievous youngsters, again illustrated by Fred Bennett.

The numerous short stories were written, apart from some of those already named, by Ernest H. Robinson, then the editor of CHUMS. Stephen H. Agnew, S.S. Gordon, Christopher Beck, Francis Marlowe and Walter H. Light, all to achieve fame in this field. Between pages 840 - 1040 there were some 20 stories with no accredited author. This was due to a competition over 10 weekly issues for readers to vote on their merit.

This account has taken longer than it should but I cannot resist lingering over the illustrations and rereading old familiar excerpts. I shall always associate this volume (and others) with 4 names, S. Walkey, Frank Shaw, Paul Hardy and Fred Bennett. They all played a very large part, over many years, in making CHUMS something that my generation, and younger readers, will always cherish.



WANTED: Greyfriars Book Club Annuals. Will purchase or exchange Weird Tales, Fantastic Adventure, Terror Magazines, Greyfriars Holiday Annuals, Howard Baker Omnibus, Collectors Pie of Magnet and Gem, Nelson Lee, Billy Bunter and the Gem Libraries, Champion and Boys Friend Libraries, Classic Cornics and Classic Junior, and more. FRANK L. KNOTT, 29 Colson Street, Avalon, Wellington, New Zealand, 6009.



STILL WANTED: Champion Library War Stories. Best wishes for Xmas and New Year to fellow collectors. J. ASHLEY, 46 Nicholas Crescent, Fareham, Hants, PO15 5AH. Tel. 01329 234489.



FOR SALE: Hardback - Biggles Omnibus (Learns to Fly, Flies East, In the Orient) £10. Hardback - Biggles Camel Squadron £3. Paperback - Biggles Fails to Return £3. Memorable School Stories by Famous Authors £3. Hardback - Complete Sherlock Holmes Short Stories £5. Hardback - Billy Bunter's Bank Note (mint) £5. Paperbacks - B.B. in Brazil, B.B. on the Nile, B.B. Man from South America, B.B. Phantom of the Towers, B.B. Ventriloquist £1 each. Book and Mag. Collector No. 2, Collecting the Magnet £5. Postage at cost. ERIC SHEPPARD, 1 Forge Close, Bempton, Bridlington, YO15 1LX



RECOLLECTIONS OF ROOKWOOD



by
Roger Jenkins



Rookwood occupied a quarter of the weekly Boys' Friend from 1915-26, though Charles Hamilton was writing the Cedar Creek stories about Frank Richards' mythical schooldays in Canada for some years, and at that time his work occupied a half of the paper. At this stage, it may be mentioned that, for several months the Fistical Four were also in Canada, where they had one series of adventures after another. Apparently an editorial decision had been made to keep them there permanently, but as Charles Hamilton said, "Other counsels prevailed." We must be thankful that they did, since foreign holidays in his schools took the boys into strange worlds, which presented threats that made them behave in a manner older than their years. I always remember Vernon-Smith toting a gun in the Texas series as the ultimate mistake.

When I visited Charles Hamilton, I asked him to autograph my copy of the Schoolboys' Own Library "Jimmy Joins Up". He was quite surprised to see a copy of the very first Rookwood story, and he duly autographed my copy in black ink, using a thick-nibbed dip pen, which he asked me to hand to him. When Jimmy Silver arrived at Rookwood as a new boy, everyone knew he was a Classical because he had a blue ribbon in his cap (Moderns had red ones). Incidentally, the editor had wanted the new boy to be called Jack Fisher, but Hamilton didn't agree. Jimmy Silver, whose maxim was 'keep smiling' had a name which I always assumed was appropriate to his sterling qualities. Silver was placed in the end study, where Lovell was in charge of the Fistical Three, and it was a long time before he was accepted. Lovell (like Coker) always knew best, Raby could be stubborn, and Newcome slightly sarcastic. Other juniors mentioned early were the nuts: Topham and Townsend of the Fourth, and Adolphus Smythe of the Shell, who was junior captain. The rascals of the Classical Fourth were Peele, Gower, and Lattrey. Mark Lattrey's father was a private enquiry agent, and whenever there was a scandal involving Rookwood, Mr. Lattrey always passed the information on to his son. Of the masters only Dr. Chisholm and Mr. Booties, the Fourth form master were mentioned

On the Modern side, they were taught Chemistry, German, and Double-entry Bookkeeping. The Three Tommies were featured in the first issue - Dodd, Cook, and Doyle. Leggett, the sneak, was also a Modern. Later on, the unpleasant Mr. Roger Manders, the Modern Housemaster, was mentioned. Mr. Flinders, who taught German, and Mr. Bull, who taught Mathematics, were also on the Modern Side.

New boys came thick and fast. Rawson, the scholarship boy, was not welcomed by the nuts, and Reginald Muffin was not welcomed by anyone. Tubby Muffin had many adventures. A memorable occasion was when his uncle, Captain Muffin, acquired a yacht, and Tubby invited fellows on a cruise for which they later discovered they had to pay. (Later on Bunter was involved in a similar situation.) The yacht had stolen

property on board. The Fistical Four discovered the property. Captain Muffin got the reward, and he gave Tubby a gold watch. It turned out later on that it was rolled gold, with inferior works, and the best offer he could get from a jeweller was six shillings.

Quite the most outstanding new boy was Lord Mornington, who arrived with a servant, who was sent home. Somehow or other he lost his title, and became plain Valentine Mornington, spoilt, proud, insolent, and vindictive. His guardian Rupert Stacpoole, was Chairman of the Governors He got rid of Dr. Chisholm and replaced him with a tyrant, Mr. Scroop, who favoured Mornington, but his reign was brief. Mornington's character improved by fits and starts, and there were frequent relapses, which made him one of the most interesting characters at the school. He even became junior captain for a while, like Cardew at St. Jim's, and they both tired of the post in the end. Later on, Mornington was capable of a quixotic act. He found a boy called 'Erbert starving by the roadside, and after feeding him, he got him in the school as a Third-former. When Kit Erroll arrived with his father, 'Erbert recognised the man as Gentleman Jim, a crook. Mornington began a feud with Erroll, but they ended up as staunch chums, like Vernon-Smith and Redwing. Erroll's real father turned up, and that problem was solved. Unluckily for Mornington, it turned out that 'Erbert was the true heir to the Mornington fortunes, and Mornington was penniless, an amazing result for such a kind gesture.

Mornington was expelled on a number of occasions. Once he returned in disguise as a new boy, Sandy Smack, a theme later used in the Wibley-Popper series. Certainly, now that he had lost his money, Sir Rupert Stacpoole, his uncle, was less inclined to indulge him, and the Stacpoole cousins refused to make allowances for the eccentricities of an impoverished relative. On another occasion, when expelled, he again refused to go home: he took a job as a grocer's errand boy, and even turned a barrel-organ outside the gates of Rookwood. No one could ever foretell what he would do next.

Other new characters included Higgs, a bully; the Colonial Co. -Van Ryn from South Africa, Conroy from Australia, and Pons from Canada; and finally one of the most unusual juniors of all, Grace, known as Putty because he was soft. He pretended to be innocent though he loved practical jokes. What else could be expected of a junior who arrived at Rookwood on a circus elephant? One of the later additions to the Classical Fourth was a big lad called Peter Cuthbert Gunner. He went at everything like a bull at a gate, and always failed. His studymate, Dickinson minor, enjoyed the splendid feeds, but there were disadvantages when he was expected to join Gunner in some wild scheme. On one celebrated occasion he met a tramp called Dalton, and he asked him if he was the brother of his form-master. Of course, the tramp agreed, and Gunner kept bribing him to keep away from the school. Everyone was looking at Mr. Dalton in an odd kind of way, until the tramp admitted he was just saying it to get money from a fool.

I often think that juniors at Rookwood seemed younger than their years. Not only were there feuds with Pankley & Co. of Bagshot, but there were feuds between

TUBBY'S TIP

By

Arthur Edward Lovell

SAID Tubby, beaming like the moon :
" I say, you chaps, how prime !
My Uncle Joe this afternoon
Is coming for a time !

I've got a wire to say that he
Is coming for the trip
On purpose to hand out to me
A very useful tip ! "

" Congrats, Tubby ! " Silver said.
" You're certainly in luck.
Mind you don't paint the village red
And die of too much tuck ! "

Our podgy friend could hardly wait
For Uncle to arrive ;
He loitered at the college gate
From three o'clock till five.

When Uncle in the station hack
Rolled up, he grinned with glee,
For he had got a bad attack
Of " hoping " cough, you see.

At last, when Uncle took his leave,
He gave his hand a grip,
And said : " Now, nephew, I believe
I promised you a tip.

It's this : When next you write to me,
Remember what I say—
The word 'extremely' has no 'g',
And 'Uncle' has no 'k' "

With that, and with a brief good-bye,
He bade the driver start :
But tear-drops filled poor Tubby's eye,
And fury filled his heart.

When Jimmy said, " Well, are you rich ? "
He groaned, as if in pain ;
So we said, " Have some doughnuts ! "—which
Soon cheered him up again !



Classicals and Moderns. Rookwood was one large building. The Modern House was connected to the rest of the school by one door on the ground floor, always kept locked, and the key reposed in a locked drawer in Mr. Manders' study. Nevertheless, it was surprising how often that door was opened so that one side could raid the other.

The seniors at Rookwood most frequently mentioned were Bulkeley, the School Captain, and his friend Neville. Knowles was the prefect in charge of the Modern house, and his unpleasant character perfectly matched his housemaster's. Knowles had ambitions of becoming School Captain and, when Bulkeley's father was arrested for theft, he urged Bulkeley to resign for the good of the school, and then stepped into his shoes for a while. Later on Carthew became the bullying prefect of the Classical side, and he had a special dislike for the juniors in the end study, just as later on Loder picked on the Famous Five.

The Fifth Form at Rookwood had none of the humour and variety that was found at Greyfriars. The chief character at Rookwood was Hansom, whose friends were Lumsden, Tallboys, and Brown major. Hansom had hopes of fagging the Fourth, but he was soon disillusioned. The only other Fifth-former of note was Jobson, who was very poor, but he never attracted the reader's sympathy, since he was both touchy and aggressive. Mr. Greely was master of the Fifth, and an unfortunate punch-ball accident gave him a black eye, and when he saved Sir George Hansom from footpads he received further injuries, which caused Dr. Chisholm to dismiss him without letting him explain. Sir George installed him in a rival school at Coombe Manor, and several transferred from Rookwood, but Mr. Greely could not control boys in a rebellious state of mind, and the school closed with everyone back at Rookwood. (It may be added that the facial injuries episode was later experienced by Mr. Prout, and that Mr. Quelch later set up a school at High Coombe, but his control of the boys never faltered.)

It is well-known that Charles Hamilton regarded Rookwood as a place to try out new themes before they were used at Greyfriars and St. Jim's. He said it was like trying out new medicine on the dog. Of course, with Rookwood occupying only a small part of the paper, a failure would not be so disastrous as it would have been at Greyfriars and St. Jim's, because these schools occupied the major part of their papers. The Lagden series, when the Fistical Four were kidnapped one by one, was both eerie, tight, and almost condensed. The Rackstraw kidnappings in the Gem, on the other hand, were so numerous that they verged on the ridiculous. On the other hand, the strike of the masters and the strike of the prefects were never used elsewhere. Only the autocratic Dr. Chisholm could have precipitated such crises.

Rookwood was the only school where there was a change of masters for the form that was the centre of interest. Mr. Bootles was a middle-aged man with bushy side whiskers and a habit of peering through his pince-nez and saying, "What? What?" Yet he was not a figure of fun, and he once ordered Jimmy Silver to leave the Assembly Hall when Dr. Chisholm was just about to administer an unjust flogging. Charles Hamilton had never intended to replace him, but the editor ordered it because he

thought the readers might confuse him with the fat boy Bunny Bootles in a Hamilton school St. Kit's. As Hamilton said to me, no one could confuse a boy with a master, but the fiat had gone forth. Accordingly, it was given out that Mr. Bootles had inherited a fortune and retired.

A temporary master, appropriately called Mr. Cutts as he was fond of the cane, lasted but a short while before Mr. Dalton arrived. Dalton had been a boxer, and he was a young vigorous man with acute intelligence, and he was very much liked by the form. Some time later, when he fell foul of Dr. Chisholm, he was dismissed. His replacement was so unpleasant that the Fourth form had a rebellion on an island in the river, which was of course the basis of the later Poppers Island rebellion. Mr. Dalton might have been popular with his form, but as a reader I think the jury is still out. If Mr. Quelch had retired and been replaced by Mr. Lascelles, I think the Magnet would have been the poorer.

Charles Hamilton seemed to have taken a severe view of upstarts. Montmorency, a former servant whose father had come into money and changed his name, got his comeuppance. Beresford-Baggs was not quite so false, but he was humiliated by visits from seedy relatives, and in the end he too left. The message seems to be that money is not enough: what is important is to be a gentleman. The one exception was the scholarship boy like Rawson who never had money and never indulged in pretence. There was one Rookwood story specially written for the monthly *Boys' Friend Library* and that is No. 413, "The Feud at Rookwood", a wartime story. There was an Italian football team, the Contadini, and various Rookwood teams tried to arrange a fixture with them. It would be pleasant to record that it was exceptionally good, but in fact it was only a workmanlike story.

Jimmy Silver's home was the Priory, and a number of holidays were spent there with assorted guests. Unlike the heroes at other Hamiltonian schools. Jimmy's parents were both alive. Mr. Silver was a great art collector, and two stories revolved around his paintings: the first a Rembrandt and the other a Titian. Of course, the Priory had a haunted room, and there were a number of ghosts appearing thereabouts. The Priory could not compare with Wharton Lodge, but it was more attractive than anything in the Gem. Perhaps Jimmy's most famous visitor was Harry Wharton, who stayed there during the first Rebel series, when he had quarrelled with his own friends.

One of the later new boys at Rookwood was Clarence Cuffy, of the Modern House. He lived in Ganders Green, and his father was friendly with Tommy Dodd's father. Cuffy was a gormless youth, with a desire to help, but his clumsiness always made matters worse. He considered noughts and crosses an intellectual pursuit. He called boys by their Christian names: Jimmy Silver was "Dear James". In the famous caravanning series, when the Fistical Four were in one caravan and the three Tommies in another, he shuttled back and forth between them. Jimmy Silver told him to help the Moderns by putting quinine in the soup to give it flavour, mustard in the milk to preserve it, and pepper in their beds to kill bugs. Cuffy was pleased to do these good deeds and did exactly as he was told. He was not featured a lot, but a little of him went a long way.

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is
To Amuse,
To Instruct,
and
To Advise
British Boys.



JIMMY SILVER'S JOY-RIDE TO ROOKWOOD!

Another famous holiday series was the time Lovell bought a motor scooter. They ran into the three Tommies and Coker as well. The Trike series in the Magnet was clearly a spin-off. One of the most interesting of all the summer holidays was when Lovell bought a pony and cart from a dubious character. It turned out that the vehicle really belonged to a handsome bronzed young man called Mr. Richards and, taking pity on the Fistical Four, he kindly loaned it to them for nothing. They called the pony Trotsky, but the animal found it very difficult to go uphill, perhaps because Tubby Muffin was hiding under the equipment in the cart. They soon got rid of Tubby Muffin, who was clearly expendable, unlike Bunter in the Magnet. The juniors came across Mornington, recently expelled, and they crossed swords with his Stacpoole cousins. An unusual encounter was with Grundy, & Co. from St. Jim's.

These picaresque holidays were always enhanced by such chance meetings, which made the reader appreciate the small compact world of Hamiltoniana.

Rookwood was the only school that Hamilton closed down of his own free will. For years, the *Magnet*, the *Gem* and the *Boys' Friend* weekly were all known as the Companion Papers. The same editor ran them all, until 1926, when it was decided to transfer the *Boys' Friend* to another editor. Hamilton did not want the bother of dealing with two editors, and accordingly he gave up Rookwood altogether, and it is not surprising that the *Boys' Friend* collapsed just over a year later. This had an unexpected consequence: he concentrated thereafter on the *Magnet*, and so began its Golden Age.

