STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST
Vol. 57 No. 659 SEPTEMBER 2003

The Greyfriars Herald 1½d

No. 7. (New Series). | FULL OF SCHOOL STORIES AND ARTICLES | Dec. 13, 1919.

A FIGHT TO A FINISH!—GREAT SCHOOL SCENE INSIDE!


George Wingate.
By Bob Whiter

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

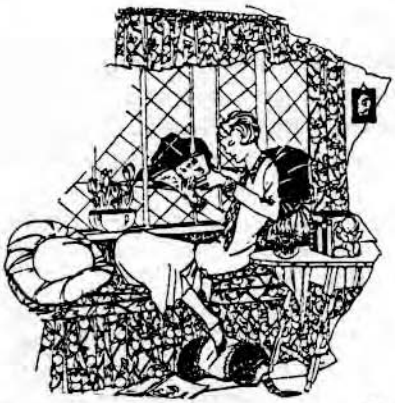
Editor: MARY CADOGAN

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR
Founded in 1941 by
W.H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST
Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

S.P.C.D. Edited and Published 1959 - January 1987 by Eric Fayne

VOL. 57 No. 659 SEPTEMBER 2003 PRICE £3.50



EDITORIAL

Autumn, despite the glorious sunny days we are now having, is on its way, and it brings thoughts of cosy reading hours - and of Christmas numbers of the old papers.

We are also, of course, thinking about seasonable fare for the C.D., and for a further *Christmas Special Number*. Last year's proved very popular, and an order form for this year's issue is enclosed.

Please note: I need to receive fairly urgently, more material for this Christmas Special, so please put your pens, typewriters or computers to work to provide some articles, stories or poems for it. Christmassy items will also be welcomed for our regular quarterly (December) issue.

I look forward to receiving these, and your orders for the Christmas Special: it helps me, and the printers, if these could please be sent to me as soon as possible.

Short articles as well as longer ones are welcomed: it might be good to have several pieces from readers about their individual favourite Christmas Series, for example (with suggested illustrations, if possible).

I think you will agree that this issue of the C.D. is full of good things. In preparing it, I was struck by the variety of its articles, and this wide-ranging coverage of nostalgic interests is echoed in meetings of the Old Boys Book Clubs, as Roger Coombes so adroitly conveys in his toast to the London Club which is printed in this C.D.

We have been informed by Broadstairs Town Council that Bob Acraman's Hamiltonian memorabilia is on long-term loan to them and will soon be viewable at the Broadstairs Museum, Arts and Media Centre, 4 Crow Hill, Broadstairs, Kent, CT10 1HN (but if you wish to visit, first telephone the Curators, Tristram and Margaret Branscombe-Kent on 01843 866088.

As most CD readers are aware, John Wernham houses a large collection of Hamiltonian memorabilia, publications and art work at his Museum Press address. This is periodically put on view by John for the London O.B.B.C. visits to Maidstone. Anyone requiring information about the Collection and/or The Charles Hamilton Museum Press publications, should write to John Wernham, 30 Tonbridge Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME16 8RT.

Happy Browsing, MARY CADOGAN

* *

BOOK REVIEW

by Brian Doyle

"By Jove, Biggles!" The Life Story of Captain W.E. Johns, by Peter Berresford Ellis and Jennifer Schofield. Foreword by Mary Cadogan. New and Revised Edition, 2003. Published by Norman Wright, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, Herts., WD19 4JL. Paperback. Price: £20.50 + £1.60 postage (UK). (EU postage £2.60, USA £4.75, Rest/World £5.25)

I used to know Biggles quite well and we had several chats about his adventures. Nice chap too - good-looking in a craggy, 'been there, done that' kind of way, fine voice, lovely sense of humour - a good bloke to have as a friend and someone who wouldn't let you down...

I'm referring, in case you're wondering, to that wonderful actor Jack Watson, who played Biggles in over 40 BBC radio adaptations of the W.E. Johns stories in 'Children's Hour' (of blessed memory) from 1948 onwards. I don't know exactly when he stopped but he was still churning them out in 1957. They were all adapted for radio by Bertha Lonsdale and produced by Trevor Hill.

I was fortunate enough to work closely with Watson on three pictures during my years as a Publicist in the film business, including one stint of 9 weeks in South Africa (on 'The Wild Geese') and one of three months in India (on 'The Sea Wolves'). He nearly 'stole' the first from such stars as Richard Burton, Roger Moore and Richard Harris, with his tough, searing portrayal of a veteran, no-nonsense Sergeant-Major, forever drilling mercenary soldiers in the heat and dust of the Bush.

I asked him more than once about his long period as the radio Biggles and he smiled reminiscently saying: "Ah, those were the days. I was really Gung Ho and a bit of an aerial James Bond really, and I became I think a sort of 'hero' figure to many young listeners (there wasn't too much television around in those days anyway). I received stacks of fan-mail (and answered every letter) and I enjoyed my time as the great man very much indeed. I read a lot of the books too! I'd loved to have done it on television, but that wasn't to be, I'm afraid..." (In fact, Nevil Whiting became the TV Biggles in a series of 44 episodes in 1960.) Watson was 27 when he began to play the radio Biggles and close to his 40s when he stopped. Sadly, he's no longer with us and died in 1999 at the age of 78.

All this nostalgia leads me to announce, somewhat belatedly but with some delight, that a brand-new edition of "By Jove, Biggles!", the Life Story of Captain W.E. Johns, the creator and author of

continued on pages 63 and 64

HARD TIMES
by Ted Baldock

"I wish you to come tomorrow, because you are
captain of cricket, and I think you should be
present on this auspicious occasion. We are
giving a farewell feed or blow out to Lawson."
"Oh, I see, sir. I hope," said Benskin diplomatically,
"there will be some of your pie on the table."
"There certainly will, and I hope I shall not
find the best part of it under the table after
everyone has gone."

Hylton Cleaver. Lawson for Lords

It is difficult to over emphasize the gravity of the situation. That it was serious is perhaps understating the case. It was approaching that magic moment, namely teatime and no arrangements concerning that most beloved ceremony had been made. It was serious and the choice was stark.

Doorsteps and Dish Water. There must be fewer ways more dismal of describing 'Tea in Hall'.

Times were hard, they probably could not have been harder. Finances were at the lowest ebb possible - in fact they did not exist at all. A long expected postal order had failed to materialize. And, perhaps most tragic of all, William George Bunter was hungry.

Added to this list of woes, tea-time was in the offing. Billy Bunter had tried to insinuate his fat person into various studies up and down the Remove passage in the hope of being invited to partake in the pleasant and essential ceremony of tea.

Harry Wharton and Co. were out. Bunter was aware of this, having seen them whirling out of the gate in a merry and dust-raising group. Selfish rotters, thought Bunter, after all I have done for them. It has been said and experienced by many that misfortunes seldom come in the singular, they usually march up in battalions, and such now was the case.

He had tried Smithy's study, a domain always flowing with milk and honey, and Tom Redwing had been inclined to let the Owl participate in helping to demolish the good things with which the study table was laden. But Vernon Smith, without saying anything had made menacing movements with his boot, about whose interpretation there was no possibility of doubt and Bunter had retired somewhat hastily.

Such had been the welcome he had received up and down the Remove passage. The situation looked bleak; it was tough, and something had to be done to solve the crisis, and that quickly. A dry biscuit is better than no biscuit at all - even though it provided very little satisfaction. A fellow had a right to a decent tea, the provider of which is of no particular importance. This was Bunter's philosophy.