This did not mean that the Hampshire school disappeared from view. Rookwood stories were reprinted in the *Popular*, the *Schoolboys' Own Library*, and the *Holiday Annual*, which also contained some specially written tales. In the late 1930s there was an autumnal flowering: at the back of the *Gem* Owen Conquest wrote two Rookwood serials. One dealt with a new boy called Dudley Vane, and the other featured Lovell in trouble with the Head after a thief stole Dr. Chisholm's wallet: it was actually hidden in the lining of Mr. Manders' overcoat. These two series re-appeared in the *Schoolboys' Own Library* - "The Boy Who Walked by Night" and "Manders on the Spot".

After the war, Greyfriars and then St. Jim's were re-born, and the occasional Rookwood story appeared in the odd annual. Not content with this, I persisted in asking him for a long Rookwood story. Hamilton was not unwilling, only dubious of its likely success for, as he informed me, only about two letters in a hundred ever mentioned Rookwood. In the end, persistence paid off, for in 1951 Mandevilles published "The Rivals of Rookwood School". Lovell was in dispute with Mr. Manders, who was not quite so severe and unreasonable as he had been in the past, but all the other masters were the same, and Dr. Chisholm was as autocratic as ever. I was more than happy with this book, which brought the long saga of Rookwood to a triumphant conclusion.



WANTED: Rover 1955, Nos. 1570, 1575, 1577. Hotspur 1946, No. 532. Hotspur 1959, No. 1158. Adventure 1958, No. 1739. Adventure 1960, Nos. 1827, 1839, 1840. Scramble, Nos. 1-3, 13, 23, 29, 34, 36, 40, 46. Also Eagle Vol. 2, Nos. 15, 36, 52. RICHARD JACKSON, 52 Gordon Road, Edinburgh, E1G12 6LU.



WANTED: Large number Schoolgirl, Schoolgirls Own and Nelson Lee. To all your readers - Compliments of the Season. D.D. BALL, Middle Lane, Whitney, Melksham, Wilts., SM12 8QP.





Nelson Lee's Christmas of Peril

by Mark Caldicott



Christmas is the time when old friends meet up. When Nelson Lee and Nipper agreed to spend Christmas at the Derbyshire home of Douglas and Vera Clifford, however, they were re-united with more friends than they had bargained for.

The detective and his assistant were looking forward with pleasure to meeting up again with their old comrade in arms. Clifford and Lee had been united in their battle to overcome the great criminal organisation, the League of the Green Triangle for the major part of the foregoing year. They had eventually succeeded in their objective. The League had been destroyed and its leader, Professor Cyrus Zingrave, had been seen to perish beneath a flood of molten Peruvian lava. Vera Zingrave, the professor's charming daughter, has kept her promise that, with the fall of the League, she would marry Douglas Clifford. So Christmas was to be celebrated in the newly-weds' house.

Another of Nelson Lee's comrades in arms, and an especial favourite of Nipper's, has also been invited to join the party. Eileen Dare, the courageous female detective, accompanied by her companion, is to be present. This promises to make a festive gathering to be enjoyed by all. Eileen Dare has teamed with Nelson Lee and Nipper to fight the Combine. The Combine is not a great criminal organisation in the fashion of the Brotherhood of Iron or the League of the Green Triangle, but is a collection of corrupt businessmen whom Eileen has sworn to destroy in revenge for the death of her father. At the time of the gathering the battle with the Combine is in full flood. The account of this Yuletide gathering is given in the tale "Christmas of Peril" (NLL, OS 78, 02-Dec-16). This is a double length, double price (2d) Christmas special in which Edwy Searles Brooks has pulled out all the stops.

The story opens with a dark and tragic prelude, Dickensian in atmosphere, set three years prior to this festive gathering. It is Christmas Eve and Clive Worthing, against the wishes of his wife, Ethel, has announced his intention of confronting Victor Marcombe, the crooked stockbroker who has defrauded Worthing of his wealth and left him penniless. Ethel is horrified to see that her husband is taking with him a gun. Worthing's idea is to frighten the stockbroker into agreeing to make good his losses. Worthing braves the snow and, approaching Marcombe's house, sees a light in the library window. Seeing this light, Worthing decides, rather than going to the front door, to leap the iron railings and shock Marcombe by entering through the window. What Worthing does not realise is that he has been spotted by a patrolling constable. The policeman sees Worthing enter the library by this unorthodox means. Shortly afterwards there is the sound of a gunshot and, entering the library, the constable discovers a bewildered Worthing, smoking gun in hand, muttering "He is dead!... Great heavens above! I have killed him — I have killed him. I don't know how

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MAGNIFICENT XMAS No. 2

A CHRISTMAS PERIL

A SPECIAL DOUBLE LENGTH TALE OF NELSON LEE & NIPPER
 INTRODUCING EILEEN DARE THE GIRL DETECTIVE - JIM THE PENMAN
 PROFESSOR ZINGRAVE ETC. SPECIALLY WRITTEN FOR THE BOOK

INCORPORATING THE "BOYS' REALM."

it happened!" Confronted by the policeman, Worthing, in his desperation, makes a run for it. He returns home, tells Ellen of the tragedy and flees from the house pursued by the police. The chase leads to the railway station, where by a desperate leap he boards a train and escapes. By a quirk of fate, however, the express train on which he is travelling crashes into the back of a slow-moving suburban train. His body is later identified from his overcoat and watch.

Three years afterwards our Christmas comrades are taking a walk in the crisp country air. Their conversation revolves around the possibility of skating if the frost holds. As the walk proceeds Lee notices a fine building which, Clifford explains, is the home of Hector Desmond. This casts a shadow across Eileen Dare's face, for Desmond is an associate of the rogues of the Combine. The walk progresses, however,

and the beauty of the winter countryside wipes away Eileen's frown.

A curious incident interrupts their exercise. The Dickensian Christmas melodrama continues as they come upon a charming cottage with trellised walls, smothered in drifted snow and with smoke curling from the chimney. The inherently peaceful atmosphere of the cottage was, however, at that moment being disturbed by two men who were engaged on removing all the furniture from the cottage and stacking it in the road. It transpires these are Hector Desmond's men, here with the intention, on Desmond's orders, of evicting the tenant. The tenant is a young widow with a child in her arms.

Nelson Lee quickly intervenes. "Do you mean to say that this poor woman is being forcibly ejected from her cottage - being turned into the snow practically at Christmas time?" When they learn that the eviction is for a debt of only a few shillings Clifford, Eileen and Nipper join in the condemnation of this brutal act, made worse by the fact that the debt could have been paid within a few days. Douglas Clifford pays the rent owing, and a further quarter in advance, and the men are instructed to replace the furniture. A promise is extracted from Ethel Lethbridge, the tenant, that she and her son will join Clifford's house party.

An explanation of this strange incident is then revealed to the reader (although not to Nelson Lee and friends) as we are transported to the home of Hector Desmond. The eviction was a carefully-laid scheme which had been totally sabotaged by the appearance of Clifford's party. The whole of the eviction, it is revealed, was planned so that Desmond's son Hubert could arrive on the scene and rescue Mrs Lethbridge from her plight. Having done so he would build upon the gratitude of Mrs Lethbridge with the ultimate aim of proposing marriage to her. The motive for marriage, however, was entirely dishonourable, for Desmond had learned through Mrs Lethbridge's solicitor that she was shortly to inherit a fortune. Marriage would effectively transfer that fortune into Desmond's control. The solicitor had not only broken client confidentiality but had neglected to tell his client that the fortune was forthcoming so that she would not suspect Hubert Desmond's motive for proposing marriage. The treacherous behaviour of the solicitor in question, Mr Sydney Bradford, is explained by the fact that he is a member of the Combine. Incidentally, Bradford was also aware that Ethel Lethbridge was none other than (as you have probably guessed) Ethel Worthing.

Into this complex plot ESB introduces a further twist. Vera Zingrave sees a face at the window. Incredulous as it seems, the features are those of her stepfather, Cyrus Zingrave. "It was the eyes which transfixed Vera Clifford's attention. Never had she forgotten the eyes of Professor Zingrave. They had always had a strange fascination — an appearance of wonderful power." At first Lee rejects the possibility, for he had seen Zingrave on a mountainside seconds before that spot was engulfed in molten lava. However, he has to admit that Vera Zingrave is a girl not given to fancies. Lee realises that he had not actually seen Zingrave die and a doubt begins to creep into his mind. Zingrave could still be alive!

The possibility that the Professor was still alive cast a shadow over the gathering.



Wildly impossible though it seemed, Varg recognised in that face the features of her dead stepfather—Professor Cyrus Zingrave!—(See page 19.)

Yet even more gloom would have descended upon Nelson Lee and his friends if they could, at that moment, have seen into the library of Hector Desmond. For here, along with father and son Desmond and the unscrupulous Sydney Bradford was a man who called himself Henry Faversham. The plot to ensnare Ethel Lethbridge into marriage and out of a fortune was to be aided by Faversham.

Bradford had been sent a sealed letter which was to be handed to Ethel Worthing on Christmas Eve. The unprincipled lawyer had broken the seal and read the letter, discovering to his surprise that it was written by Clive Worthing. Moreover, it was written after the date of Worthing's supposed death. So Clive Worthing was not killed in the train crash. He was alive and, according to the

letter, was planning to return to his wife on Christmas Eve!

Any chance of winning Ethel Worthing's hand would be wrecked by Worthing's reappearance, of course. She had not seen the letter, so was unaware of the situation. Clive Worthing therefore had to be intercepted and prevented from making his visit - and our evil friends would not flinch at taking his life. The tricky matter of winning Ethel Worthing's hand was to be assisted by the fact that they had a sample of Clive Worthing's handwriting. A forged letter in Worthing's hand, purporting to be written before his death, would urge Ethel Worthing to marry Hubert Desmond. It would need to be a good forgery, but then it would be, for Henry Faversham was the greatest forger the world had ever seen, his real name being Douglas James Sutcliffe, aka Jim the Penman.

When a stranger skids his car into a tree and is concussed, Lee takes him to Clifford's home not realising that the man is Clive Worthing and that in doing so he has prevented Worthing being intercepted. Fate decrees that Jim the Penman sees Zingrave on the road outside Ethel's cottage. Thinking this stranger is Worthing, Sutcliffe attacks him, but recognises Zingrave immediately. The two return to the Desmond house. They do not realise that their altercation has been witnessed by

Eileen Dare, who recognises Zingrave and follows the pair back to the Desmond residence where she overhears discussion of the whole evil plot. Eileen is discovered, however, and is driven to the snow-bound moors where she is abandoned to die.

Worried about Eileen's lengthy absence, Lee and Nipper are out on the road searching for her and hear the car returning from the moor. From a snatch of conversation Lee realises she is somewhere on the moor. Only by removing his car's electric headlights lights from their brackets and sweeping the lights around the vast expanse of the moor spelling out "Eileen" in Morse code does Lee at last find the stricken girl.

The rescue of Eileen, of course, enables the whole plot to be revealed. She tells of Ethel Worthing's fortune, the unprincipled nature of Ethel's own lawyer, Sydney Bradford, of his association with the Combine and above all of the fact that their latest house guest is Clive Worthing. Eileen also reveals that the next move planned by Desmond and Co is the murder of Worthing. Lee decides to allow the enemy to believe that their plans are running smoothly and to catch them in the act of murder, thus providing the necessary proof to convict them. This plan almost comes to grief when Desmond and his confederates strike earlier than anticipated and Worthing is poisoned. Only Lee's intimate knowledge of poisons and their antidotes saves Worthing's life.

Christmas Eve dawns with sunshine. Ethel Worthing, in her cottage, was not present when Eileen is rescued, and is therefore in ignorance of her husband's return. She is also unaware that her lawyer is a crook. When Bradford delivers Sutcliffe's forged letter, therefore, she is confused and troubled by her husband's request that she marry Hubert Desmond. Soon, however, Ethel receives a visit from Eileen, who breaks the happy news that her husband is alive. Clive Worthing himself appears and there is a joyous reunion, with Clive seeing his son for the first time.

There is a final bonus for Clive Worthing, for when Lee and his party confront Desmond, Clive immediately recognises Hubert Desmond as the man who was in Victor Marcombe's room when he was shot. Hubert is so unnerved by this that he babbles: "I didn't mean to kill him! The truth is revealed. Marcombe had stunned Clive Worthing with a paperweight and while he was unconscious Desmond had killed Marcombe with Worthing's gun, leaving the gun in Worthing's hand before fleeing.

In this wonderful seasonal offering by ESB has managed to weave into one story an old fashioned Christmas melodrama with a happy ending and a typical Nelson Lee thriller. In doing so he has gathered together into one story of all the main characters featured by Brooks in the Nelson Lee Library of 1910. This is a tour-de-force well worthy of the Christmas double number.

And, of course, this story marks the return of Professor Cyrus Zingrave... of which more in the next Collector's Digest.





MARTIN HANDFORD, “WHERE’S WALLY?” CREATOR by Eric Hammond

I met Martin Handford twice. The first meeting was in March 1986, when he spent the whole evening with my family and myself. The second a fortnight later was very brief. At this time, his “Where’s Wally?” books were just becoming known. Their phenomenal success was around the corner.

I had been aware of Martin Handford’s work for some years. I had always been a regular visitor to the annual Royal Academy Summer Exhibition and at the 1976 event I was very impressed with a large pen and ink picture of the Battle of Waterloo. It was a serious graphic representation of the battle and it made a deep impression on me. My admiration was reinforced, when this work was followed yearly by further battle scenes. Namely the Battles of Marengo, Cortreras, Magenta, Mudki, Fort Fisher, Intoli Drift, Handschoote and finally a work entitled Beach Attack using the medium of felt pen. The whole series must have contained thousands of accurately attired figures which must have entailed great and minute research.

At the same time, I was also aware of his lighter and commercial works. His work was now appearing in magazines, on book covers and advertisements. He appeared many times in the then prestigious *Radio Times*. One of his pictures caused comment from one of the magazine’s ultra observant readers. The picture depicted part of the audience at one of the Albert Hall’s Promenade concerts, in its usual detail. Within that audience was one lady sitting topless. An example of his impish sense of humour. When viewed again, it was barely visible and somewhat of a miracle it had even been noticed. This may well have been a progenitor of looking for Wally.

One of his most amusing crowd scenes he was then doing was of a crowded nudist beach. In the centre of the crowd of both naked men and women stood one man facing them wearing the obligatory raincoat held open in “flashing” mode. I appreciated the absolute incongruity of the situation.

It was about this time that a meeting between Martin and David Bennett, Art Director of Walker Books, took place and between them “Wally” was born, soon after we were to meet. It came about when my daughter was telling a colleague at work (she was and still is an optician) of my admiration for Martin Handford. He then revealed that he happened to be a personal friend of Martin, and added that Martin lived quite close to us and would we like to meet him. We jumped at the chance and it was arranged. He duly arrived, and within a few minutes there was a rapport. We found that he and I, in spite of a generation gap, had many mutual interests. A love of military history, the same for the comics of the 40s and 50s and beyond. We also had a mutual liking for the comedy of Tony Hancock and the Sgt. Bilko character and the music of The Bee Gees. He confessed he did most of his work in the wee small hours listening to recordings of the above.



Number one copies of three of his magazines

I showed him my collection of comics: although not extensive, it seemed to impress him. I was pleased to be able to present him with two or three that were surplus to needs. His enthusiastic thanks were more than my small gift deserved. We were told of his early life in Hampstead, which he looked back on with satisfaction, especially his love of drawing.

He spoke briefly about his forthcoming Wally books, hoping they would prove successful! He was a genuinely shy, modest, softly spoken young man. This did not hide his quirky satiric sense of humour which appears in his work, plus a gift for depicting the outrageous pun. To admire and praise his work was to embarrass him. He felt the great pleasure he derived from his work was reward enough, any praise was superfluous.

The success of his creation, the books, the magazines, the ephemera, has now become truly international. In the U.S.A. and Canada Wally is a massive success. There, he is, "Where's Waldo?" In France he is called "Charlie". In Holland "Govert". In Germany "Walter". In Italy "Ubaldo". In Egypt "Aref". In Denmark "Holger". In Iceland "Valli". In the Czech Republic "Valdik" and in Sweden "Hugo". Whatever his name, he looks the same and people are trying to find him. Probably his greatest following after North America is in Japan. He is hugely popular. Apparently his most obsessive fans there are teenage girls.

The worldwide enthusiasm is without precedence given the short time span involved. Apart from his books he has had highly successful animated television shows starring Wally. As one would expect, gigantic viewing figures have been recorded in the States.

The business empire that has grown from his creation could not have been foreseen, even in his wildest dreams. The financial rewards (I have seen figures of 50 to 60 million pounds as his share) essayed in the National Press, would certainly not be the reason for his devoted work. He showed little interest in money and I am convinced his attitude would not have changed. I have read of this, and that his fortune has made no difference to his simple way of life. I can well believe it.

We keep in touch, the very occasional letter, but every year at Christmas I and my daughter receive a welcome present, perhaps one of his books, often an obscure edition, or a piece of his ephemera, always personally inscribed. Invariably accompanied by a Christmas card, originally drawn and cut out by himself. My whole collection of Wally related items has come from their creator. It is a unique and much loved collection that I treasure. All this followed from a couple of meetings all those years ago. This more than anything shows what kind of person and friend he is. He does not forget his past. I am often asked what he looks like? Look at Wally, there is a definite likeness.

This pen portrait of one of the most successful creators of a worldwide character, is not, nor never intended to be, a definitive list of his works nor a biography. At our meetings we discussed private attitudes and views, hopes and fears. Now he is a celebrity, I am sure the opinions expressed then between us, he would prefer to remain private. I respect that, as I am sure that his fame has not altered his desire for simplicity and privacy because those two words exemplify his attitude to life.



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The Strange Connection Between Churchill, Habakkuk And Wilson, Of The Wizard

by Des O'Leary

For some years I have been intrigued by the tantalising references which have surfaced from time to time relating to top-secret Second World War plans to construct a huge ship made of ice. These references connected in my mind with one of the most unusual adventures experienced by one of my favourite story paper heroes, Wilson, while on board an aptly named "Ship of Shivers". This series appeared in the WIZARD in 1951 - as far as I am aware well before the real, if fantastic, story had been widely publicised.

I was inspired to collate all these references and find out more about the ship of ice after reading the obituary of Nobel Prize winner Max Perutz, which appeared in the Daily Telegraph on 7th February 2002. I quote: "Perutz's work in the Second World War sprang from his enthusiasm for skiing and interest in the crystal texture and flow mechanism of glaciers, which he liked to demonstrate with blancmange... Perutz was assigned to work on an airbase made of ice which could be established in mid-Atlantic." Such a staging-post was urgently needed as a refuelling base because of the limited range of planes early in the war. Convoys of Allied supply ships were under attack far out in the Atlantic and vital supplies were being lost because aircraft could not protect them so far from land. Such an unsinkable construction might also be developed for use in future landings in France which, even in the dark days of 1942 were seen as a necessity one day to break Hitler's grip on Europe. Perutz's experimental work was carried out in a large underground cold store at Smithfield Meat Market. But he had not had the original idea for the airbase.

In 2001 the BBC radio play "Habakkuk of Ice" had presented an entertaining account of an ebullient Churchill (a man always open to unorthodox schemes) actively espousing the novel proposition of a ship of ice, put forward by eccentric genius Geoffrey Pyke. Pyke was a gifted inventor, inspired by lateral thinking to unexpected solutions to problems, some viable, but most considered by many as "crackpot". Ice itself being too brittle, American researchers found that a mixture of ice and wood pulp was shatterproof and strong as concrete. The mixture was christened "Pycrete" in Geoffrey's honour. In practice the huge demands the scheme would make on the limited resources available soon became apparent. Even in collaboration with the USA and Canada (where experimental studies were organised in the Rockies and Newfoundland) the project was seen by senior officers as unlikely to succeed - a typical Churchill flight of fancy. The death-knell of the idea was sounded by research showing that the amount of steel needed for the pycrete structures would be greater than that required for a conventional ship.

The post-war suicide of Geoffrey Pyke was a sad end to that gifted though erratic

man. He had chosen the name Habakkuk for his invention after the Old Testament book, which proclaimed "I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told to you."

But if, as I think, this story did not emerge fully into public awareness until long after 1945, it is most interesting that WIZARD, one of D.C. Thomson's very popular boys' story papers, should feature its hero, Wilson, in a series of 1951 entitled "The Truth About the Ship of Shivers". In this short series of eleven instalments Wilson recounts his experiences when recruited by the Royal Navy to help with its post-war experiments on its top-secret aircraft carrier constructed *of ice!*

For those readers unacquainted with Wilson it should be stated that he was a mysterious Englishman, born in the eighteenth century, who by rigorous physical training and the aid of a secret herbal elixir had prolonged his life into modern times. He had spent his life competing against ancient and modern records of speed and endurance for his own personal satisfaction. Always successfully. A wonderman indeed, but well within the boundaries of fictional super-heroes if we think of Spiderman, Batman, Superman and the rest!

He is enlisted by the Royal Navy at an athletics meeting while initiating his intended programme of breaking records at five distances - 100 yards, 220 yards, 440 yards, the half mile and the mile. He is, however, assured that if he joins the experiment known as "Operation Shivers" he will be guaranteed opportunities for training and participation in athletic meetings. This, combined with an appeal to his patriotism, convinces him and he is immediately flown to an aircraft carrier known as "Big Flo", an artificial island of ice.

Wilson's function on board is to conduct experiments on the effects of low temperatures on human beings and ways to improve their resistance to cold and extreme weather conditions. His extraordinary physical and mental powers are soon evident. He never wears anything except his famous homespun woollen costume, he sleeps on deck, and swims in the freezing sea, drying himself by a brisk massage with his open hands.

He is certainly kept busy! He conducts experiments to test the effects of extreme cold. He dives seventy foot to the seabed without diving gear to recover some vital lost equipment. He thwarts attempts by foreign agents to kidnap him. Enemy tramp steamers lurk under false flags and send counterfeit appeals for help, seeking to lure our hero into traps. Through all this he is determined to accomplish the task he has set himself of beating the five athletic records. This necessitates not only attendance at athletic meetings around Britain, but also what training he can fit in, whether on lonely beaches or on deck for a twenty mile run on his very own version of a treadmill, a cylinder which can be set to revolve at varying speeds. As well as obstructing all his enemy's efforts, Wilson runs five exciting races and, of course, breaks all five records.

As Wilson was the only guinea-pig used in testing human reaction to extreme cold, it is doubtful how valuable the results of the research would have been if applied to ordinary mortals. In addition to Wilson's extraordinary powers of resistance

The inside of the tank is the coldest place on earth yet Wilson, clad only in his running costume, astounds the scientists by showing no signs of discomfort!



Wilson runs twenty miles—without leaving the spot where he started!



Somewhere on the sea bed lies Britain's latest secret device... It's so far down that Wilson has to carry an anchor to dive deep enough to search for it!

**THE TRUTH
ABOUT
THE SHIP OF SHIVERS
REVEALED BY
WILSON**

Pictures copyright D.C. Thomson

to cold, he could call upon secret knowledge acquired previously in Tibet ("The Forbidden Quest of the Man Named Wilson" WIZARD 1949). In a freezing-chamber, even at minus 70 degrees Fahrenheit, he felt "quite comfortable for, by my Yogi methods, I had insulated myself against all changes of temperature". He can also understand the foreign language spoken by his enemies, disable them with expert judo chops and escape through a porthole by bending iron bars before swimming miles using "my own development of the Australian crawl". What a man!

His involvement with Operation Shivers came to an end when the experimental Big Flo had served its purpose and "more giant icedromes were to be constructed. Evidently our experiments had proved that they were practicable." As we know, no more ice ships were to be built in fact or fiction.

But, was Big Flo a complete invention of the WIZARD'S or is there a connection with Habakkuk? It seems to me that Big Flo has too many similarities with Habakkuk to be merely coincidental. The WIZARD'S admiral explains Big Flo's origins in World War II as one of the "unsinkable floating aerodromes to combat the submarine menace". Its construction; "artificial iceberg ... the ice to be reinforced and covered with an insulating skin made of wood pulp". It would have been driven by electric motors. "The final design was for a two million ton 'carrier', two thousand feet long, three hundred feet wide and two hundred feet deep ... The war finished before the floating island could be constructed ... (Big Flo) was not as big as the one suggested in wartime ..."

In the radio play "Habakkuk, Ship of Ice" the same figures of two thousand feet long and three hundred feet wide are mentioned, while Perutz's obituary mentions "plans to build a giant 2.2 million ton iceberg ship on Newfoundland ... and the vast ice block was to have been propelled into position by twenty-six electric motors ..." It is clear that someone on D.C. Thomson's editorial staff must have had some knowledge of the Habakkuk project. These editors often initiated story themes in consultation with their authors. The author most closely associated with the first Wilson stories was Gilbert L. Dalton (1904-1963), perhaps it was he who wrote this series. Whoever was responsible, he came up with an exciting group of stories, setting the superhuman athletic feats of Wilson in an intriguing background.

Only much later than first reading them did I find out that it was not just a fantasy but an echo of one of those wartime secrets that, like the code-breakers of Bletchley Park, stayed secret until long after 1945. I well remember when the Enigma secret first came to be openly publicised (in the mid-1970s?) that, to my surprise, a mature lady of my acquaintance revealed that she had been one of the many hard-working secretaries there. She said how surprised she was to see the publicity. "We were told that this secret would never be revealed." She repeated, "Never!"

Now the Internet carries details of an experimental structure to examine ice's plastic flow and brittleness on Patricia Lake, Jasper, Alberta, Canada, abandoned in August 1943 and left to sink in place. "In the 1970s scuba divers discovered the remains and they were subsequently studied by the Archaeology Department of the University of Calgary." In 1988 the site was marked by an underwater monument and

the following year a plaque commemorating these unusual wartime events was erected on the shore of the lake.

Habakkuk was a failed experiment, of course. Possibly leaks about it could therefore have surfaced soon after 1945 and provided material that an alert author or editor could have seen as ideal for the long-running Wilson saga in WIZARD.

Whatever the real background of its inspiration, Wilson's adventures on the "Ship of Shivers" are a fascinating fictional reminder of that British wartime ingenuity which always appealed to Churchill and, though not always feasible in practice, was witness of this country's determination to resist Nazi aggression, leaving no possibility unexplored, however far-fetched it might seem.

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Christmas and New Year Greetings to London Club members from this year's Chairman, ROGER COOMBES.



Season's Greetings to all Hobby Friends. REG AND MAUREEN ANDREWS.



Christmas Greetings and Best Wishes for 2003 to Mary, Bill and all friends. JOHN BRIDGWATER, Flat 5A, Saulfland Place, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 4QD.



Season's Greetings to all Hobby Friends from the Becks of Lewes and Pevensey.



Christmas and New Year Greetings to all Readers. **Wanted:** Raffles v. Sexton Blake and any Teed's Plummer. E. BAINES, 22 Hetley Road, Beeston, Nottingham, NH9 2QL.





WHATEVER HAPPENED TO

by Ernest Holman



At odd times, probably in Holiday Annual, there would appear a short article concerning the activities of members of the Greyfriars Remove after school years were over. They were, of course, of a humorous character and, often, highly unlikely.

Thinking of those articles set me looking at the subject from a more serious aspect. Yes, what indeed did happen to them when they went into their careers after school years? A trivial pursuit, somebody might think - but I do not think so. Greyfriars to us was a very real establishment over the years and has stayed so. Here, then, is my idea of the possible future of members of the Greyfriars Remove. Mind you, there will be an odd 'side issue' here and there; however, we will begin at the most obvious place first - the start of the Remove passage.

Here, right away, I have a 'side issue'. That Remove passage has always seemed something of an enigma to me. To judge by the stories and illustrations, the studies were all on one side of the passage. What a very long passage it must have been. If it had been so, there must have been windows into the outer parts of the school facing all those studies. More logically, surely, there would have been odd numbered studies on one side, and evens on the other. That would certainly have made the passage of reasonable length. The passage ended in the Remove landing. Yet there appeared to be a box room that had stairs leading down to the passage. I reckon that No. 15 was round a corner, where the box room stairs led away. Pure speculation, anyway, so let's leave it at that and start our journey of placing the boys into their future lives.

No. 1 - Wharton and Nugent. What, then, for the captain of the form? I cannot see that Harry followed into the footsteps of his uncle and became a soldier. He was, though, a good scholar and I have a feeling that he would have become the owner of a publishing house. I don't know why I should think so, except that I feel he would have made a great career in that aspect of literature. He may also have found time to turn out at the Oval for Surrey. He would not have graduated to captaining the side, I am sure - and probably not have been in the England team. (George Wingate, I feel, could be reserved for that role.)

Frank Nugent would have been in a similar line, I think, but as an author - and even a poet. Maybe he would also be one of Harry's reviewers - I am sure they would have settled down into that kind of adult life.

Next, to No. 2 - Hazeldene and Tom Brown. Well, just what form of occupation would have attended Peter Hazeldene's future? I can only see him as a 'drifter'. With Tom, however, the answer has been given to us. In a post war story, it was revealed that Tom's father ran a New Zealand Air Line and, of course, Tom would have been well taken care of in the world of air transport. He would have found time to bowl for his 'state' and, quite likely, become a member of the National cricket team.

Dick Russell and Robert Ogilvie occupied No. 3. They may have had an addition when Jack Drake and Dick Rodney joined the Remove briefly - although this never happened in the main Magnet story. Drake left to become the assistant to detective Ferrers Locke, and Rodney never reappeared. There is little to go on for placing the No. 5 occupants in their future careers - Ogilvie no doubt would pursue his life in the North; just what Dick would have achieved it really is not possible to conjecture.

When, however, we arrive at No. 4 study, then we really do have material to draw on. The Bounder, naturally, would follow in the business steps of his father and Herbert Vernon-Smith would have been a name to conjure - and do battle - with in the City. Like his parent, he would have swept all before him.

When we come to Tom Redwing, well there I have a theory all my own. I am sure he would have eventually taken Holy Orders. Not only that - he would have taken his calling to the place he really loved - the sea. I can quite see Tom as a Ship's Padre - even calling the message to 'praise the Lord and pass the ammunition'. I also think, when time permitted, that the friendship between the Study Four pair would have held strong.

No. 5 study needs a feat of memory- I can only name Oliver Kipps as being resident there - and his career would no doubt have been that of a stage magician. Who else might have been in No. 5? Perhaps Dick Rake at one time, though to me this boy is but a name. Maybe Pentelow's Delarey and even later George Bulstrode.

Room for three in No. 6 - William Wibley, who undoubtedly would have made a great stage name for himself, even if not reaching the heights of Olivier, Gielgud or Richardson. The other two, well it's anyone's guess as to what befell them - Irish lad Micky Desmond, Welsh David Morgan. That would be as far as one can go with Study number 6.

No lack of occupants in No. 7, of course. The two Todds, for instance. Alonzo - never a regular attendant - would no doubt have been found some sort of niche by Uncle Benjamin. Peter, though, had it all mapped out. He would probably have been one of the most argumentative - and successful - lawyers in the world. There would have been great times and achievements for Peter. Tom Dutton would probably have settled into some career that didn't require much correct hearing.

Larger than life was the fourth member of No. 7. So, just what could have been the future for William George Bunter? Certainly not in his father's occupation amongst the Bulls and Bears; undoubtedly, food would have been the environment for a career for Billy. He would never have been capable of running a business for himself but I am sure he would have been employed in his element as a cook. Perhaps never a Chef - and certainly not of TV type (which might have been a good thing to miss, anyway!). I doubt if Sammy and Bessie figured much in his subsequent life - Billy was never a dutiful brother. He would have a life ideally suited to him.