Diplomatic overtures had been made at the tuckshop concerning the delicate matter of credit, but Mrs Mimble had proved adamant upon the subject, there was nothing doing. It is unlikely but just possible that, had he approached Mr. Mimble, he might have met with a modicum of success.

It was a hard and unfeeling world, a very selfish place especially when a fellow was 'broke'. But Doorsteps and Dish water – surely there must be some other way. Not that this humble fare was in any way to be discounted. It was frugal to a degree but a fellow could quite happily survive on it should there exist no other avenues to explore. Lots of fellows tea-ed in Hall, usually bolstering up the unimaginative fare by bringing along little delicacies of their own, jars of jam, sardines, biscuits, all of which helped to raise the general tone of the meal. It was certainly not all that bad to a fellow with not too much imagination. Such a fellow could get by quite happily, as many did.

William George Bunter was, however quite another 'cup of tea', as it were. Accustomed to the endless luxurious fare at Bunter Court, he found it difficult to descend to the crust of bread tolerated with good humour by other fellows .

He was rather at a loss. It was one thing saying that something must be done, quite another knowing just how to accomplish that necessary end. I wonder where those fellows have gone, he mused to himself. It could be any of a number of their usual haunts, Chunkley's at Courtfield, the Pagoda, possibly Cliff House, they might be found at any one of these destinations, but which?

After much cogitation the Owl decided to try and seek those beasts and it was Courtfield to which his deliberations led him. To Courtfield and that oasis of delight and plenty – Chunkley's. Perhaps those beasts would be there, it was a shot in the dark but anything was better than having to resort to tea in hall.

Having selected a bicycle from the cycle shed, Bunter gave not a thought to the owner and whether he might be requiring it that afternoon. Wheeling it out he mounted, and clinked away down Friardale Lane en route for Courtfield. It was extremely warm on that July afternoon and the usual concourse of insects were abroad in great numbers, many of whom attached themselves to Bunter's fat ears and other exposed areas of his podgy person. All seemed vary keen on accompanying him on his journey along the dusty lane. Bunter ground on, perspiring freely, a perfect example of what sacrifices some fellows will make in the pursuit of 'tuck'.

The market square at Courtfield was silent and deserted in the intense heat of the afternoon. Coloured awnings sheltered the shop windows, protecting the wares within. Chunkleys was a haven of silence and cool shade. The few customers within consisted mostly of ladies in large summer hats who were enjoying the peace of the moment, discussing who knows what over the convivial pot of tea. All was calm and shady, other sensible inhabitants of Courtfield had retired to the coolness of their homes to enjoy that most pleasant of rituals - the afternoon siesta.

An unmusical clinking announced the arrival Billy Bunter into the square, his fat features crimson with heat and unwonted exercise, still accompanied by a faithful host of out-riders which swarmed lovingly round his fat head and ears.

Directing his large spectacles towards the one place which held any practical interest for him, namely Messrs Chunkleys, he observed – much to his satisfaction - five bicycles stacked together on the pavement. "Good", he grunted, "I thought the beasts would be here". With which gracious comment he added his borrowed machine to the others and, sweeping his cap round his head to disperse his winged companions, he prepared to enter the sacred precincts. Harry Wharton and Co., not infrequent visitors to Chunkleys, had their favourite table in a secluded comer more or less cut off from the large central area by the fronds of a large palm tree so placed to preserve a certain privacy. Here they sat, five fellows happily busy with

refreshments and chatting round a table, sublimely unaware of the Owl's imminent approach. Bob Cherry was remarking, with a grin, "I wonder what old Bunty is doing just now".

They were not kept long in suspense for at that moment Bunter happened. "I say, you fellows", came the familiar squeak. Billy Bunter had arrived.

There was a little stir among the waitresses. One or two who had had previous experience of him, mostly of a doubtful character, smiled at each other. These smiles were interpreted by the Owl as being visible signs of admiration of his manly and athletic figure!

Room was made for him at the table, fresh orders were issued, there was a bustle of activity among the waitresses, all was well. Where now was tea in Hall with Door Steps and Dish Water? The Owl was in his element. The situation, so bleak and unpromising earlier in the afternoon, had been miraculously solved thanks to his superior strategy and deduction.

Come Mrs Mimble, hurry do
I have a sinking feeling,
For dinner we had watery stew,
It really had me reeling.
Old Quelchy said t'was very good
He took a second plate.
Good 'Tuck' he never understood
For me - a dreadful fate.
So hurry with those jam tarts please
Don't keep a fellow waiting,
I'm feeling wobbly at the knees
And I'm not over stating.
In Smithy's study, what a sight,
The cupboard door stands open,
Within the shelves - oh what delight.
That 'Tuck' is now bespoken.
Buns are there, with cakes and pie,
With ginger ale and 'pop',
Enough to make a fellow sigh
Should he devour the lot.
A melon and a monstrous pine,
With grapes and apples ripe
It matters little they're not mine
They are a wondrous sight.

Good things flowed to Bunter's table in a delicious stream, and the bill went up by leaps and bounds.

* *

* *

MEMORIES OF HUGH McNEILL
by Colin Wyatt

Not long ago I read an article about Hugh McNeill the children's illustrator, and it prompted many memories for me of the time I knew him.

I have always loved to draw, and the comics I read as I grew up in the forties gave me the inspiration to want to draw for them for a living. Although I read and enjoyed 'Champion', 'Rover', 'Hotspur' and 'Adventure', it was the picture story papers that I enjoyed most. 'Knockout', 'Film Fun, 'Radio Fun' and 'Mickey Mouse Weekly' were my favourites. And when 'Eagle' began in 1950, that became a firm favourite too.

I loved copying my favourite characters from these comics, and my own style was definitely influenced by both them and the Walt Disney cartoons that I saw at the cinema. I still have some of the drawings I did at the time, and it's clear from these that it was the younger characters I preferred to draw. And it was already my ambition to work for the young comics in some way. Because I had no art qualifications I didn't think I had a chance of getting a job with a publishers or at an art studio, so I began my working career in a shipping office in London in 1954. And I hated it. I found my only consolation in drawing, which I did whenever there was a break in my work. So after three miserable years I decided to write to a comic publisher. The two largest were The Amalgamated Press in London, and D.C. Thomson in Dundee. As I lived not far from London I wrote to The Amalgamated Press at Fleetway House in Farringdon Street, and received a prompt reply inviting me for an interview.

Because my acquaintance with Frank Richards' characters hadn't begun until my dad bought the first post war 'Tom Merry Annual' for my 11th birthday in 1950, I had never seen a 'Magnet' or a 'Gem' and so had never heard of Fleetway House and the name meant nothing to me at that time. My interview was with Leonard Matthews who was then a managing editor. The interview didn't last long. He simply looked at my drawings, and then asked me when I would like to start. I was bowled over! I was actually going to be working in children's comics! I could hardly believe it! On the 19th of August 1957 I duly arrived at Fleetway House. I was to work as an art assistant in what was called the 'nursery group'. At that time the A.P. produced just three nursery titles 'Tiny Tots', 'Playhour' and 'Jack and Jill'. It was a wonderful, memorable time for me. I had never seen original comic artwork. And to actually see and prepare for publication work by such wonderful artists was an absolute joy. And best of all was actually to meet the artists themselves

Most of the artists were freelance and worked from home, and although some posted their work to the office, most delivered it personally. This is how I first came to meet Hugh McNeill. He was a warm, friendly person, and he would always spend time chatting with me whenever he visited the office. I knew nothing of his work other than that he drew 'Harold Hare', the most popular character in 'Jack and Jill'. In those days comics were still one of the main forms of entertainment for young children, and the weekly circulations were quite considerable. At the time I believe 'Jack and Jill' sold around 500,000 copies each week. Each comic had its own popularity chart, and the readers would write in by the sackload naming their favourites. 'Harold Hare' was by far the most popular and that had to be due to Hugh McNeill's skill in putting so much life and fun into his characters I soon learnt, of course, about the other marvellous work he had done. Not from Hugh I hasten to add! He was much too modest for

that! The wide variety of his work was truly amazing. With 'Harold Hare' his style was loose and free, but he had many styles and he was master of them all.