No. 8 Study was always a bit of a mystery. Occupied, by a 'shadowy' person known as Smith Minor; I believe at one time there was an Elliott who also resided in No. 8 - but memory tells me he left for Canada in the early stories.

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The Magnet

2^d



No. 1,465. Vol. XLVIII.

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The ninth study in the Remove passage saw Dick Penfold and Monty Newland. It would be idle to try and work out what their future might be - Monty, no doubt, would be a forceful careerist - maybe even aiming at Parliament. Dick Penfold would have achieved something more acceptable than his father's occupation of local cobbler - one thing, whatever Dick went in for, he was built of his parent's solidness.

I cannot imagine just what Study Ten's Percy Bolsover would have tried as a future means of livelihood. Perhaps I am being a little unfair but the only suitable occupation for Percy, I reckon, would be that of a "bouncer". He was just made for it. Napoleon Dupont I expect went across the Channel, and I hope did not take with him a Bolsover image of the English!

What, though, for Harold Skinner and Co. in No. 11. Snoop would have been a complete washout in any reasonable occupation. Stott might have made something

of his life, especially away from the other two. Skinner, though – Harold, of the quirky humour and ill-disposed nature – what of him? I can see him requesting Lawyer Todd to take up his case! Sorry, Harold – you probably got in with Ponsoy at a later stage – to your undoing!

Lord Mauleverer's future as Lord and Master of the Towers would have kept him well occupied, maybe not allowing him to 'sport his oak' as much as he did in No. 12 study. Mauly had this to himself nearly all the time, apart from a brief spell with his relative Jimmy Vivian.

No. 13 gives us four Removites to deal with. Well, as far as Wun Lung is concerned I can only say, in answer to speculation about his future, 'no savvy!' The Nabob, however, would have gone back to India for quite a colourful career - for a while. As a ruler, he might have been well thought of - I'm sure he was. Mainly, though I see Inky as a really genuine fast bowler in, and captain of, the Indian Cricket team. An earlier Kapil Dev, most likely. What, however, became of him when, like so many others of his ilk, he found himself as plain Mr. Hurree Singh, it is difficult to envisage. With Indian independence and the demotion of the native rajahs, somehow, I think he would have returned to England - but in what occupation, I cannot begin to think. I do not see him, for instance as a County cricketer. This livelihood, however, I would promptly bestow upon Bob Cherry. Never the greatest academic, his love of most sports would have singled him out for that world. Probably, another Denis Compton - in the days when one would have time to be a professional in both cricket and football. That, I am sure, would have suited Bob down to the ground!

The remaining member of Study 13 is Mark Linley. No doubt about his future. Mark would eventually have become one of the finest Headmasters any school could hope to have. In fact, he would in all probability have been the most well-known of them all in his time.

The last occupied Study in the Remove – No. 14: Fisher T. Fish would have settled down to being a very successful money-lender in his native land. That job was made for him, and his father would have set him up with great pride.

For Johnny Bull, also not a lot of working out his future is required. He would be a sturdy, hard-working farmer of the Yorkshire Dales, probably frequently calling in the services of James Herriott!

Finally, S.Q.I. Field; what of this laddy? Home to Down Under, of course - and I see him as a journalist-sportsman, much on the lines of Richie Benaud - and probably pre-dating that worthy by several years. Squiff would have made it as Skipper of the Aussies, especially in the time of the Ashes series.

We are only left now with that curious Study 15. Only ever mentioned once or twice - I cannot recall where or when - it must have been just a storeroom that was never needed as a study.

There is still an odd name or two that I cannot recall as far as the Remove was concerned. There was once Treluce and Trevor, though I don't recall them in stories very much. Other names, of course, merely stayed for one series. I suppose one might correctly include the name of Ernest Levison as a resident for a while.

Anyone I've missed?

That ought to be the end of the forecasting of the Removites and their future. There is, of course, one aspect I have not entered upon - that of marriages. A subject fraught with interest, perhaps to some - but nothing to go on in the 'crystal ball' line. All the same, I am going to make a venture - in two cases.

Despite Bob Cherry's undoubted regard for Marjorie Hazeldene, it was usually to Harry Wharton that the girl turned when help was needed - generally in connection with brother Peter. I feel in my heart that one day Marjorie would have become Mrs. Harry Wharton - even if it meant that Harry would probably still on hand to help with his-now-brother-in-law Peter.

Come now, you are saying - what about poor old Bob? Nothing about poor old Bob. He was a very resilient character and who hasn't been through the traumas etc. of puppy or calf love? Bob would have been highly delighted at the forthcoming marriage and I am sure would have very satisfactorily fulfilled the role of Best Man.

Bob, in the marriage stakes? Why not - and despite her often referring to him as 'that clumsy boy' I can see the sporting instincts of Clara Trevlyn teaming up for a life-time with him. Clara would have been active in both playing and organizing sport. I do believe that the marriage of Clara and Bob would have been 'very jolly'.

That, therefore, is the end of this road. A lot of wishful thinking, and a thought in mind that 'well, it might have been!' One final, if immodestly personal, note - I have a feeling that I might have received a fairly reasonable mark from Mr. Quelch for this essay!



Season's Greetings to all Hobbyists, especially fans of Nelson Lees.
ARTHUR EDWARDS.



Happy Xmas and Healthy New Year to friends and readers everywhere.
BILL BRADFORD.



Best Wishes to Mary and all Hobbyists, from Jack Wilson, Nostalgia Unlimited,
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'STAR WARS', 007 JAMES BOND, HAROLD LLOYD AND ALL THAT

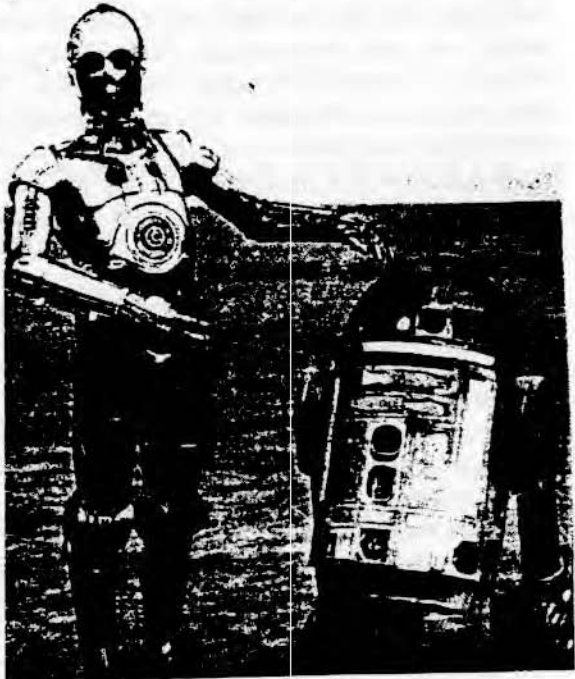
More Reminiscences from BRIAN DOYLE about his long career in Movies

My name comes 76th on the end cast and credits list of the most successful film of all time - the original STAR WARS, first released in 1977, but made in the previous year at Elstree Studios and on locations in Tunisia. 76th. That's half-way down, since there were 151 names on the full list. That's not too bad on a picture that virtually changed the face of motion pictures, ushered in a whole new wave of Special effects - dominated fantasy and science-fiction films and (according to more than one movie pundit) 'reinvented cinema for all time.'

It's a film that has taken literally billions at the world's box-offices, though it was superseded in its Number One position for a couple of years by 'E.T.' in the 1980s and has now been topped, I believe, by 'Titanic'. And, of course, there have been four 'Star Wars' sequels (and 'pre-sequels') so far.

But, back in the Spring of 1976, when shooting began in Tunisia on a 15-week schedule, none of us on the picture had any idea of what the movie, budgeted, I believe, at a fairly modest sixteen or so millions, would become. Most of us thought it might turn out to be a good action and fantasy film, with special appeal to young audiences. At the outset, by the way (and on my original script) it was titled 'The Star Wars' and the leading young hero-character was called 'Luke Starkiller' not 'Luke Skywalker', as he subsequently became.

Our first, and main, location was based in a small Tunisian town called Tozeur on the edge of the Sahara Desert. And it was on that very first morning in the rather chilly atmosphere of an African early morning, that I was re-



sponsible for creating what was to become a very famous still photograph and probably the most famous and best-selling film poster of its time in the world.

I noticed that '3PO', the golden robot and his little companion 'R2D2', the bleeping metallic android, were making their way (with a little help from a couple of unit-members, across the sand and on to the shooting-set area. Calling for Johnny Jay, the stills photographer, I raced over and asked them to stop for a few moments while pictures (both black-and-white and colour) were taken as I 'posed' the two 'characters'.

'Put your hand on top of R2D2, Tony,' I told Tony Daniels, the nice and very English young actor inside 3PO. He obliged and thus that famous photograph was born. Then an assistant director rushed up and said that the two were wanted at once for rehearsal and shooting. I thanked Tony and midget Kenny Baker, who was squeezed inside R2D2, and my two-minute stills session was over. Photographer Jay (an old friend and colleague, who had been in movies since the 1930s and with whom I had last worked on the Oscar-winning 'A Touch of Class') gasped: 'I think we got some useful shots there, Brian. Luckily, I had just loaded my cameras.'

Later, I came to know midget Kenny and his old friend Jack Purvis, who was a dwarf, and also in the film, quite well and subsequently worked with them both on other pictures including 'Wombling Free' and 'Labyrinth'. They were marvellous people and had a vast fund of funny stories and anecdotes about their size (or rather lack of it). 'Trouble is they always give us small parts...' sighed Kenny.

I wasn't actually 'in' another famous 'Star Wars' photograph and the main advertising poster, but I was the 'eye-line'. Back at Elstree Studios, just outside London, where most of the film was made, well-known photographer David Steen, came down one day to do a special session (on behalf of Twentieth-Century Fox, the distributors, and with the eventual all-important poster in mind) featuring the three young stars, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher and the then-unknown Harrison Ford (now, of course, one of the biggest stars in the world). In costume and brandishing their ray-guns, etc., they looked good. But Steen wanted an 'eye-line' for them to look at, just off-camera. Steen had an idea. 'Everyone look at Brian - imagine it's him you're attacking - really concentrate on him - Brian won't mind, will you, Brian?' 'Help yourself, folks,' I murmured, and off they went. I stood there trying not to look stupid and it was just as well it wasn't me Steen was photographing. But it turned out well and you may recall that brilliant and eye-catching poster in colour when it was plastered all over the buses, tube stations and street hoardings, not to mention the newspapers and magazines, when the picture opened.

I could very well have been in 'Star Wars' and very nearly was. I was asked if I would appear as a 'stormtrooper' complete with white plastic uniform-armour and huge white helmet. But it was a hot day and it was in the Sahara Desert and it would have meant standing around or running around all day, so I politely turned the chance of movie stardom down (after all, I had already been directed by the great Billy Wilder in 'The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes' a few years earlier, so I was slightly blasé by now!). But, in retrospect, it might have been nice to have said airily: 'Star Wars'? Oh yes, I was in that, you know...!' But, being known later as the Publicity Director who

had been on 'Star Wars' was quite useful, career-wise, as it turned out, and led to more than one assignment.

On the first evening in Tozeur, I heard that Sir Alec Guinness, who also starred in the film, of course, had arrived and was staying at an hotel at the other end of what passed for a High Street in that Tunisian beauty-spot. I rang him and he invited me over for a drink. It was the first time I had met him and I found him to be probably the most modest and self-effacing actor I had ever met. I knew his work well and had seen nearly all his films, but he was reluctant to discuss them. 'No, no, that was a long time ago, let's talk about you - what have you worked on recently?' he asked, seeming to be genuinely interested. I ventured to mention a particular favourite film of mine, 'Last Holiday' (specially written by J.B. Priestley). 'Yes, a nice little picture, but that was back in the Stone Age,' he smiled. But we chatted away for an hour and I found him a delightful companion. I had naturally called him 'Sir Alec', but as we parted he murmured 'Please, Brian, I'm Alec to my friends,' which I thought was rather nice. Of course, when 'Star Wars' was released, he became a millionaire, since his contract gave him some 2½% of the profits. This was very pleasant for him, but he found it somewhat confusing. When I bumped into him some years later and light-heartedly mentioned the matter, he said, rather desperately: 'Yes, yes, but I didn't really *do* anything in that boys' adventure film, I didn't really *earn* it, d'you see...!'

An old friend was in the cast of 'Star Wars': Dave Prowse, a well-known 'tough' actor and stunt double, who had cropped up as, more often than not, a fighting crook, in occasional films I had worked on. He was a big, amazingly fit chap and, in fact, ran his own gymnasium and body-building business, when he wasn't working in films and television. Now in 'Star Wars' he was playing one of the stars - the dreaded and all-powerful villain, Darth Vader, though his face was never seen due to the huge black mask he wore throughout. The only snag was that Dave originally hailed from Bristol and had a lovely, West Country burr to his speech. It was part of his personality.

Dave duly spoke all Darth Vader's lines. His first one, I recall, was 'You are part of the Rebel Alliance and a traitor. Take her away!'; this to the attractive heroine, Carrie Fisher (in real life, would you believe, the daughter of movie star Debbie Reynolds and singer Eddie Fisher). But it didn't sound in the least intimidating when lovely old Dave said it - more like a country farmer admonishing a badly-behaved sheep-dog.

It had always been arranged, however, that the distinguished American black actor, James Earl Jones, would 'dub' Vader's lines when the picture was finished and this duly came to pass. Dave knew that something of the kind would happen and was quite philosophical about it. 'At least I'm seen up there on the screen - *and* make quite a visual impact,' he said to me. Dave later became quite famous in Britain as the 'Green Cross Code Man' in all those TV road safety ads. At least he was allowed to use his own voice in those - but I couldn't help thinking that he might have been even more effective if he had appeared in his striking Darth Vader outfit...

My cinematic memory now goes back to 1977, when I spent 2½ months on location in the remote South African bush on a picture called 'The Wild Geese', about mercenary soldiers trying to rescue a black President from captivity. The stars in-

cluded Richard Burton, Roger Moore and Richard Harris, and the director was a great character named Andrew V. McLaglen, whose father had been that fine Hollywood actor, Victor McLaglen. He was a huge tough bear of a man with an impressive track record of films, including several starring John Wayne and James Stewart; his Westerns included 'McLintock!', 'Shenandoah', 'Chisum', 'The Rare Breed' and 'Cahill-U.S. Marshall', and his favourite trick was to come up, put his arm around your shoulder and stand heavily on your foot! It was his idea of an affectionate joke - but it was also quite painful! But he was very likeable and I was privileged to work with him again two years later on a 3 months location in India for 'The Sea Wolves'.

I'll always remember an incident during 'The Wild Geese' when a light aircraft we were expecting to fly in from Johannesburg (an 11-hour drive away by road) was held up for some reason and was very late in coming in to land at the small make-shift airstrip at the back of our large sprawling hotel (which had been entirely 'taken over' by the film cast and unit) on the edge of the wild bush, where daytime temperatures were usually 120 degrees plus.

It was dark when the 'plane was finally due and since there were no such things as landing lights, a large group of us, including stars Burton, Moore and Harris, other actors and unit-members (including me) stood in two long-spread-out lines on either side of the rough runway, holding aloft literally flaming torches so that the pilot could see where to land. Harris looked across at me and grinned. 'We all look like the Columbia Pictures Lady!' he shouted. The plane finally arrived and landed safely.

Some while later, our enterprising producer, Euan Lloyd, arranged a special party for Roger Moore, to celebrate his fiftieth birthday. The entire film unit and cast (around 200) were transported out to a very remote spot in the Bush, to find half-a-dozen huge, 15-foot high beacons, all blazing away merrily, illuminating the area like daylight. Long trestle tables were laid out with barbecues, other food and plenty of varied drink. A small local band was playing. It was quite a night and Roger said it was the most unusual and memorable birthday party ever. 'Even James Bond never had it like this!' he quipped.