When I had been working at Fleetway House for a short time I was called to see Leonard Matthews in his office. He told me to sit down, and then proceeded to tell me at great length about Hugh's career. About his drawing 'Deed a Day Danny' for 'Knockout' on air mail letters during the war and sending them to the office from wherever he was stationed. (He actually had one of these framed and hanging on his wall.) He spoke about Hugh's marvellous 'Wind in the Willows' artwork and all his other varied work. Then he spoke about "Harold Hare' and how he was the most popular character. And how, because of Hugh's work load, what they wanted was another Hugh McNeill "And this is where you come in!" he said. "We want you to be the next Hugh McNeill!" Now! Part of my job required me to copy other artists' styles for when a mistake had to be quickly rectified etc. (In fact, since then, over the years I have drawn hundreds of other people's characters everything from 'Disney' to 'Noddy'. And for the last few years have been drawing 'Thomas the Tank Engine'!) But there was, and only ever would be, one Hugh McNeill!

Hugh's style was totally unlike mine, and there was no way, especially at my young, inexperienced age, that I was going to be the next Hugh McNeill! But, brave foolish youth that I was, I said I would give it a try! Naturally I never succeeded. Whoever could?

Because of Harold Hare's popularity they decided to give him his own weekly comic,

'Harold Hare's Own Paper'. Things were more hectic than ever for Hugh. So, once more, I was asked to help out. This time it would be easier. Hugh would draw and ink Harold and the other characters and I would ink the backgrounds and occasionally add the grey wash tones to his work. This I enjoyed doing, and continued doing for a considerable time.

Because I was sometimes too busy to do this during my working day, I would take Hugh's strip home and do the work during the evening. In those days, during the sixties, I commuted to the office on my Lambretta scooter. I would strap the carefully wrapped artwork to the rack on the back of my scooter, checking it occasionally as I drove the fifteen miles home. On one memorable occasion, to my horror, when I arrived home the artwork was gone! It had been there when I had last checked a few miles before, so I retraced those last few miles over and over, to no avail.

Then followed a sleepless night while I wondered what my art editor, Mick Hall, would say when I broke the news. Luckily for me, Mick was a relaxed, unflappable individual, who simply told me not to worry about it. He told me to make up a reprint story, and they would send Hugh the script again sometime in the future. I then urgently went through lots of Hugh's published artwork, and gradually, taking illustrations from a number of different strips, managed to formulate a new story. Then, much to my relief, off it went to the printers on time.

Some weeks later the script of the strip I had lost was sent to Hugh again to redraw. When I next spoke to Hugh, I apologised to him for my stupidity and explained to him that that was why he had had to redraw the stop. Hugh just laughed, and said quite honestly he hadn't even noticed! I had learnt my lesson though. I'm pleased to say I never lost another piece of Hugh McNeill artwork!

Among Hugh's other work, he was now drawing 'Bunny Cuddles' for 'Playhour'. He was always accompanied by his small sidekick 'Tiny Mole' 'Harold Hare' had a small friend too He was 'Dicky Dormouse'. Both these characters had their own small spin off strip in their respective comics. This was a common thing to do. A popular strip in 'Playhour' was 'Willow Wood' drawn by Peter Woolcock and a character from this, 'Harry Hamster' also had his own small strip. (In fact I took it over in 1960 and drew it for some years.) During the early 1960s a young lady joined our team as an art assistant. Her name was Pam Cooper, and she was a family friend of the McNeill's who had known her since she was a child. (Pam became well known later for producing a series of puppy and kitten plate and greeting card designs for the Gordon Fraser Company.)

Pam had a much tighter style of drawing than Hugh but she was still able to capture the feel of his characters. Soon she began to draw the small 'Dicky Dormouse' strip, and eventually took over the two page 'Bunny Cuddles' strip from Hugh, and drew it successfully for a number of years.

As Hugh was getting older he naturally wanted to spend more time with his family and gradually he eased his workload. This was helped somewhat by the waning in popularity of the young children's comics. By now there was a flood of titles on the market and the circulations had fallen considerably, which meant more and more reprint material was being used.

Hugh McNeill's prolific output was over, but his body of work will always be there to see and enjoy, I am proud to have been a small part of his working life!

* *

DOROTHY L. SAYERS, SEXTON BLAKE, and LEON KESTREL

by Derek Hinrich

"...The neuroses, you know, are particularly clever criminals - they break out in as many disguises as-"

"As Leon Kestrel, the Master Mummer," suggested Parker, who read railway-stall detective stories on the principle of the 'busman's' holiday.

Dorothy Sayers, Whose Body, Chapter 6

(This article was first a paper for the Dorothy L. Sayer Society)

1. **Sexton Blake**

Sexton Blake first appeared in The Halfpenny Marvel in 1893 in the story "The Missing Millionaire". Over the next ten years some fifty stories of Blake's exploits appeared in various publications of the Amalgamated Press and it was only in 1904 that a single story paper, the Union Jack, became his regular home, in which he appeared weekly in stories of between 25000 and 40000 words in length. In 1933 The Union Jack was revamped as Detective Weekly. In 1915 a series of cheap paperback novels of some 60000 words each, The Sexton Blake Library, was also started. These were monthly publications. The number of new titles each month varied, but in the heyday of his popularity in the 'twenties and 'thirties of the last century, four new Sexton Blake novels were published each month. There were thus a hundred adventures of Sexton Blake published each year in those years. The Detective Weekly ceased publication in May 1940, killed off by the wartime paper shortage, but The Sexton Blake Library continued, with some interruptions, in attenuated form, until 1970.

Over two hundred authors - some of them very well-known in their day - contributed more than two hundred million words to some four thousand stories of Sexton Blake over the seventy-odd years in which his cases were chronicled.

Those who wrote about him regularly tended to develop their own, subsidiary, series characters in their stories. These were either allies of Blake (as Dorothy L Sayers once contemplated using Lord Peter Wimsey in an early stage of his development, when he was the younger son of the Duke of Peterborough)[2] or master criminals, but generally the latter, so many indeed so described to distinguish them from ordinary criminals that one might almost wonder if someone somewhere was issuing diplomas.

They were an exotic and flamboyant set of desperadoes. The doyen was George Marsden Plummer, a renegade Scotland Yard man who began by trying to murder his way to the earldom of Sevenoaks, and subsequently was Abdel Krim's right-hand man during the great Riff rebellion in the 'twenties. The most popular was probably the Criminals' Confederation.

a hydra-headed international crime consortium; the most sinister. Prince Wu Ling, Grand Master of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Beetle, a far more plausible embodiment of the Yellow Peril than Dr Fu Manchu; but Monsieur Zenith - "Zenith the Albino" (reputedly a member of the Romanian branch of the House of Hohenzollern) - who, despite being wanted by the police of five continents, dressed at all times of day or night in white tie and tails; and Leon Kestrel, the Master Mummer were the most dashing conceptions.

2. **Leon Kestrel**

Leon Kestrel was, to my mind, the most original creation amongst the great serial villains with whom Sexton Blake periodically crossed swords. He was the invention of Jack Lewis, a staff writer of the Amalgamated Press, who used the pen name "Lewis Jackson", when Sexton Blake stories ceased to be published anonymously.

Kestrel first appeared in The Union Jack, No 620, on August 28th 1915 in a story called "The Case of the Cataleptic". The sobriquet "The Master Mummer" may have been inspired by an E Phillips Oppenheim novel of 1908 of that name. Kestrel was originally an actor (hence the "Mummer"). The following passage from "The Case of the Cataleptic" shows Blake studying the CV of Kestrel in his files:

"Born at Wisconsin, USA. Educated for the stage. Achieved considerable eminence as an actor. Disappeared suddenly, and it was not discovered for some years that he had forsaken his profession for a career of crime at once unique and remarkable.

"There followed a long and detailed list of the crimes which he was supposed to have perpetrated, which Blake studied with minute thoroughness. When he had collected these details he had earmarked the man as of unique and original methods. But Kestrel's career, though long successful, had at last come to the inevitable end. At the end of the list this fact was recorded:

"Apprehended September, 1910. Sentenced to penal servitude for life in the Pittsburg Penitentiary."

It soon transpires that Kestrel has escaped from prison three months before, and the US authorities believe he may have fled to the UK. As befits any self- respecting Master Criminal, Kestrel is a Master of Disguise, to an extent even greater than might be ordinarily expected from a formerly distinguished character actor, as a New York detective correspondent explains to Blake in a letter later in the narrative:

"The man himself is a nonentity; he hardly ever exists. I believe I am correct in saying that only the prison authorities in Pittsburg have seen his real face. According to them, his face is thin, with the skin drawn tightly over the cheekbones. By some means known to himself, he has rendered his face and head absolutely hairless, and he has no teeth. His eyes are a watery grey, which is practically colourless.

"He is of medium height, apparently, but walks with a deceptive stoop, so that by straightening his carriage unduly he can appear quite tall. He can also appear much shorter by emphasising the stoop.

"You can now see, my dear Blake, the really wonderful opportunities the man has for lifelike impersonation, especially when you consider his wonderful faculty of acting and his great knowledge of make-up. He can assume almost any complexion, dark or fair, by choice of eyebrows or wig. His teeth can be bright and regular, or irregular and decayed, according

to his needs. I have heard on good authority that he possesses a preparation of belladonna by which he can colour the eyes without harm.

"The thinness of his face renders it almost easy for him to assume a plumpness of feature by the arrangement of wax moulds inside the mouth. As I have said he can be nearly short and nearly tall. In brief, he is a unique, dangerous, and utterly unscrupulous character."

Kestrel was the leader of a gang frequently referred to as his "syndicate". Its regular members were small in number: Lessing, the former scientific instrument- maker; Madrano, the steeple-jack; "Papa" Bierce and his daughter, Fifette (Kestrel's mistress); and Semiramis, the Greek fence. Leon Kestrel appeared as an adversary of Sexton Blake in 37 novellas in The Union Jack and its successor The Detective Weekly, and in 16 novels in The Sexton Blake Library. He also featured in a novel- length serial. The Fox of Pennyfields in The Union Jack in 1927. After 1927, however, he virtually disappeared from the Sexton Blake saga, featuring in only four stories in the 'thirties. Their last encounter, after many years, was in 1944.

A total of nine stories featuring Kestrel appeared in The Union Jack or The Sexton Blake Library in both 1919 and 1920, and 12 in 1921. These were the years when Dorothy L Sayers was reading the Sexton Blake Library[3], subjecting it to the higher criticism which she later applied to Sherlock Holmes and contemplating, however briefly, contributing to it.

She plainly had a fondness for the Sexton Blake saga. She commissioned a Sexton Blake story[4] for The Evening Standard when editing its daily short story (the author W W Sayer, alias "Pierre Quiroule", frugal man that he was, adapted one of his Union Jack stories, which was itself already an abridgement of part of an earlier Sexton Blake Library novel, for the purpose). She also famously paid tribute to the stories of Sexton Blake in a lecture since "...they represent the nearest approach to a national folk-lore, conceived as the centre for a cycle of loosely connected romances in the Arthurian manner..."

If Dorothy L. Sayers continued to read The Sexton Blake Library I wonder if she was flattered by Number 449 of 4th October 1934, The Blazing Launch Mystery, by Rex Hardinge. The convoluted plot deals with an insurance fraud but it begins with a famous violinist falling to his death from a balcony with a low balustrade. At first it appears to have been an accident, but Blake finds a pebble on the balcony and realises how murder was done...

And between 1933 and 1940, in 56 novels in the Sexton Blake Library and one short story in Detective Weekly by John G. Brandon, Sexton Blake enjoyed the assistance of the Honourable Ronald Sturges Vereker Purvale (known as RSVP to his friends), the eldest son of Viscount Ebdale. Purvale is a tall, blond, monocled young man without a "g" in anything he says ending in "ing", but any Wimseycal traits stop there. He has a broken nose and a cauliflower ear, and a man, "Flash George" Wibley, who is a former safebreaker. Purvale is thus rather more a mixture of Bulldog Drummond and Bertie Wooster, but surely there is a trace of homage there.

But there is no single volume called The Adventures of Sexton Blake, as cited at the head of Chapter 7 of Clouds of Witness, nor is there any volume in the Sexton Blake Library entitled The Clue of the Crimson Star, despite the reading matter of Ginger, the office boy, in Chapter 6 of Murder Must Advertise.

Footnotes

[1] I am a collector of Sexton Blake stories and the information on Blake and his adversaries is drawn from my own collection, from the chapter on Sexton Blake in E.S. Turner's classic study of "blood and thunders", Boys Will Be

Boys, and from The Sexton Blake Index published by the London Old Boys' Book Club, of which I am a member.
[3]See Chapter 12, "Enter Lord Peter Wimsey", of Dorothy L. Sayers Her Life and Soul by Barbara Reynolds.
[4]But particularly in 1919. See Chapter 5, "Adrift", of Dorothy L. Sayers Her Life and Soul.
[5]"Sexton Blake Solves It" appeared in The Evening Standard on 23rd November 1936. It derived from The Union Jack story "The Clayton Moat Mystery" of 1923 which in turn was based on The Sexton Blake Library novel The Mystery Box of 1920 (later republished as The Case of the Bismark Memoirs). It was also reprinted in the anthology of Sexton Blake stories edited by Jack Adrian, Sexton Blake Wins, published by J M Dent & Sons Ltd in their Classic Thrillers series in 1986. As the copyright in the name "Sexton Blake" was held by the Amalgamated Press, some delicate negotiations were necessary before a Blake story could appear in a Beaverbrook paper.