Which brings me to 007 himself. In the Autumn of 1980 I found myself on the beautiful island of Corfu in Greece on the first day's shooting on the latest Bond movie 'For Your Eyes Only', starring Roger Moore as 007, plus the Israeli actor, Topol (famous for 'Fiddler on the Roof'), Julian Glover, a beautiful French actress, Carole Bouquet and Lynn-Holly Johnson, a pretty American teenager, with whom I had recently worked on Disney's 'A Watcher in the Woods' (starring the great Bette Davis).

A few days earlier, at the airport which was milling with 007 types, both unit and cast, I had been chatting with Roger Moore when I couldn't resist showing him my passport, not because of the beauty of my photograph therein but to point out my passport number which, believe it or not, ended in those magic figures '007' (true - I still have that passport to prove it!). Roger pretended to go mad and button-holed producer 'Cubby' Broccoli, who happened to be nearby (one of the nicest men in the business, incidentally, and whose father introduced broccoli into the food business!). 'Look at this,' he shouted, 'Doyle's got my Bond number, 007, so everyone watch out

- it means he's licensed to kill...!' 'It's all right, Cubby,' I said, reassuringly, 'it means I'm just licensed to publicise!' Roger, who's a great one for running gags, never let me forget it, and was forever saying: 'Look out, folks, here comes 007 Doyle...!'

Roger Moore, by the way, is one of the funniest and wittiest men in the movie business. On the three pictures on which I worked with him, he was rarely, if ever, serious about anything. As Publicist I had to 'sit in' on every Press, radio and TV interview he gave (and being the co-operative type that he is they amounted to around 200! And I was *never* bored). On our return from Greece, we filmed at my favourite Pinewood Studios for several weeks, before setting off to Cortina and the thick snows there. Quite an important American journalist arrived to interview Roger and told me he wanted to obtain a really 'in-depth', serious interview. 'You won't get that,' I assured him firmly, 'you'll be laughing too much.' The man insisted he would and bet me £20.00 he would get what he wanted. He didn't, and I duly pocketed my winnings from a rueful writer. I told Roger about the incident and he told me he thought he should have half of the £20.00 for maintaining the 'status quo'. I was about to fork out when he laughed and said he was only kidding - and I should think so to...!

I'd like to finish with an anecdote and a treasured memory of one of the screen's funniest (if not *the* funniest) comedy stars.

When I was working as Press Officer to Columbia Pictures in London in the mid-1960s (a job I hope to return to in a later article) I was sitting in my office wrestling with the planning of an up-coming Royal Premiere, when my boss (the Head of Publicity and Advertising for the U.K.) walked in, followed by a small, dapper, bespectacled, balding man. 'Brian,' he said, 'I don't think you've met Mr. Harold Lloyd.' Although I was well-used to meeting and working with movie stars, I just managed to stifle an involuntary gasp. One of my two favourite 'funny men' of all time (the other being Buster Keaton) was grinning up at me and shaking hands. 'Hello, hello, it's a pleasure, Brian,' he beamed. It's a great pleasure to meet *you*, Mr. Lloyd', I said. 'Harold, please, it's Harold,' he said.

Lloyd was in London for the opening of his new 'compilation' film, 'Harold Lloyd's Funny Side of Life', which featured excerpts from many of his funniest pictures, both silent and sound, and it was being released by Columbia.

Remember Harold Lloyd? You must have seen some of his films, or clips from them, on television over the years. The slim, eager young man, wearing a straw-boater, smart suit and large, black horn-rimmed glasses? He was famous for hanging perilously off the sides of skyscrapers, windows and even trains. He made his film debut as far back as 1912 but became renowned throughout the 1920s and early-1930s and his most famous picture was probably 'Safety Last' in 1923, in which he hung precariously from the hands of a large clock on top of a New York skyscraper. It was terrifying as well as hilarious and audiences both screamed and laughed simultaneously as they watched. Lloyd never used a 'stunt double' and it was several years later that he explained how he had done it all (it all looked terrifyingly real and authentic). I haven't the space to tell you here, but he *was* actually at the top of a real skyscraper when he did all that stuff and he did take a lot of crazy risks. And he was

never seriously injured - not by falling anyway...

Harold Lloyd sat down in my office and chatted for 15 minutes or so over a coffee which my young secretary had brought (she had no idea who this great man was!). He was friendly and nice and was obviously very proud of his movie career. 'By the way, Brian, congratulations - you didn't react when we shook hands just now.' 'How do you mean, Harold?' I asked. He held up one hand, showing that he had no thumb or forefinger on his right hand. 'It's funny how differently people react, you know,' he laughed, 'some wince, some look down to see what's wrong, some even step back in surprise. But you stayed calm and cool and you didn't react at all, my boy - I like that, it's good. My God, the unflappable English...!'

'I also didn't react when I noticed that you weren't wearing your straw hat and big horn-rimmed glasses,' I joked. 'No, I guess I lost those when I fell off the final skyscraper - and that was quite a few years ago, now...!' I asked

him how he had injured his hand. 'I was holding a prop bomb which wasn't supposed to explode until later during a scene - but it did, sadly, it did,' he explained with a shrug. 'And my hand is still partly paralysed too. Call it battle-scars...!'

I also learned that he still owned the copyright of all his later films and 'earned a



few dollars' by releasing them or renting them out to television. At one point in the 1920s he was the highest-earning actor in Hollywood, getting more even than Chaplin and Keaton. I was also told that he was one of the wealthiest men in Hollywood due to this, and also because he had invested his money wisely. In 1952 he was awarded a special Academy Award for his work as a 'master comedian for the screen'. When I met him he was 71.

Eventually, he glanced at his watch and said 'I must be gone - gone with or without the wind.' With a quick handshake and a grin ('no wincing now!') and with a parting wisecrack that I'll always remember: 'Bye now - see you in heaven!' he was gone. He sadly died seven years later at the age of 78.

Footnote: Two years after my meeting with Harold Lloyd, I was walking down a long corridor between the sound stages at Shepperton Studios, just outside London, when I saw a familiar, white-haired figure walking towards me. Nobody else was round. I couldn't resist it. 'Good morning, Mr. Chaplin,' I ventured. 'Good morning - and please, it's Charlie!' he replied cheerfully and quite ebulliently. He was making his last picture, 'A Countess from Hong Kong'. 'You were lucky,' said a colleague when I told him of my brief encounter with the great man. 'He must have been in a good mood - at other times you would have been lucky to get a nod...' I'm glad that Charlie Chaplin had been in a good mood.

But I never did meet Buster Keaton...



Good Wishes to everyone. BARRIE STARK.



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A GENTLEMAN AT LARGE

by Ted Baldock

**Billy Bunter has become a proverb,
What other writer can claim as much
For one of his characters?**

The Listener

From time immemorial - so it seems - Harry Wharton has been joined by the other members of the famous Co. to spend a few days at Wharton Lodge during the vacations.

Invariably on these traditional sojourns they have been accompanied by a plump appendage, usually uninvited. Not that this rather important fact cuts any ice whatever with Billy Bunter who, in so many ways, is a law unto himself, being quite impervious to anything which might prove disagreeable to him. Of the effect upon his friends, or indeed upon any of the inhabitants of Wharton Lodge, he gave not a thought.

For Wells, Colonel Wharton's butler, life had proceeded in a very even tenor for many years at the Lodge. He was a trusted old retainer. Wells knew the Colonel, and the Colonel knew Wells. They suited one another. Mutual respect existed between the old soldier and his subordinate.

Wells had a very wide range of responsibilities far beyond those which fell to the normal practice of butlering. The Colonel left many things entirely to this discretion, such was his confidence.

On several occasions Wells had seen fit to assert this privilege. Outrageous though it had appeared to Bunter, Wells had, following a series of exasperating exchanges with the Fat Owl, so far forgot the canons of strict butlerhood as to waylay Bunter in a quiet and convenient corner, and there twisted him over his knee and administered what may be described as a most undignified but richly deserved spanking. The Owl's dignity and ego suffered as considerably as did his fat person. Wells experienced the feeling of well-being of a necessary duty well performed.

The entire structure of society as conceived by Billy Bunter appeared to be sinking into a veritable morass of disintegration. Was it not an intolerable state of affairs when butlers and footmen spanked or kicked gentlemen with impunity?

That Bunter was outraged would be stating the case mildly. He was on the point of registering the strongest of protests to Colonel Wharton when he paused. Thinking did not rank very highly in his achievements. However, he felt some small warning that such a course might well prove to be counter-productive, and he wisely refrained.

Instead he approached Harry Wharton and his chums with a display of much injured dignity and placed the situation before them. Sadly, the net result was that his



Wells, the butler, bent over the fat junior and shook him by the shoulder. "Your taxi, sir." "Groogh! Beast!" grunted Bunter. "I—I beg your pardon, sir!"

trousers and his fat person received a further dusting and not a little discomfort.

There had been other incidents equally painful for Bunter, on one occasion involving John, the footman at the Lodge. John, a very commendable young man, had been in the Colonel's service for a considerable time and was highly thought of both above and below stairs.

The unhappy details leading up to the unfortunate incident need not be dwelt upon at length. Our knowledge of Billy Bunter clearly suggests that they were far from being salubrious. Bunter's general demeanour towards "menials" was well-known and left much to be desired. The culmination of a series of less than happy incidents was reached when John, feeling fully justified, had actually kicked Bunter in a most undignified and painful manner.

Oddly enough the skies did not fall, The Owl's roars of protest brought a strangely muted reaction from above stairs. Wells had, for the sake of formality and appearance, 'carpeted' John and given him to understand that whatever one's feelings may be one should *never* etc. etc.... As 'Wiggings' go, it was an exceedingly mild affair. In fact John was barely aware that he had received a rebuke at all, so mild were the strictures of Wells.

"In future be a little more circumspect, John," he had said. Then, to John's

complete amazement, Wells had placed a hand upon his shoulder and said, "You know, that young bouncer is really not worthy of our notice; be as civil as you can, and try to ignore him!"

What Bunter would have made of this advice from one servant to another would have been, no doubt, quite interesting. Further, Wells felt moved to say. "John, today you have achieved something I have long wished to do myself. Between ourselves may I congratulate you." Colonel Wharton may or may not have had cognizance of the affair. In any case he said nothing which, who knows, may well have signified approval.

William George Bunter, although enjoying great popularity with his readers, was the ultimate snob, being ready to assert his (imagined) superiority as a public school 'man' and a gentleman. Thus when Wells and John - to name but two - somehow failed or refused to recognise that distinction, it caused perpetual annoyance to the Fat Owl who never lost an opportunity to assert the fact both in and out of season. He was outraged when patience was exhausted and physical action became a last recourse. The kickings and spankings heralded the decline of a regime. That these chastisements he had so blatantly sat up and begged for were thoroughly deserved never occurred to him.

A brief final 'snapshot' which perhaps conveys something of the peaceful and timeless quality of life at Wharton Lodge until...

Wells, his usual portly and imperturbable self was standing and surveying the general scene over which he had been the majordomo for more years than he cared to recall. The hour was early and John, under the supervisory eye of Wells, was performing one of his many early morning tasks, before the Colonel and his sister Amy arrived for breakfast. Wells held in his hand a small bundle of letters. It was his habit to place these by their respective plates at table for the perusal of the family during breakfast. Wells, a near *beau-ideal* of butlers, saw to it that everything even down to the distribution of the morning mail was performed with the smooth precision of a well oiled machine. This suited Aunt Amy, and the Colonel whose whole career and retirement had been organised with military exactness.

Now, not for the first time, Bunter had happened - or was going to happen sometime during the day. So said a dog-eared and grubby missive lying by Harry Wharton's place. The Colonel grunted. Aunt Amy sighed, while an expression which boded anything but a cheery welcome permeated the face of Harry.

In the background Wells caught John's eye with a meaningful glance. A poet has said, 'if winter comes, can spring be far behind'. That glance of Wells seemed to opine 'If Bunter comes, can kickings be long delayed'.

So the characters of the Greyfriars saga play their various parts - Wells, John, Colonel Wharton, Aunt Amy and Harry Wharton and Co. While towering among them is William George Bunter, a figure of fatuousness personified and crassness unlimited, yet holding together the whole fabric. A strange juxtaposition indeed.

It may be safely assumed that the domestic staff at Wharton Lodge held extremely decided opinions about William George Bunter which would have surprised him with

his delusions of imagined popularity. Pride, it has been said, goes before a fall. An axiom well proven on so many occasions in the Owl's career. Yet he never fails to rise again with spectacles agleam and the familiar squeak, 'I say, you fellows!' which has outlasted the aphorism and statements of many famous - and infamous - personages throughout the years.



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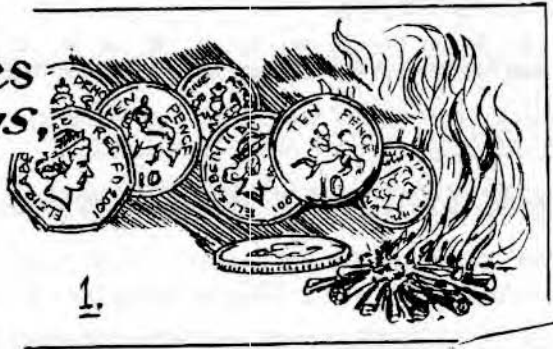


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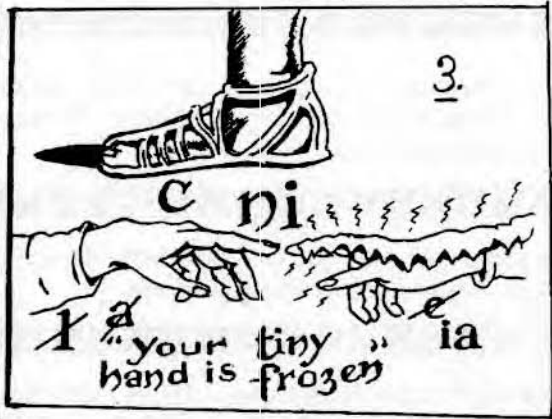
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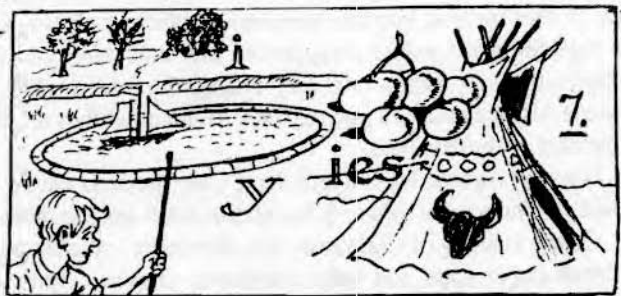
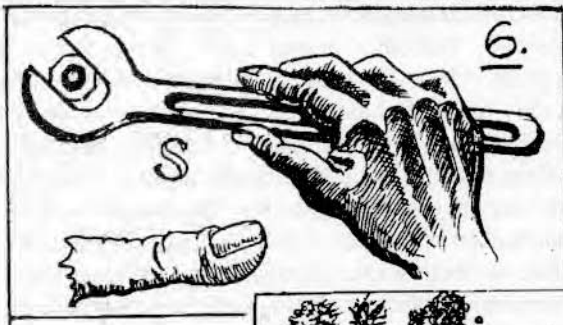
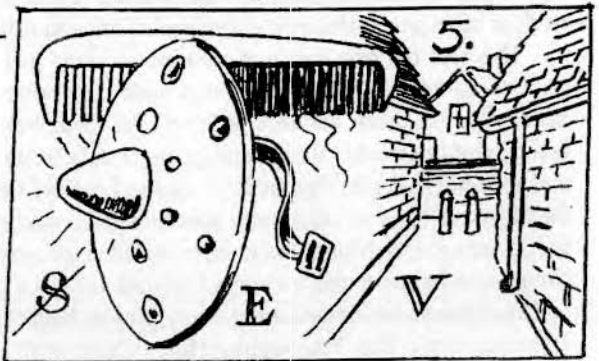
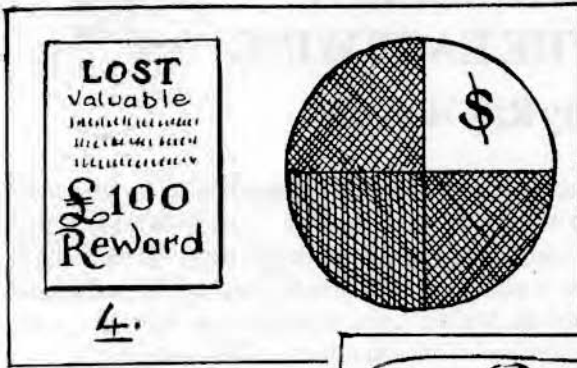


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THE SECRET OF THE EAST WING



by Ray Hopkins

Ravenscaw Castle! A perfect setting for a magic Christmas holiday for Morcove's Study 12 coterie, set among the wilds of the Yorkshire Dales. A snow-filled moat runs round it and a large courtyard leads to the massive oak double door, "He is as big as my Palace in Nakara," is Naomer's admiring comment as they arrived. So much inside "had been left unchanged since the Middle Ages: winding stone staircases, dark, vaulted passages, corkscrew stairways of ancient towers, battlemented roofs."