* *

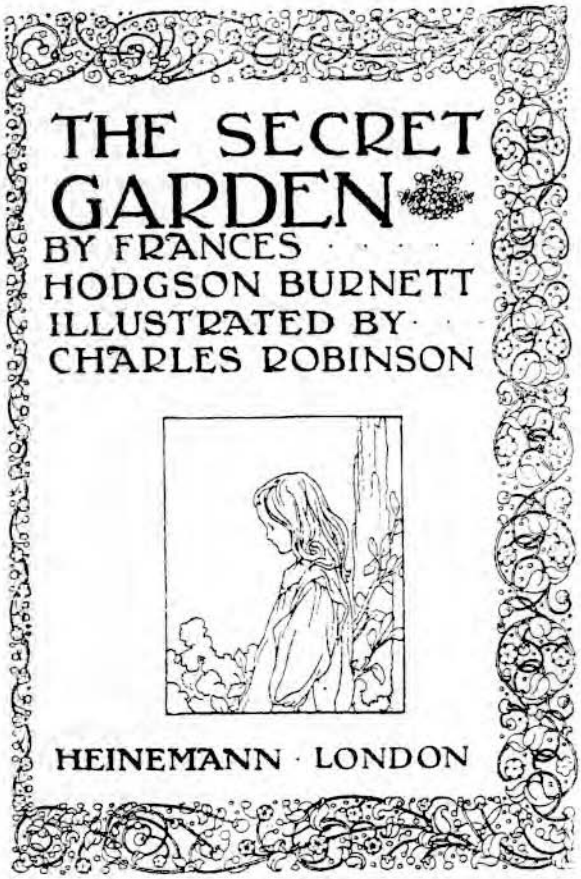
MORE WALKS IN THE WONDERFUL GARDENS
by Laurence Price

1. Frances Hodgson Burnett

Over a two year period in the C.D., from February 1997 to March 1999, Donald V. Campbell, wrote some delightful articles about some of the wonderful gardens that can be found in children's books; I, for one, was very sorry when the series came to an end. I think the garden holds a special place in many of our hearts - we associate it with peace and tranquillity and, perhaps, lost childhood innocence too. We seek our own individual Garden of Eden - in Joni Mitchell's gentle hippie anthem, *Woodstock* the central theme of the song was 'we've got to get ourselves back to the garden.' One of the wonders of ancient civilisation was The Hanging Gardens of Babylon - A love of gardens, whether, natural, fabled or mythological, seems rooted deep within us. There is often something deeply satisfying, then, about stories that are centred on the garden - it transports us for a little while from the worries and anxieties of the world around us. But in any worthwhile story about a garden it can improve and uplift us too. Firstly, then, I'd like to retrace Mr Campbell's steps just once, and return to *The Secret Garden* of Frances Hodgson Burnett. Yet, so well realised is the story, that it is not *her* garden, but the garden of her created children, especially Mary, then the invalid, Colin, and Dickon too.

It is a place both of discovery and redemption for Mary and, later, Colin, two self willed and initially objectionable and selfish children, made that way by external circumstances - their every whim and want indulged, yet both neglected by their parents or guardians in different ways, and for very different reasons, as the book makes poignantly clear. They both come from privileged upbringings - Mary, from colonial India, and Colin, with his aristocratic and hereditary background; both are used to 'lording' it over servants, and it will be through the *working* class Dickon that they will be changed and redeemed, partly by working the secret garden themselves. They eventually become 'doers' and 'givers' rather than receivers. But it is surely the garden that begins their transformation. Here is how Mary first sees the garden, in the dying days of winter:

It was the sweetest, most mysterious-looking place anyone could imagine. The high walls which shut it in were covered with the leafless stems of climbing roses, which were so thick that they were matted together. Mary Lennox knew they were roses because she had seen a great many roses in India. All the ground was covered with grass of a wintry brown,



and out of it grew clumps of bushes which were surely rose bushes if they were alive...one of the things which made the place look strangest and loveliest was that climbing roses had run all over them and swung down long tendrils which made light swaying curtains...and had crept from one tree to another and made lovely bridges of themselves... 'how still it is', she whispered. 'How still!'

Then, later in the springtime, it is the invalid Colin's turn to see the garden:

And over walls and earth and trees and swinging sprays and tendrils the fair green veil of tender little leaves had crept, and in the grass under the trees and the grey urns in the alcoves and here and there everywhere were touches of gold and purple and white and the trees were showing pink and snow above his head and there were fluttering of wings and faint sweet pipes and humming and scents and scents And the sun fell warm upon his face like a hand with a lovely touch...

Dickon must not be forgotten. Here is how Mary first met him:

A boy was sitting under a tree, with his back against it, playing on a rough wooden

pipe. He was a funny-looking boy about twelve. He looked very clean and his nose turned up and his cheeks were as red as poppies and never had Mistress Mary seen such round and such blue eyes in any boy's face. And on the trunk of the tree he leaned against, a brown squirrel was clinging and watching him. and from behind a bush near by a cock pheasant was delicately stretching his neck to peep out. and quite near him were two rabbits sniffing with tremulous noses - and actually it appeared as if they were drawing near to watch him and listen to the strange low little call his pipe seemed to make... 'Don't tha' move,' he said. It'd flight 'em.'

There is a sense of magic and mysticism - something of Peter Pan or a nature spirit - about Dickon.

Nature magic pervades the book for it is initially through contact with a robin that Mary both discovers the secret garden and her own repressed feelings. and then, gradually, learns how to feel and care about others. Dickon, with his empathy with and love of animals. and of plants and flowers. and indeed of life itself. helps Mary in her self-discovery. and recovery - process. And it is no surprise that radical changes also take place in the life of Colin in this lovely, life-affirming book. It is all Magic and as 'white as snow' as Mary tells Colin. And such Magic that another party learns to live again too; if you do not know this classic children's story I would urge you to seek it out and take a walk in this wonderful garden yourself.

As a postscript I must mention the enchanting 1993 film adaptation of *The Secret Garden* by the Polish film maker, Agnieszka Holland. It starred Kate Maberly as Mary Lennox; she was perfect in the role and the whole cast was uniformly excellent. The film was beautifully and atmospherically photographed. An equally good film adaptation of Burnett's *A Little Princess* followed in 1995.

Editor's Note: *The Secret Garden* is one of my very favourite children's books, although I didn't discover it until my very mature years! The illustrations here are by Charles Robinson, who so beautifully catches and endorses the magical mood established by the author. Frances Hodgson Burnett.

* *

DIAMONDS OF PERIL AT ST. JIM'S

by Ray Hopkins

Tom Merry stood transfixed as the small, dark-skinned man with the glittering eyes about whom his cousin had warned him, parted the bushes and stepped into the clearing. "I am Manual Da Silva," he hissed. "That box is mine. Give it to me."

Moments before, Tom's cousin, Herbert Dorrian, pursued by enemies from South Africa, had met Tom in secret in Rylcombe Wood to hand him a small wooden box, contents undivulged, to be kept safely hidden at St. Jim's until Dorrian could shake off his enemies and return in safety to retrieve his property. He had specifically warned Tom to beware of the gang leader Da Silva, a Portuguese, before speeding away through the wood.

Because Dorrian, in a letter, had urged his cousin to tell no one, Jack Blake and his Study 6 chums became immediately suspicious of his motives when they enquired what he was up to and he answered them evasively, his cheeks pinking. Ah hah! They were intrigued and followed Tom at a safe distance as he entered the wood.

A sudden call for help sent them speeding through the wood. Tom was on his back with a man not much bigger, but evidently much more powerful, than the Shell junior, with one hand gripping his neck and in the act of removing a small box from an inside pocket. The man looked up startled as the four Fourth-Formers ran forward but was up and away like the wind before he could be secured. When the sounds of pursuit faded behind him the Portuguese slowed down for a moment gasping, "I have baffled them," between heavy breaths. The next moment he whirled in sudden fright as three other schoolboys he had not previously seen ran silently across the grass from an entirely different direction and bore him to the ground. As the voices of Blake and Merry draw nearer Da Silva offers his new assailants a hundred pounds to let him go. When Jack and Tom come upon the scene, they are too surprised to gasp out any more than, "Figgins and Co." It appeared that Study 6, shadowing Tom Merry had, in their turn, been shadowed by the New House trio. Tom Merry goes through the thief's pockets while Figgins and Co. hold Da Silva flat on the ground. There is no sign of the box which is no larger than 6" x 2". Da Silva gives Tom a mocking smile. He had disposed of it somewhere along the trail as he ran from his pursuers. A quick throw in the gathering dusk was all he must have been able to manage and no sure way of knowing exactly where it would land or be found again.

The juniors tie Da Silva's hands behind his back and prepare to walk him to Rylcombe Police Station. But the thief craves a word in private with Tom Merry first. He tells him that the box contains diamonds worth £20,000. He says that he and Dorrian bought them illicitly from Kafirs working in the Kimberley mines. For this illegal act they could both be sent to prison. Dorrian went back on his word stealing Da Silva's share and fled to England. The box has Da Silva's name etched on the sliding lid. "Dorrian is the thief, not me." Tom Merry refuses to believe the Portuguese's protestations and the Juniors march him through the wood to the village. But the wily foreigner works his hands free of the handkerchief which binds them, knocks the Juniors holding his arms to the ground and is out of sight almost before they realise they have lost him.

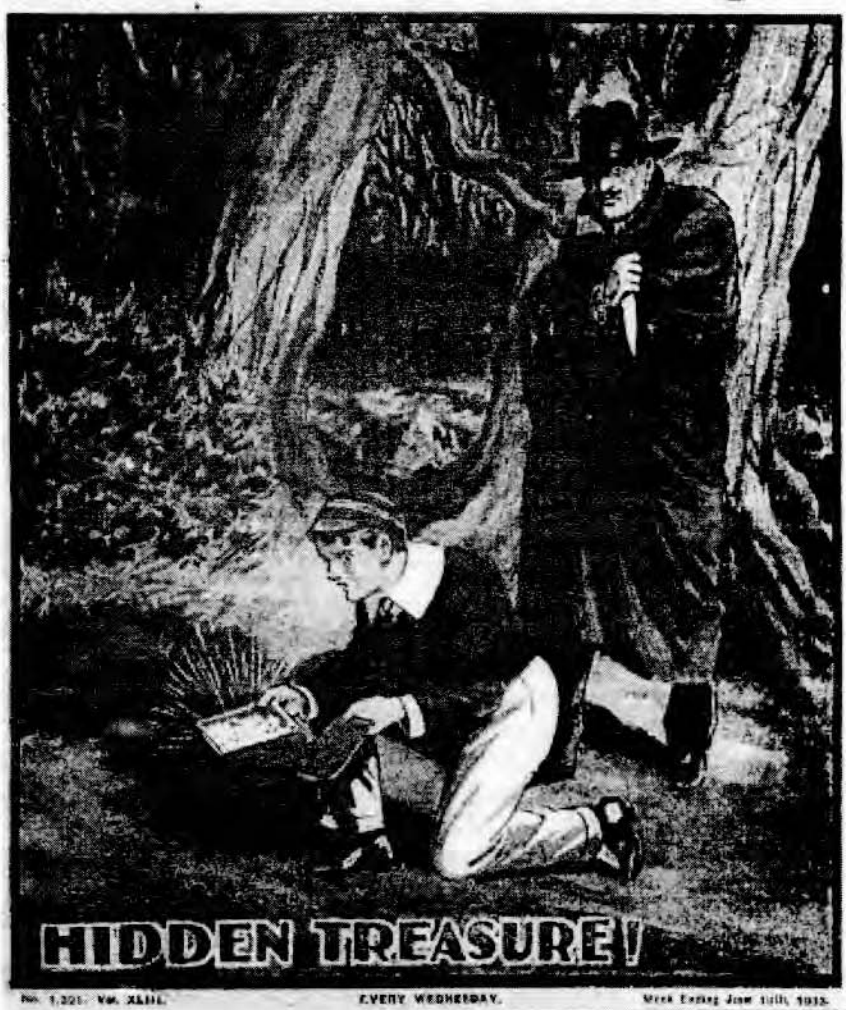
Tom Merry, guessing that the Portuguese will be searching for the small box as soon as dawn breaks, enlists the aid of Manners, Lowther and Harry Noble for a search in Rylcombe

"RED STAR RANGER!" THRILLING NEW WESTERN ADVENTURE YARN STARTS THIS WEEK!

CONTINUOUS VARIETY! YOUR FAVOURITE STARS – TOM MERRY & Co. INSIDE!

The GEM

2d



No. 1,321. Vol. XXIII. EVERY WEDNESDAY. Week Ending June 14th, 1913.

Woods. He is surprised and grateful for the backup of the Study 6 Fourth-Formers who are waiting for them outside the Dormitory. Herries brings his bulldog Towser and Tom is further delighted when they are all joined by the New House trio. But they find evidence of several burned matches and the stump of a candle at the site and know that Da Silva has already been there before them. An hour later they return to school having drawn a blank.

D'Arcy's younger brother, Wally of the Third, observes with some surprise the amazing sight of the rival Co's of the Shell and Fourth, apparently combining with the New House trio, in some mysterious project instead of ragging one another, and wonders what's up. He lets his dog Pongo off the lead, who immediately scuttles out of sight into the wood. Pongo whining faintly from a distance is found by Wally and with difficulty he lifts him out of a hollow oak which he had probably entered while chasing a rabbit. Wally hauls Pongo out by his collar, encounters something square and hard and finds himself holding a small box with a name carved on the lid: Manual Da Silva. He slides the lid off and is amazed at the glitter of many diamonds that meets his astonished gaze.

Wally jumps nervously when a short, dark figure steps out of the bushes and shouts, "Thank heavens you have found my box." He goes on to say that he was attacked by thieves in the wood the previous night and threw it away wildly so they wouldn't get it. He tells Wally his name and instructs him to read the same name on the box lid. He also pulls letters from his pocket as final proof that the name is his. Da Silva snatches the box and runs off leaving Wally open-mouthed.

Wally meets Tom and Jack Blake and their Co's at the school gates and D'Arcy asks his Minor if he's been looking for the box, too. Wally, in all innocence, says yes, and he's handed it back to the owner whose name was inscribed on the lid. Tom cannot blame Wally as there had been no opportunity for him to learn that the box actually belongs to Tom's cousin Dorrian. Wally tells the disconcerted Juniors that Da Silva had cut off in the direction of Wayland. Blake says he's bound to follow the clearly marked path through the wood and won't know of the short cut only familiar to the St. Jim's Juniors. "We can be at the end of the footpath with ten minutes to spare before he arrives."

And so they are all waiting grimly for Da Silva to emerge from the wood. He, with incredible energy, fights like a mad thing when they tackle him. Blake snatches away the thief's knife as he pulls it out. Tom finds the box in an inner pocket and tells the Juniors to let the man go. "You will see me again," he snarls as he runs back into the wood and disappears.

Tom Merry locks the box up in his study and awaits a call from his cousin. After all the exciting happenings recede from his mind he gradually forgets all about the box until -----

The bright, clear moonlight through the window beside his bed projected a pattern of four squares on the dormitory floor. Tom sat up in bed. Something had disturbed him. A loud creak causes him to stare swiftly at the window then back to the silver projection on the floor. The silhouette of the head and shoulders of a man are now masking part of the bright moonlight coming through the two lower panes. What madness was this, Tom thought. The man must be fifty feet from the ground at least, in imminent danger of slipping off the narrow sill after a precarious climb up a slimy rainpipe. Tom rouses Monty Lowther who leaves the dormitory to alert Mr. Railton. Manners says it must be Da Silva. But how could he know, out of all the windows, that this was where he would find Tom Merry?