This was the new home of a former cottage girl from Barncombe, Morcove's nearest market town, who had lived under the protection of old Mrs. Sadler, now installed in the castle and referred to by the incumbent as Granny. She had escaped being bamboozled out of her heritage by Ursula Wade of the fourth Form who, aided and abetted (with glee) by the ever-vindictive Cora Grandways, had almost become the Morcove Peeress. But Betty Barton and Co. had stepped in, righted wrongs and so the cottage girl, Muriel Swancrave, became the new Lady Ravenscaw. The letters comprising her surname, swivelled around, revealed her connection to the title.

The visitors are Betty Barton, Polly Linton, Paula Creel, Naomer, Madge Minden, Tess Trelawney, Pam Willoughby, Helen Craig, with Jack Linton, Dave Lawder and the parents of Polly and Jack. During their initial tour, Muriel rather pointedly hustles them past a narrow, darkened passage. "Nobody ever goes there," she tells them. "It leads to the East Wing." But a game of hide-and-seek on Christmas Eve inevitably finds Betty and Polly in what they feel is forbidden territory. Pursued by Polly's brother Jack, they "nipped round into a dim-lit passage and then a really dark branch-passage proved irresistible." They remained still, hearing the shrieks of laughter from a distance as other players were caught. Facing the way they had come, Betty suddenly caught in her breath and looked behind her. A faint shimmer of light caught her frightened stare. "A gaunt face and hollow eyes stared at them." A figure whose dark clothes merged into the surrounding blackness! But as the two girls stared at the apparition it became disappeared and that other end of the passage became completely black again. As they emerge breathless at the end of the forbidden passage they are pounced upon by Jack. With relief they allow him to drag them back to the rest of the revellers.

It wasn't a ghost, Muriel tells them when they recount their frightening adventure to her. "I know what you saw but please don't tell the others."

On the evening of Christmas Day after more "cracker-pulling and the putting on of fresh paper caps and bibs and tissue crowns," Naomer gave her conjuring performance during which none of the tricks came off properly but caused roars of laughter. A dance was proposed in the great hail, the commencement set back while

Jack, helped into a suit of armour by Dave, grabbed Betty for a brief whirl on the slippery floor until "he went down like a cartload of saucepans." In all the commotion and general laughter Betty catches a movement in one of the ballroom doorways. It is "the same dark clad figure, the same tall, gaunt woman in the sombre rainment; the same pallid face with its hollow eyes looking in upon the gay scene." Betty realises she is staring at a real flesh and blood person, not an apparition! She looked around to tell Muriel but did not observe her. Later, she saw her with Granny Sadler coming through the same door. They were both looking distraught.

After the castle guests are all occupying their bedrooms, Betty realises she has left her new bracelet watch on the piano downstairs for safety during the evening's final games. She retrieves it and is about to replace it on her wrist when she catches a movement in the hall reflected in a large mirror she is facing. Once again she finds herself looking at the mystery woman. Before she can call out, the reflection vanishes, Betty is determined to speak to the woman and follows her to the East Wing but all is in darkness with no sight of anyone. It is only when she returns to the bedroom to tell Polly of the encounter that she realises she is no longer holding the watch in her hand.

The next morning, Betty and Polly, anxious to retrieve the watch from the East Wing, find it impossible to slip away from Naomer, Jack and Co. who insisted on a grand snowball fight. This, in turn, was interrupted by Muriel who said she had to visit a cottage in the village, and would they all like to plough through the snow with her. "Fiercer still the snow eddied about them after they had floundered clear of the courtyard. The high wold-country of Yorkshire lay all around, its rolling hills thickly blanketed with winter's mantle."

Ravenscaw village consisted of one straggly street of old cottages, some of which had been turned into small shops. It was inevitable that Naomer, always on the lookout for snacks and refreshers between meals should hone in on the one used as a tuck-shop. Her cry of "Oo gorjus!" drew the rest of the girls to her after they watched Muriel disappear inside a cottage with a Christmas food parcel. The old tuckshop lady is pleased to have such a large shop full: ten jolly girls and boys from the castle to wait on. When they ask if she'd like a hand, she tells them she has two unexpected lodgers who turned up just before Christmas. She was the only one in the village with a spare room available and they have been willing to help when she's had a rush of trade. They are a Mrs Darker and her daughter who appear with trays of hot drinks. Betty's heart beats rapidly at the sight of the mother. A tall, gaunt woman with a sad, thin face and deepset eyes which remind her of the haunted expression on the face of the mystery woman in the East Wing. Can it be possible there's a connection?

When they return to the castle Betty tells Muriel. Realizing that she should no longer keep the true facts from the sympathetic Morcovians, Muriel informs them that the grieving woman is the old Lord Ravenscaw's housekeeper, Mrs. Headlam. Her daughter married a bad egg who estranged her from her mother. "She was completely under his sway and they left. She is not mad but grief stricken to such an

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extent she can concentrate on nothing else." Muriel thinks it strange the lodger in the shop did not come immediately to the castle to identify herself and wants to return to the village to invite the woman to the castle if she is, in fact, the missing daughter. But Jack and Dave will not allow Muriel to go in such weather, and set out with lanterns through the heavily falling snow, armed with a letter of invitation to Mrs. Darker and her daughter.

But, later than expected, beaten by snow and the dark, they return to say the pair had fled the shop as though in fear of something, telling the shopkeeper nothing of their plans soon after the castle guests had left the village. It had been impossible to know in which direction they had made their way.

Muriel decides to tell the rest of her visitors the story of the lone woman in the East Wing because she wants them all to join in the search for the runaways the following day. So it is past midnight when they all make their way upstairs to their warm bedrooms. Polly wakes later and, intrigued by the silence beyond the heavy window curtains, draws them apart to discover that the wind has dropped at last and the snow-covered expanse she can see from the window, smooth and clear in the bright moonlight, is entirely empty right up to a grove of trees. A figure emerges from the trees its head moving from side to side as it regards the old castle walls. Can this be the fugitive woman arrived at the castle at last? But the long overcoat and trousers reveal the figure to be a man. A burglar perhaps or someone connected to the fugitives. Or the cause of their sudden flight?

The next fun item on the agenda at the castle is the Servants' Dinner and Ball, the former to be prepared by the Morcove girls. So Betty and Polly find themselves in the large kitchen when there is a loud knock on the back door. Polly thought the man revealed when she opened the door must be a tramp and then took a gasping breath as she realized it was the man she had seen from the window during the night. He wants to speak to Lady Ravenscaw, he tells Polly. "I am Mrs. Barker's husband and the father of that girl." Betty and Polly stare at one another. "The wife and daughter, urgently wanted, were missing; the husband - a waster and the cause of all the anxiety spread over many years - he was her here!"

Muriel returns with Betty and Mrs. Headlam's son-in-law tells her he hasn't seen his wife for two years and in fact was released from prison just the day before Christmas Eve. He says he knows Muriel wants the fugitives found and reunited with Mrs. Headlam. He offers to find them and bring them to the castle if Muriel will give him fifty pounds as a reward. And Mr. Darker, full of sardonic cheek, suggests Muriel's lawyers could be persuaded to let him have more from her vast fortune, as he knows she is too young to handle all the money at present. Muriel is furious but persuades herself she must be charitable. She provides him with fresh clothing and lets him have a hot meal in the kitchen closely watched by Jack and Dave. As he leaves, Muriel gives him some pound notes.

The Servants' Banquet passed in a haze of laughter and cheer as the Morcovians and the boys acted the parts of waiters and servers. Later, while the ballroom was filled with the happy below-stairs contingent, the juniors watched the proceedings

from the gallery above where minstrels would have provided the music in past centuries. That grand piece of technology, the wind-up gramophone, provided the orchestral accompaniment, creating and enlarging the sounds embedded in the grooves of the ten-inch recordings. Another marvellous invention to give lasting pleasure to all listeners and participants in the dance.

During a lull in the music a terrible cry of anguish is heard faintly from above and in the following dead silence Mrs. Linton hastens to the East Wing to discover the old housekeeper lying outside her room, barely conscious, muttering "Her Ladyship." Jack goes to the village for the doctor. Incredibly, Muriel is nowhere to be found. The whole castle is searched for her. Mrs. Headlam, it appears, when the doctor arrives, is not ill, but had suffered some kind of shock, so violent that it had almost caused a stroke.

The following day there is still no sign of Muriel. Betty and Co. feel sure that she never left the castle, but frantic searches by them and the police, who have been called in to solve the mystery, have failed to find any clue to her whereabouts.

During the searches Jack excitedly joins the girls and persuades them to follow him to the East Wing where he has something exciting to show them. In one of the unused passages where dust covers the old wooden floors he has discovered many footmarks made by a boot. "The sole has a tread like a motor tyre like ones I have for winter walking." Jack says he gave his pair to Mrs. Headlam's son-in-law the previous day and he was wearing them when Jack and Dave had seen him off the premises after he had eaten the meal provided by Muriel. Darker must have returned by breaking into the castle! But why has he not been seen with all the searching by so many that has been going on? The chums feel his presence may be the cause of Muriel's disappearance and, despite his enquiries for his wife and daughter the day before, they begin to believe he may have been responsible for their disappearance as well!

That night the servants are deployed outside the castle to watch for any entrance attempt made by Darker. Jack and Dave and, after some argument by Polly, all the girls, patrol the East Wing. Mrs. Linton is at the bedside of Mrs. Headlam, still stricken and silent as to what had made her call out and go into shock from which she, as yet, has been unable to arouse herself.

The all-night vigil commences with a good spread in the dining room, Naomer inevitably the first to reach the table and dig in to the cold chicken and game pie with jelly and blancmange to follow.

Betty and Polly, on watch together, are the lucky two to hear the creak of a door opening followed by someone's agitated breathing and footsteps cautiously approaching where they stand, readying themselves to call for assistance in holding the man they expected. Betty switched on her torch and shone it directly on the intruder. But the torch's brightness does not reveal a man but the figure of a girl, grimy and dishevelled. Certainly not Muriel as they at first hoped.

Mr. Linton and the rest of the Morcove watchers congregate in the passage and listen to the explanation given by her. She is, in fact, Mrs. Barker's daughter. She tells them that she and her mother have been hiding in the crypt beneath the private

chapel, well known in the past by her mother, in the castle grounds. They had managed to dig enough snow away from the steps leading to the crypt door and squeeze through but had been unable to emerge since because the continuous heavy snowfall had filled in the opening and they had been unable to push their way out again. Their footprints had been completely obliterated so that nobody at the castle had been able to discover where they were. They had brought food with them and used the stove they found in the crypt with an appreciable amount of coke still remaining, so they have been able to keep warm and free from hunger. The girl, whose name is Florrie, drops a final bombshell by telling them that Muriel is in the crypt with her mother.

Muriel had left the revellers to see Mrs. Headlam was comfortable when she came upon Darker outside the old house-keeper's room. In the ensuing scuffle, Mrs. Headlam opened the door, saw Darker jerking Muriel's head back to keep her quiet and gave the terrible cry which frightened the merry-makers and caused her to fall senseless where she was found after Darker carried Muriel off. He had taken her to the crypt via an underground passage from the castle and locked the wrought iron gate at the crypt end preventing the three from escaping into the castle. "We used the old poker of the stove to pick a stone clock out of the wall, and then we used the stone to dash two bars apart. Only I could squeeze through because I am the thinnest."

Florrie had been in unrelenting darkness throughout the time of her journey. The underground passage led to some narrow steps which went up and up and finished at an area of rough woodwork set in the stone walls. She lifted a wooden bar which was slotted across the door and found herself in the empty room which she had left before being half-frightened to death by Betty's sudden flash from the torch,

Florrie's mother and Muriel are released by Jack and Dave by digging through the snow to the crypt door. There is no sign of Florrie's father while all this activity is going on but Betty and Co. are convinced that he is somewhere in the castle. Darker had worked at the castle and knew about the underground passage and had, in fact, been able to follow the footprints of Florrie and her mother to the crypt before they were entirely blotted out. He also knew of a way to get inside the castle unbeknown to those who lived there. His idea was, Florrie told them, to get Lady Ravenscaw to promise him a large sum of money if he found them and delivered them safely to the Castle. Being seen by Muriel in the East Wing upset all his plans. Florrie believed he had decided to loot the castle and purloin all he could and then, from a safe distance where he could not be apprehended, he intended to contact the castle letting it be known that Florrie and his wife could be found in the crypt.

When Jack and Dave release Muriel and Mrs. Darker from the crypt there is a joyous reunion between mother and daughter. A further heart-warming reconciliation occurs between Mrs. Headlam and her own long-lost daughter and a beloved granddaughter of whom she had known nothing. All three were to remain resident at the castle under the loving eye of the caring Lady Ravenscaw. No sign was ever found of Darker and he was never heard of again. It was believed he vanished into the night

upon overhearing that all his plans were thwarted. He knew he wouldn't be made welcome by Lady Ravenscaw and invited to stay.

(The above Christmas adventure is based on a series in weekly SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN, Nos. 515 to 518, 20 Dec 1930 to 10 Jan 1931. It was never reprinted in the SGOL.)



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AMALGAMATED ARTISTS

by Dennis L. Bird

Among the most attractive features of the Amalgamated Press's pre-war story papers for girls were the delightful, vibrant illustrations. These were provided by a group of twenty or more versatile artists, who had to depict scenes ranging from school classrooms to South Sea Islands, motor-racing circuits to riverside cafés, riding stables, zoos, and Ruritanian castles. Occasionally they were acknowledged by name in the "Schoolgirls' Own," "Schoolgirls' Weekly" and "The Schoolgirl" - but usually they were anonymous. The "Girls' Crystal" in particular never gave them credit. Nevertheless they all had their own distinctive styles, and it is possible to identify some of the most prolific.

Not all of them were good. The Cliff House School stories ran in the "School Friend" from 1919 to 1929, and they were illustrated throughout by *George Montieth Dodshon*. Born in 1870, he was one of the oldest of the Amalgamated Press's artists, and to my mind the worst, Brian "Doyle in his 1964 book "Who's Who of Boys' Writers and Illustrators" says "His backgrounds were often sketchy and scrappy," and Mary Cadogan ("You're a Brick, Angela!" 1976) comments on the "strangely Oriental faces" of his schoolgirls. E.L. Rosman told Bill Lofts that there had been concern at the publishers over Dodshon's old-fashioned style, which he would not or could not modernise. Nevertheless he was still drawing for "The Schoolgirl" as late as 1937. Personally, I find him positively grotesque.

A far superior contemporary was **Leonard Shields** (1876-1949). He began drawing for the A.P. in the 1890s, and was the first to portray Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the St Jim's series. From 1926 to 1940 he shared with Charles Henry Chapman the task of portraying the Greyfriars lads in "The Magnet." So far as the girls' papers are concerned, it is for Morcove that he will be remembered.

Morcove School, situated at Mortehoe in North Devon, was the creation of Horace Phillips ("Marjorie Stanton") from 1921 to 1938. The series featured Betty Barton, a working-class girl from Lancashire who became Fourth Form captain in a high-class girls' boarding-school. Leonard Shields was the skilful artist. As the years rolled by, he showed changes in fashions and artefacts. His girls gradually became more sophisticated in appearance. He was less progressive where modern transport was concerned: his motor-cars and charabancs remained the square boxes of the 1920s, and his aeroplanes were never convincing. But he had a subtle gift of artistry in delineating Morcove's lively - sometimes lovely - girls.

The two schools, Morcove and Cliff House, ran in friendly rivalry throughout the inter-war years. Although Cliff House seemed to have come to an end when the "School Friend" closed in 1929, it was revived with a new paper, "The Schoolgirl,"



Anonymous - but the best of the six Noel Raymond artists



T.E. Laidler at his best



Evelyn Flinders. "Girls' Crystal", Feb. 24, 1951

from 1932 to 1940. G.M. Dodshon was replaced by a new and brilliant artist, **Thomas E. Laidler** (1873-1975), known for presumably obvious reasons as "Tubby". I have not been able to confirm whether he was related to the famous "Punch" artist of the period, Graham Laidler or "Font". Laidler was a man of forceful character, who always insisted on being given a by-line, or at least being allowed to put his initials "T.L." to his drawings. He gave verve, charm, and elegance to the Cliff House girls. His work for the Amalgamated Press ran from a "Schoolgirls' Weekly" cover in 1927 to "Trixie's Diary" thirty years later, in 1957. He was one of the finest artists ever to decorate the schoolgirl papers.

The girl detective Valerie Drew made her first appearance in 1933 in the "Schoolgirls' Weekly," drawn by G.E. Montford. He (or she) was soon replaced by **C. Percival**. This was the definitive artist for Valerie, who continued to draw for many other A.P. stories. These drawings, including Valerie's sagacious Alsatian dog Flash, were full of life but curiously often showed people in a "backwards-leaning posture. Truly laid back.

One of the A.P.'s longest-serving artists was **Evelyn B. Flinders**. She began with them in 1929, and later filled in for temporary absences for the Morcove, Cliff House, and Noel Raymond stories. She was a regular A.P. artist, but (as she wrote in a 1981 Dennis Gifford newsletter) in 1939 "the old 'Schoolgirls' Weekly' gave up and left me stranded. Even the Income Tax people wrote me a kindly letter and hoped things would soon look up." The "Girls' Crystal" came to her rescue. In 1950 the revived "School Friend" gave her her biggest opportunity with seven years of "The Silent Three."

Her style is easy to recognise. Her characters are usually tall and slim, often, with curiously elongated faces.

The next artist worthy of comment is **Valerie (Vi) Gaskell** ("later Mrs V.D.M.," as a cryptic entry in my notes records). She was drawing for the new "Schoolgirls' Weekly" in 1931, but it was with the "Denise the Dancer" series that she really made an impact. The Denise Laxton stories began in 1936 and ran for three years. In 1939 Vi Gaskell began drawing for a new series which ran in the "Girls' Crystal" for 18 years, until 1957. This was "The Cruising Merrymakers" - the adventures of Sally Warner and Go, originally on a cruise liner and then all over the world. The Gaskell characters had a natural grace and charm that were both appealing to the eye and appropriate to the story-line.

My own favourite among all the A.P. artists is one I have not been able to identify. He (she?) was a frequent contributor to the "Girls' Crystal" and its annuals, but was most notable for illustrating the Noel Raymond detective stories from 1938 to 1944, and again in 1947-48. The characters were beautifully drawn: natural and realistic, the girls charming, the men strong and clean-cut. All were individuals, not stereotypes. He was especially good at showing the various feminine emotions - fear, apprehension, enthusiasm, joy.

The nearest I have been able to come to an identification is **J. Pariss**, a named "Schoolgirls' Weekly" artist who drew for the Bidy Hartland stories and the 1938

Binnie Bowden serial "Queen of the Secret City." Some of these drawings are very like the Noel Raymond illustrations - and yet a doubt remains. Anyway, whoever he was, he did for Noel what Sidney Paget did for Sherlock Holmes. He was an artist of real merit.

(I am grateful to Ray Hopkins for some of the information in this article.)

No. 1 of a Grand New Series by DAPHNE GRAYSON



The Cruising Merrymakers

To go on a luxury cruise all the way to Australia! That was the wonderful treat Sally Warner was to have. And she was not going to let a jealous member of her party spoil one moment of her fun.

Valerie Gaskell, "Girls' Crystal", May 27, 1939



Valerie raised the torch. At that moment a stone, flung with deadly accuracy, knocked it from her grasp. In the distance, she heard a frightened scurrying. The mystery "organist" was making a desperate bid to escape.

C. Percival, "Schoolgirls' Weekly", May 30, 1938





Three Little Jests of Robin Hood

by

Derek Hinrich



The figure of Robin Hood first became associated with Christmas, I suppose, when he was arbitrarily chosen by mid-Victorian theatre managements as the Principal Boy¹ role in the pantomime *The Babes in The Wood*, though Wayland Hall in Norfolk, the original setting of the story, is far from Sherwood Forest (not that that would stop anyone) and the babes, in the pantomime, have a happy ending.

Still, philanthropic outlawry is a popular theme and, coupled with Gwyn Evans's febrile invention and neo-Dickensian gusto for Christmas in his seasonal tales, it provided the devotees of Sexton Blake and *The Union Jack* with two very happy diversions in 1928 and 1929 when he first created, and then resurrected, the League of Robin Hood for some Yule-tide devilment.

In 1928, in *The Crime of The Christmas Tree*, Robin, Earl of Huntingley, VC, DSO, a former RAF "Ace" and currently a big-game hunter just returned from Africa, recruits the League by an advertisement in the newspapers similar to that placed by Bulldog Drummond to start his illustrious career. There is something Sainly about the League: perhaps it was something in the air, the *zeitgeist* if you will, as 1928 saw, too, the first appearance of Simon Templar in *Meet The Tiger*. The members of the League are drawn (give or take an East End parson of the muscular Christian variety, who promptly takes the roll of Friar Tuck, and the League's members' sisters and girl friends) from Bertie Woosterish or Whimsical young men about town of the type who followed Drummond and, for that matter, the Scarlet Pimpernel - and where would British thriller fiction between the Wars have been without them?

In fairly short order the League turns its attention to various miscreants in the East End district of Shinwell (which happens to be the parson's parish) and its members proceed to carry out a daring series of abductions of the undesirables, clad the while in Lincoln green and domino masks. The kidnapped include a slum landlord, the local stipendiary magistrate (who seems to model his sentencing policy on that of the late Lord Jeffreys of Wem), a defaulting slate club treasurer, a local agitator, and Shinwell's principle exponent of the art of GBH.

Inspector Coutts is soon involved in investigating the disappearances, but Blake, hoping for once for a quiet Christmas (Oh, how vain!), declines to help him in view of the nature of the victims. These have meanwhile been carried off to the Earl's estate in Essex where they are to undergo an enforced period of hard labour (reminiscent of the camp for "bolshies" and others established by Drummond in *The Black Gang*).

"Splash" Page rapidly becomes involved with the League, and is enrolled as its "scrivener"; and, willy-nilly, so is Blake when a mysterious death occurs. Bruff, the

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The Crime of the Christmas Tree

This is the only story published combining the mirth and jollity of Christmastide with a well told detective yarn—a combination both rare and refreshing. Sinton Blake at his gaitiest best. Complete inside.

No. 1,212.

EVERY THURSDAY.

December 13th, 1924.

stipendiary magistrate, is found lying in the snow in Lord Huntingley's park, with his throat cut and no tracks other than his own within yards of his body: a pretty little problem.

The members of the League now stand in great peril of the Law, but Blake solves the mystery of Bruff's death with his customary aplomb and ingenuity. For various reasons none of the kidnap victims are anxious to pursue the League or its members (some of those abducted are indeed themselves already subject to arrest by Coutts for various crimes), so all passes off for the best in the best of possible worlds.

The League dissolves and, after a merry Dickensian Christmas for all on his estate, Lord Huntingley returns to Africa to continue decimating the wildlife.

A year passes. The Christmas Season comes round once more and now, in 1929, Gwyn Evans offers us two further "Little Jests of Robin Hood" in the linked stories. *The Mistletoe Milk Mystery* and *The Masque of Time*. As in the previous year - and as in all Blake's Christmas cases, I believe - there is frost and snow before, during, and after Christmas. And Time's whirligig, if not on this occasion bringing its re-venge, at least has in due course a pretty puzzle or two for Blake, Tinker, and

Inspector Coutts, and, for that matter, Blake's American friend Ruff Hanson with the ever-present pair of Colt peacemakers.

Firstly, a few days before Christmas, the board of the Welsh Amalgamated Dairies² announce a price-rise of one (old) penny in the price of a quart of milk. Great offence is taken by the public at this grasping measure. The Chairman and Managing Director of the WAD are kidnapped and bottles of blood-coloured milk with sprigs of mistletoe attached are left on their doorsteps (fortunately the colour turns out to be nothing more than added cochineal). Subsequently Blake discovers one of these unfortunate skinflints in one of his own depots, stuffed inside one of his company's churns, but otherwise unhurt. Blake, meanwhile, has observed the Earl of Huntingley nearby in a limousine.

Just before these events, however, a prim little suburbanite, Mr Habbakuk Meech, the infinitely dull and respectable accountant of the Baker Street Branch of the National British Bank, runs amok in the Bank, smashing the clock, throwing money left, right, and centre, just as Sexton Blake is about to cash a cheque. Blake follows the little man home to the suburb of Dulstead (halfway between Dulwich and Banstead?). He finds Meech has smashed his own clock and a bottle of milk on the carpet.

According to Meech, he had repaired the previous day to the ABC shop near his bank for his customary morning pint of milk but had then been first accosted, and then kidnapped, by a new client of the bank. Professor Hirsch. The Professor had taken him to his laboratory nearby and then given him a lecture upon the Einstein theory of relativity, forced him into a time machine and transported him to the eighteenth century! He had awakened from the time machine-induced trance in a country tavern in the year 1735. There, after some time, he had met a charming young lady with whom he had been induced to enter a stagecoach which was presently ambushed by Dick Turpin and Tom King. A fracas ensued, in which a horse-pistol was discharged in his face, and he woke up, powder-burned, in 1929!

Further disappearances follow thick and fast. "Splash" Page's night editor, Julius Jones (a man ever on the look-out for a sensational story, preferably, a murder), is carried off by Hirsch and transported in his machine. Firstly he is taken ten years into the future, where he finds himself in the condemned cell awaiting execution for murder, and then, when he recovers from the fainting fit he suffers at this news, he awakes again in Ancient Britain where a group of Druids are in the process of making the Managing Director of Welsh Amalgamated Dairies the subject of human sacrifice! Just as that wretched man is apparently thrown into the fire, Julius Jones is rescued by "Splash" Page and dragged hastily away to an 18th century coaching inn.

And Mrs Bardell is carried off, too, and a bottle of scarlet milk left with a label informing Blake that, unlike Sir Philip Sidney, their need is greater than his. The good lady wakes to find herself in a coach, attired in 16th century costume and addressed as Queen Elizabeth, en route for Lord Huntingley's country seat for Christmas.

But Blake and Coutts are now abreast of things. They raid Huntingley's manor for the second year running and round up the League of Robin Hood. The Managing Director Of the Welsh Amalgamated Dairies is rescued from an improvised dungeon

in the wine cellar. He is prevailed upon to keep quiet to avoid scandal, and also to drop the proposed price-rise. The time travelling is revealed as just a little matter of suggestion, drugs and hypnotism, and playacting by various members of the League on various parts of Huntingley's estate.

Mrs Bardell is restored to the bosom of Blake's household but prepares everyone's Christmas Dinner at Huntingley Manor, where all ends well in conviviality and forgiveness.

So ended three light-hearted adventures of the Baker Street ménage and, though further activities at future Christmases were hinted at, no more was heard of the League of Robin Hood, by many lengths the least desperate, but one of the most daring of Blake's opponents.

1. In about 1936 I saw that fine actress Fay Compton - later the original second Mrs. Condomine in *Blithe Spirit* and Gertrude to Burton's *Hamlet* - in the role at Streatham Hill Theatre.

2. It may be worth pointing out that in my parents' youth, long before the advent of supermarkets or indeed the rise of what is now Unigate, the many little local dairies which served the Greater London Area in Edwardian times were predominantly Welsh-owned.



THE CHRISTMAS BOOK

MYSTERY

by Margery Woods



"Isn't it exciting?" exclaimed Barbara Redfern, leaning yet farther over the red velvet rail of the minstrels' gallery to gaze down at the scene below. "I hadn't pictured it just like this."

"Look out, Babs." Harry Wharton put a restraining hand on the shoulder of Cliff House's Junior School Captain. "Don't try to fall over!"

Babs laughed and drew back while Mabel Lynn leaned over. "It's just like Dickens down there—those children!"

"*Oliver Twist* isn't in it!" Diana Royston-Clarke said admiringly.

"Hazel told me she'd picked the thinnest ones." Bob Cherry smiled. "But they still look too well fed and healthy to be Victorian orphans."

"Just like our own two fatties," grinned Smithy unkindly.

"You mean our two stars," said Jemima Carstairs solemnly.

"I can't wait to see them—where are they, anyway?" asked Clara Trevlyn.

"Costume fitting," said Mabs. "Oh look! There's Marjorie."

"There'll be no living with the Bunters after this," groaned Smithy. "As if their

heads weren't fat enough already."

The scene the chums were watching so eagerly was being played below in the great baronial hall of Quainsey Place, home of Sir Guy Silvester, genial host to the chums of Greyfriars and Cliff House for this special Christmas party. And a most unusual party it was proving.

Sir Guy was an old friend and colleague of Barbara Redfern's father, and through a casual encounter in town between the two old friends had come this invitation to the chums. Sir Guy was a widower and adored his only child, a daughter called Hazel, an attractive girl with warm friendly charm who had formerly been a pupil at Cliff House. Sir Guy's only other close relative was a nephew, Rupert Nevison, the son of Sir Guy's only sister. Tragedy seemed to have stalked the Silvester family for Sir Guy's father had died at Alamein, his wife was stricken by a totally unexpected heart attack when Hazel was only nine, and less than a year later his sister and brother-in-law died in a car crash when Rupert was twelve. Yet Sir Guy had not become embittered and had made himself responsible for Rupert's welfare and education, later setting him up in his chosen business in the city. But it was for Hazel that this Christmas party had been arranged.

Hazel, now nineteen, was a talented photographer, already becoming known, and had just got her first big break. A special book was in a leading publisher's pipeline, co-written by several famous people and expected to be a top seller the following autumn when it was hoped that a great deal of money would be raised for a children's medical charity. Hazel had been invited to supply a wealth of illustrations to depict a year in the lives of children. She had decided to follow the seasons, alternating between historical, modern and literary, and had already completed her choice for the sections for summer and autumn, carefully matched to the anecdotes of the famous contributors. Now she had chosen to use her own home as the setting for her Christmas section and part of the Eastertide scene. Sir Guy had agreed with delight and offered whatever assistance he could, to the extent of allowing part of his baronial hall to be stripped of all furnishings that suggested wealth and replaced by the minimum of spartan props.

About fourteen children, all from the village and estate cottages, were seated at a bare scrubbed table on which some very plain fare lay with one straggling spray of holly and two spluttering candles; the Christmas tea! The children's normally healthy colour had been transformed into pinched waxen pallour by a skilful application of make-up—Mabs' contribution to this scene—and their drab coarse pinafores or shirts and trousers completed the traditional idea of a Dickensian orphanage. The candles cast flickering shadows as Marjorie Hazeldene, clad in a long severe black dress, poured cocoa into the tin mugs held up to her and endeavoured a not very successful imitation of the unpleasant prefect, Connie Jackson. Hazel and her camera were never still, capturing some of the strangely angled shots which were becoming one of her specialities, while her assistant, a tall thin boy with long dark hair, recorded the scene with a video camera. But suddenly there came a cry.