The intruder is just getting the heavy window to move when he is halted by a voice hailing him from the Quad. "Come down and surrender." Mr. Railton with Kildare, Darrel

and Rushden, Sixth Form stalwarts all, are in the Quad waiting to grab the man when he descends. Da Silva, if it was he, remained still until the window creaks and he realises that he is about to be pulled inside. As the man lifted his head and stared straight through the glass at Tom Merry, the junior recognised it was indeed Da Silva.

The face disappeared as the man, still gripping the rainpipe, left the sill and climbed up to the roof of the schoolhouse. And here the anxious watchers in the Quad, thankful he had not fallen to certain death, lost sight of him. Mr. Railton and the Sixth-Formers, though joined by many of the juniors who all circled the schoolhouse waiting for the burglar to come down, did not see him descend. After thirty minutes Mr. Railton called off the hunt.

The fact that Da Silva appeared to know where he could find Tom Merry after dark startled the juniors into thinking that the only solution is that the Portuguese must have an accomplice inside the school. In which case the searcher will already know where Tom Merry's study is located, which is where Dorrian's box is hidden. Tom decides to lock the box in his trunk in the dormitory.

Study 6, the home of Blake and Co., has the interesting feature, a fact they have kept to themselves, of having a panel which, when opened, becomes the gateway to a series of secret passages, one of which ends in the old priory in Rylcombe Wood, a most handy way of getting back into the school after the gates have been locked. Blake and Co. silently at work at Prep., had learned of the panel when it had opened suddenly to reveal the confused figure of Binks, the boot boy, looking out and apparently the only one to be aware of the entrance to the secret passage in the old priory. Binks had promised he wouldn't use it again and scare them to death. Was this how Da Silva had escaped from the roof, by climbing inside the building, creeping down to Study 6, and emerging safe and sound in Friardale Wood? But how could he have ever contrived to become acquainted with Binks and get this information out of him?

Binks is an avid reader of American "blood and thunder Wild West pulp fiction" and occasionally is to be observed with amusement by onlooking juniors, acting out an incident he had recently read in, for instance, "The Mysterious Marauder of Dead Man's Gulch." D'Arcy, discussing Binks' prospects of making his fortune in the wild West, is startled to hear that the boot boy has had a change of heart and is hoping to make himself rich by "Freebooting (pirating) in the diamond mines of South Africa." Freebooting means stealing, D'Arcy informs Binks with severity but Binks assures him he'll be quite safe. He has a new friend who will show him the ropes and he'll shower all his old friends at St. Jim's with diamonds when he gets back. D'Arcy informs Tom Merry that Binks' new friend can only be Da Silva. But when confronted by them, Binks tells them his new friend is called Don Giego Fernandez and he has promised to help him get a job in the South African Diamond Mines. They had parted at the old priory and Binks told his new friend, showing how smart he was, that that was how he got back into the school after the gates were locked for the night. Other meetings had doubtless drawn from the gullible Binks further information, enabling Da Silva to locate Study 6 and Tom Merry's dormitory.

Without implicating Binks and telling Mr. Railton as little as possible regarding Dorrian's diamonds, Tom Merry reveals the presence of the secret passage and the entrance to the School House through the panel in Study 6 to the Housemaster, and says the thief will almost certainly make one more try for the small box in his possession. As Da Silva emerges from the panel in Study 6 that night he will find a strong group consisting of Mr. Railton, two

stalwarts from the Sixth and himself waiting for him. He won't get away! So speaks the ever-optimistic Tom. Mr. Railton will inform Inspector Skeet of the Rylcombe Police who will be there to make an arrest. The Inspector will be glad of the publicity in the London newspapers.

At half-past midnight the silent watchers in the darkness of Study 6 are jerked to full wakefulness by the clock made by the opening of the secret panel. Da Silva glides to the study door silently. Just as quietly, the Housemaster springs to the panel. He slams it shut and stands, arms outstretched across it. Kildare, Darrel, Tom Merry and Inspector Skeet fall upon the intruder but, like greased lightning, he is through the study door. They've lost him! But a loud altercation from the passage gives them hope. The foursome from Study 6, Tom's Study 10 chums and Harry Noble, are discovered clinging to Da Silva, the knife he had drawn falling unused to the floor. Inspector Skeet gets his welcome bit of publicity in the London newspapers and Portugal is delighted to get their hands on one of their most-wanted criminals.

At last the worry over the physical present of the box in Tom Merry's possession ceases. Herbert Dorrian contacts him and the box changes hands after dark. Dorrian tells Tom he has made arrangements to sell the diamonds and they will pass out of his hands that very night.

THE END

The above exciting events are detailed in *GEM* 82 and 83, September 1909 and were re-printed in *GEM* 1321 and 1322, June 1933

* *

WHEN WILLOW MEETS LEATHER

by Reg Hardinge

One of the highlights of *The Pickwick Papers*, written by Charles Dickens and published in 1836 when he was 24, was the match between the Dingley Dell Cricket Club and All-Muggleton. An illustration depicting a scene from the match is printed on the reverse side of a Bank of England £10 note (no longer current of course, Ed.).

The wicket had been laid, and a couple of marquees pitched for the rest and refreshment of the contending parties and their supporters. The players were dressed in straw hats, flannel jackets and white trousers. "Capital sport - fine exercise - very", exclaimed Mr. Alfred Jingle in his jerky way. "This way - this way - good fun - lots of beers, hogsheads - rounds of beef - bullocks - mustard - cart loads - glorious day - make yourself at home" invited Jingle.

All-Muggleton had first knock, and Messrs Dumkins and Podder, two of the most renowned members of their distinguished club, opened the innings. Mr. Luffey, the highest ornament of Dingley Dell, opened the bowling to the redoubtable Dumkins, whilst Mr. Struggles operated from the opposite end against the accomplished Podder. The umpires were at their stations, and the scorers ready to record the runs.

Doubtful balls were blocked, nasty balls missed, and the loose ones sent flying to all

parts of the field. The fieldsmen were soon hot and tired. Frequent bowling changes were made. Dumkins was eventually out, caught, and Podder stumped. All-Muggleton were dismissed for 154, a total which, despite the valiant efforts of the Dingley Dell Team, could not be overhauled.

And so it was that the All-Muggleton and Dingley Dell sides dined sumptuously at the Blue Lion - and at the expense of Dingley Dell, of course. After much speechifying and conviviality in general, the proceedings ended shortly before midnight with the singing, embracing great feeling and emphasis of:

"We won't go home 'till morning,
We won't go home 'till morning,
We won't go home 'till morning,
'Til daylight doth appear."

Mention must here be made of Mr. Alfred Jingle's monumental innings in the West Indies, which was narrated by him at the conclusion of the match, in his rapid and disjointed style of speech. Jingle was challenged by his friend, Colonel Sir Thomas Blazo, to a single wicket match. Jingle won the toss and elected to bat. His innings commenced at 7 a.m. Six natives fielded while Blazo bowled. But the heat was so intense that they fainted and were taken away. A fresh half-dozen replaced them. They, too, fainted. Blazo was still bowling, supported by two natives. Then he, too, fainted, and was carried off.