The littlest child of all was overcome; perhaps the scene had come too close to

reality for him, for his small white face crumpled and tears rained down his cheeks.

Marjorie set down the large battered enamel jug and instinctively moved to comfort the mite, only to have her way barred by Hazel.

"Five seconds," whispered the young photographer, zooming in on tears, then lowered the camera and bent to the child to offer comfort. "Tea's coming and Mummy's over there."

Someone switched on the main lights and Hazel told the children they were all wonderful. The housekeeper appeared wheeling a large trolley laden with party goodies and soft drinks. Behind her the butler appeared with a second trolley on which reposed a pile of gaily-wrapped presents. The littlest one's tears had already vanished; he and the rest of the children were eager for their rewards. Soon, crackers cracked, paper hats were donned and wrapping paper was strewn everywhere.

"Your turn tomorrow," cried Hazel as Babs, followed by Clara and Smithy, led the descent from the minstrels' gallery. Hazel's expression became serious. "I hope you didn't think me too cruel pausing those few seconds but it was so perfect. It said more than a million words about the unhappiness of a child—I must get that film out, it's precious." She dropped the film into her pocket and left the camera on the table as the mothers began rounding up their offspring.

"I think those few seconds are forgotten already," broke in Smithy as the littlest one seized the trifle bowl. "Look at the grin trying to get through a faceful of trifle."

Willing hands were removing the orphanage props and spotlights and starting to restore the normal furnishings. Marjorie was collecting the ugly black lace-up boots kicked off by the children, some of whom were evading parents and tearing round the hall. Hazel looked round. "Anyone seen Rupert? And where's Tim? I asked them to make sure the big theatrical basket was stowed away safely." She sighed. "I'd better do it myself."

Clara and Nugent and Hurree dashed after her to help. Babs and Marjorie began clearing party debris off the table then looked up sharply as a worried voice spoke. A young, fair-haired young woman was looking for the littlest one, who'd vanished. "Don't worry," Babs assured her. "We'll find him." Joined by Diana and Bob and Harry and Smithy the chums spread out round the hall. Then there was a terrified cry and Harry spotted the missing child at the



far end of the hall, near the big staircase. The littlest one was looking fearfully up at a huge suit of armour. At the same moment Smithy yelled: "Look; It's coming over!"

He and Bob Cherry got there as Harry snatched up the child. Bob and Smithy were just in time to arrest the swaying armour before it crashed to the floor. The littlest one, still clutching his trifle trophy, was restored to his mother, who demanded to know if he had tried to push the armour over.

"No!" cried the small indignant voice, "He frightened me, Mummy. He did!"

Everyone agreed he had not touched the armour and assured him it hadn't tried to frighten him. He was still protesting as his mother carried him away, muttering about bedtime long overdue, and gradually the hall emptied of parents and children, leaving Sir Guy and the chums to help clear away stray balloons and torn paper hats, and to catch their breath again before retiring up to their rooms to wash and change for dinner. There was still no sign of the Bunters when the chums tripped downstairs again, but they might have known! There were two occupants already seated in the dining room. Both wore satisfied smirks but seemed unwilling to impart any information about their own experiences of the afternoon. "Can't understand her," whispered Mabs. "Usually she can't keep quiet."

"She's enjoying keeping us guessing," returned Babs. "All she'd admit to me was that her costume was too tight."

Clara overheard. "Burst your costume, Fatima?" she called over the table as the soup arrived.

"Ha ha; Better not have any dinner."

Bessie sniffed disdainfully. "Just wait until you see the book. We've got a whole page to ourselves."

"Is it a big enough page?" teased Clara, and Bessie sniffed again, while Billy ignored the chatter and concentrated on more important business.

Only Babs noticed that Smithy and Jemima seemed rather quiet over the meal, a rather sumptuous rehearsal for the Christmas Day feast, Babs thought. She forgot about the errant armour and the Bunters' little secret for Hazel had promised that after dinner Tim was going to show the recordings he had made so far. But a second shock awaited them. Hazel discovered that her camera had gone missing, and her assistant Tim announced that the cassette had been taken out of his camcorder.

There was consternation and a frantic search of the house, no small task, especially on top of the rather large meal of which they'd all partaken. The suddenly Rupert stared at the chums. "You lot haven't been fooling about, have you?" he demanded.

They stared back at him, appalled: Hazel broke in: "Of course they haven't. How could you say such a thing. And none of the children would touch them, I'm sure."

Smithy turned his back pointedly on Rupert and said: "I've a new camcorder with me—Christmas gift from my father. And there's a supply of cassettes with it. You're welcome to borrow it, Tim, if that's any help."

"Thanks, but I have several blanks with me." Tim glanced at Hazel. "It's the recording she needs as back-up to her stills work."

Diana, after a disdainful sniff at Rupert, turned to Hazel. "I've had a digital camera given me—a good one. If it's any help..."

Hazel shook her head. "I've two other cameras in my darkroom. I think I'll go and process my film right away—thank goodness I took it straight out." She gave a tremulous smile, "Will you excuse me?"

In somewhat sombre mood the chums retreated to the big sitting room where there was tea or coffee or cold drinks for anyone who felt like a nightcap before bed. The Bunters had retired to the TV room and were probably asleep there already. Babs curled up at one end of a chesterfield, nursing a mug of tea for she was thirsty, A moment later Harry Wharton joined her. Without preamble he asked:

"What do you think of Rupert?"

Babs hesitated. "I'm not sure. I haven't really talked to him since we arrived. But I was appalled by his accusation."

"So was I," Harry agreed. But yesterday was the first time we'd met, early days to form a considered opinion. I just wondered how well you knew him, I mean with your father and Sir Guy being friends."

"We aren't really close socially." Babs frowned. "It must be two years since I last met Rupert. He's always seemed quiet and rather too adult to bother much with a party of schoolboys and girls. He had his college friends, and he certainly seems a more introverted type, not given to bonhomie."

"Does he get on okay with Hazel?"

"As far as I know," Babs said. "But I hardly knew Hazel at school. She was in the Sixth and leaving the term I arrived. But everyone liked her." Babs paused. "You know that Hazel wanted to do the school pictures at Cliff House?" Harry nodded. "Hazel thought it was a perfect setting for the scene she had in mind. But Miss Primrose didn't think it was possible, although she was very sorry not to be able to arrange it. So we were asked here instead."

Harry was silent for a few moments, then he mused: "I just wondered if Rupert resented it all, but if he was always a bit withdrawn..."

Babs wondered if the ears of the absent Rupert were burning. She hoped not but she might have felt twinges of concern had she chosen to uncurl herself and wander out into the hall.

It was fairly dim in that great cavernous space. The log fire at the far end had burned down to glowing embers. Nearby, the big Christmas tree rose majestically, its festoons of coloured lights aglow, and all the wall sconces were switched on, but there were many shadows and only two occupants.

At the end where the broad oak staircase rose to the galleried upper floor two figures stood quietly, apparently lost in admiration of a vast old oil painting depicting some long ago ancestral lady in a blue satin gown.

"Did you notice anything, Sir Spartan?" Jemima asked quietly.

"Yes, I did," returned Smithy. "But it wasn't just the armour that scared the kid."

Jemima sighed. "I wondered if I'd imagined a shadow moving."

"No, you didn't. Even though it happened so quickly. Too quickly to recognise

the shadow's owner."

Jemima pointed up to a blurred signature on the portrait. "Do you think whoever it was frightened the kiddie deliberately?"

Smithy shrugged. "I'd rather think otherwise. Jimmy—will you keep a lookout for anyone coming into the hall?"

"Ahem, I shall whistle Good King Wenceslas." Jemima resumed her study of the painting while Smithy moved silently along to the darker recess under the staircase. There was no sound of anyone entering the hall, then a soft exclamation came from Smithy as he examined the armour with a small pocket torch. He reached behind the armour and came swiftly back to Jemima's side. "So what do you think of this?" he said triumphantly, holding out his find. Jemima gave a soft exclamation. "One camera and one video cassette. Well done; Hazel will be thrilled."

"Not yet." Smithy shook his head and his face hardened. "I've had an idea. Keep an eye peeled—! I'll be back in a couple of minutes." Smithy pushed camera and cassette down behind a nearby settle and took the stairs two at a time. Jemima moved towards the suit of armour and reflected that someone dodging behind it would terrify a small child. She noticed a doorway almost under the overhang of the stairs where the thief—or prankster—must have dodged through. Then Smithy returned. He whispered quickly: "I've had an idea. I'm going to put the things back where I found them, and I don't think we should tell the others just yet. But I'm going to substitute a blank cassette of mine for this one." He was swiftly exchanging the two cassette covers. "Good job Tim hadn't had time to label this before it vanished." In moments he had replaced the two articles exactly where he'd found them and turned to Jemima. "Someone is going to return for them. We'll try to keep watch for when they vanish. Meanwhile, I'll tell Wharton and you tell Babs and suggest we wait until everyone's together then announce in a loud voice that we saw someone hiding behind that armour and scaring the child."

Jemima tapped her head. "Smart thinking, Sir Spartan. There's bound to be a reaction from someone—unless someone from outside the house was responsible."

"We'll all rush around the hall," went on Smithy, "and discover the missing things—that is if they are still there. Breakfast is the time, I think. Agreed?"

"Agreed." The two amateur detectives rejoined the others as if nothing had happened, each wondering if their hoped for reaction would occur at breakfast. But they were to be disappointed.

They were not joined at breakfast by Hazel or Rupert or Tim. And both camera and Smithy's cassette had vanished. But at least there were two surprises awaiting the chums. Clara, bouncing out into the crisp December sunshine, screamed a summons. She dashed back into the house. "Just come and see this!" she yelled.

They crowded out after her and through an archway at the edge of the lawn. A topiary paradise was revealed, wonderful sculptured evergreen shrubs and several graceful examples of classical statuary. But these went almost unnoticed and roars of laughter broke from the chums. At last the Bunters' secret starring role was revealed. Standing there like bookends in carefully rehearsed poses, wearing identical cos-

tumes, while Hazel aimed her camera and in the background Tim video'd the scene, were the two immortal characters from *Alice Through the Looking Glass*; Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

Of course Bessie immediately became all self-conscious, despite her previous film experience, and her tucked up plait descended untidily over her shoulder. Hazel spun round and shook her head, half laughing, half despairingly. "These two needed more preparation than the rest put together. But aren't they just perfect? This is for the spring section of the book."

"I'm sorry," Babs apologised. "We didn't mean to spoil your shots but they are so funny; Come on, kids, let's clear off." Still chuckling, they moved towards another section of the grounds.

"Contrariwise, to be sure," broke in a voice at Babs' shoulder.

Surprised, Babs looked up into the dark, serious face of Rupert Nevison. He gestured towards a nearby seat. "I'd like to talk to you for a moment," he said. Babs nodded, and he went on: "I'm sorry for my angry outburst yesterday—I was so furious that anyone could hurt Hazel."

"Well, we were a bit angry ourselves—at you," Babs admitted

"You see" he said "I don't find it easy to indulge in small talk and fool about so people tend to think I'm moody. But Hazel means a great deal to me and I'd never allow anyone to hurt her. She made me feel part of the family straight away when I came to live with Uncle Guy. Another girl might have resented an impoverished relation coming to share what had always been hers, but she didn't, especially as she..."

He paused, and Babs said gently, "Especially as...?"

"You didn't know?"

"Know what?" Babs looked puzzled.

"Hazel was adopted as a baby. My aunt couldn't have children. Then somebody who should have known better told Hazel when she was very small, it broke her heart, until she realised she'd been chosen. That was when I made up my mind I'd always care for her." He paused. "We'd better go indoors before you turn chilly. But what I wanted to tell you is this. I've had my suspicions for a while about someone Hazel shouldn't trust. There have been a couple of other incidents to cause Hazel problems but I can't prove anything, not until I overheard your friend—the girl with the monocle—and the boy they call Smithy talking last night." Rupert half smiled. "They thought they were being so quiet. Then this morning you all discovered that Hazel's camera and the video cassette had vanished again, and I decided it was time I talked to you."

"Yes, but..." Babs hesitated as they neared the house and saw Smithy and Jemima standing at the door. Could she trust Rupert? He sounded sincere enough, and because he didn't possess the charming extroverted kind of personality that drew people to him didn't mean he wasn't trustworthy. Some of the outwardly charming people were not to be trusted. But should she tell him that Smithy had switched the cassettes? Suddenly she made up her mind. "Come and talk to Jemima and Smithy,"

she said.

They did not enter into the merriment emerging from the sitting room but chose the solitude of the library. There, Babs recounted the conversation with Rupert and said: "I think we ought to tell him."

So Smithy told him.

Rupert's mouth tightened. "Thank you. This gives me an idea. Which may surprise Hazel," he added grimly.

They looked at him expectantly, still rather surprised at the sudden emergence of the apparently withdrawn young man as an ally—if ally he truly was.

"Not yet," he said. "Hazel has the day planned and she won't thank us if we upset her plans. The children will be back any moment for another scene, then we've planned a short party for them—a sort of reward. Now, I must remind Hazel to keep her darkroom locked. I'll see you later."

When he'd gone Jemima polished her monocle thoughtfully: "it's strange, me thinks, how the quiet ones have such hidden depths."

"That's why they're quiet. Still waters, you know," Smithy observed. "Wonder what he's got in mind."

For this they had to wait. Hazel still had shots to complete of Tweedledum and Tweedledee, and a sequence of the children in Victorian dress around the Christmas Tree. So it was not until after the evening meal that Rupert invited the company to join him in the big drawing room where he had a surprise for them. Then, in a casual aside he asked Smithy to let him have the cassette.

"Only if I'm with it," said the wily Bounder.

Smithy and Jemima already knew what was coming without being told and were keeping fingers secretly crossed. When everyone was seated, with Sir Guy and even the housekeeper and the butler invited to stay, Rupert switched off the overhead lights and switched on the TV wall screen.

"Oh, we're not going to sing carols or play Charades," joked Sir Guy.

"No said Rupert. "Just watch."

Hazel gave a little cry of delight as the orphanage scene sprang to life on the screen. "You found it," she cried, but her words were eclipsed by a shout from Tim.

"Where did you get that? Who made a copy? How?" His face was twisted with fury. "Who took that out of my recorder?"

Rupert silenced the TV. "I think you know," he said coldly. "You removed and hid the cassette and Hazel's camera yourself. And scared the wits out of that child in the process. Don't deny it, Tim. You were seen. And two of our guests saw you and found the stuff. But why?"

"Yes, why, Tim?" Hazel's expression showed her hurt. "Why?"

"Because I'm sick of being your lackey. On call when you needed me and no credits for my work."

The scene was painful and Tim's only motive was jealousy. He had failed several times in attempts to get jobs with television production companies and had also tried still photography. He seemed to imagine if Hazel failed to fulfil her commission for the

Christmas Book job he might be able to step in, in her place. He departed the next day and Hazel shrugged off her disappointment and got on with her plan, this time a traditional home Christmas theme in which the chums all featured, by the free, toasting Christmas, Carol-singing with glowing lanterns, and games with the children.

On Christmas Eve they gathered by the great rosy log fire in Quainsey Place hall to see the first prints of the photographs of themselves, and all agreed that Hazel was gifted and assured of fame in her chosen career. The chums sensed a new warmth between Hazel and her cousin, a warmth perhaps she had never realised.

On the stroke of midnight Smithy toasted Jemima: "Another Christmas case successfully solved!"

"And success to Tweedledum and Tweedledee," laughed Babs.

"And to Hazel's Christmas Book," cried Harry Wharton.

"To Hazel's Christmas Book," they all echoed. "Happy Christmas to one and all!"



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