A faithful attendant named Quanko Samba was the last man left. The sun was so hot that Jingle's bat was in blisters and the ball was scorched brown. The master batsman had notched 570 runs and was rather exhausted himself. Quanko summoned up his last remaining strength, and bowled Jingle with a real beauty. "Had a bath - went out to dinner" concluded the achiever of his prodigious feat in his unique staccato style. When asked what had happened to Quanko Samba, Jingle replied that the poor chap had never recovered and had expired.

* *

RADIO ENTERTAINMENT IN WORLD WAR 2

by Eric Hammond

It is a well known adage that the first casualty of war is truth. In the case of the second world war, it was, as far as we were concerned, television. Truth came a close second.

My grandchildren look at me in disbelief, when I tell them that I do not remember ever being bored before the days of television or the appearance of cassettes, C.D.s, videos and D.V.D.s They laugh and ask, "How could that be?" They are not convinced when I say, "What you don't have you don't miss!"

It so happens that I had watched television once before the war. I must admit to being disappointed, a tiny black and white screen that appeared almost lost in the, by comparison, massive dark cabinet. The picture of a poor flickering quality, was only broadcast for about two hours in those early days, and on only one channel. Although I only viewed once, I remember vividly seeing a Mickey Mouse cartoon. Although the novelty of seeing moving pictures in the home was enjoyable, it was no great wrench when television was dropped for the duration of hostilities.

In similar circumstances now, the opposite would take place. Any war would be fully covered in detail. We would be able to watch bombing, killing and the inevitable horrors of war as it happens by satellite. War is now a worldwide entertainment. Technology makes this possible, it has advanced a thousandfold, but has the morality of its use? That is open to debate, but this article is in no way walking that path.

With television gone, radio was an even more important medium. The cinema and books were a great source of entertainment and information as were comics, magazines etc. All were important and essential, but have been or will be reviewed by others far more qualified to cover their values in war than I.

I am concentrating on radio, or wireless as it was known then. There was no curtailment of the BBC services, other than very occasional and local disruptions caused by enemy actions. Any such cessations of broadcasts were short lived. The BBC provided the nation throughout the almost six year war with a second to none service of entertainment and information.

This article will concentrate on the former in all its many faceted forms. Before the war, the BBC had a somewhat stuffy image of education and what it thought was proper for the masses. This had to change in the wartime period. The BBC was still an important source of news and information, but relaxation was also now a priority demanded by its listeners. The BBC forgot its previous image and took up the challenge admirably. Music became the main ingredient for each days' programmes. Its universal appeal was recognised. From popular dance and classical music there was a vast choice which could be broadcast each day, and gave a wide variation.

One of the earliest songs that had great popularity was the morale boosting, "We're going to hang out the washing on the Siegfried Line". A great favourite in the early weeks of the war. Ironically, our troops never succeeded in doing any such thing. On its return to mainland Europe in 1944/45 our army was directed north of the Line, which was subsequently penetrated by American forces a few months before the war's end. With no idea of the future, the song was sung with gusto and optimism by the boys of the British Expedition-

ary Force in 1939. As the war progressed, we sang "Run, Rabbit, Run", probably an unwarranted allusion to Germany. "White Cliffs of Dover" was another very popular and wishful-thinking song. In the Western Desert we "captured" Rommel's Afrika Korps favourite song, "Lili Marleen". We then had the unique situation where two opposing armies were singing the same song. When the Russians were forced to join us, we were pleased to hear, "My Lovely Russian Rose". When the Americans became our Allies in late 1941 we were all "In the Mood". As the war spread so did its music. Without doubt it became the international and universal morale booster. Unlike our army, the German fighting man marched and sang triumphant and martial songs, whilst our men's songs were of a much more deprecating nature. Perhaps a potent illustration of the outlook of the opposing armies.

With the Battle of Britain, after the fall of France, followed by the long and depressing Blitz, more and more light hearted entertainment was demanded. No matter how bleak the outlook, the need for cheerfulness was relayed every day by the National and Light programmes of the BBC. They met the need of the hour. The people craved music above else. The indomitable Dame Myra Hess played Mozart piano sonatas in the National Gallery, sometimes to a background noise of falling bombs. Many of these lunch-time concerts were broadcast.

Impromptu concerts were also arranged in village halls, churches and even in the open air. The appetite for being entertained was insatiable. Also the forces E.N.S.A. shows were put on air to the nation, that seemed somehow to bring our boys and girls and their families at home that much closer. E.N.S.A. was founded by well known theatre director, Basil Dean. Officially entitled Entertainment National Service Association, the initials were quickly changed by our troops into "Every Night Something Awful". A typical expected reaction. However, it was often the only source of entertainment for many of our units posted in some out of the way corner of the world. Over 2.6 million shows were put on for our serving men and women over the six-year war period. With shows large and small, it was an enviable record.

It would be too space-consuming to try and mention every popular entertainment broadcast

in the war. It would take a very large volume or three to do the subject justice. So, inevitably the choice, for the above reason, has to be mine. I must point out that at that time I was a young teenager. This should explain some of my choices.

Although music was the cornerstone of most entertainment we were given many memorable shows featuring the cream of British entertainers. The first popular radio show of the war was "Bank Wagon", featuring the later very well known comedy duo, Arthur Askey and Richard "Stinker" Murdoch. This series began before the war, the first series starting on January 5th 1938. This was arguably the very first situation comedy series using fine radio techniques. Arthur and Stinker were supposed to live in the top floor flat at Broadcasting House, together with a menagerie of pets, Lewis the goat, and Basil and Lucy, the pigeons. Mrs. Bagwash and daughter, Nausea, looked after the boys. Perhaps a slow starter, the show evolved into a very celebrated presentation with numerous and obligatory catch phrases. The third and last series began on October 7th 1939 and concluded on December 2nd 1939. In spite of its success it never returned to radio, but continued as a stage show in 1940. It was sadly missed.

I suppose the first completely new show of the war was "Garrison Theatre". First heard on November 10th 1939 it was devised by Charles Shadwell, conductor of the BBC Variety Orchestra, and was an instant success. It starred the then almost unknown Jack Warner, brother to the already famous Elsie and Doris Waters, who created the lovely characters of "Gert and Daisy". Warner played a cheeky Cockney private in the army, who on a weekly basis crossed verbal swords with Shadwell and Joan Winters in her role of an upper class usherette. If my memory serves me correctly, Joan Winters was the daughter of Charles Shadwell. This programme shot Warner to instant stardom. This did not diminish until his death, he having added the stage, cinema and television performances to his talents. He also introduced many famous catchphrases while in "Garrison Theatre". His "Mind by Bike" and "My little Gel" were on everyone's lips, and Jack reading a weekly letter from soldier brother, Sid, where every swearword was read as "blue pencil", caused great hilarity. For many months the nation's expletive, was "blue pencil" such was the power of radio. It even changed our way of swearing.

Another early war-time show was "Ack Ack Beer Beer" the Morse Code words for Anti-aircraft and Balloon Command. First edition was broadcast on July 1st 1940. It specifi-

cally targeted the men and women involved in the air defence of the country, and was a magazine type programme with music, quizzes, records, serials and sketches. It ended in 1944 when the two command existence was no longer needed.

Who can ever forget, if they were alive, the ubiquitous "Workers Playtime", blatantly introduced by the then Minister of Labour, Ernest Bevin, as a morale-booster for the factory workers. First broadcast on Saturday 24th May 1941, it then became a thrice weekly show and ran for twenty-three years. It used a multitude of well known stars and its very longevity suggests it achieves its aim.

In a similar vein "Music While you Work" was aimed at the same audience. Far more frequently broadcast with literally dozens of different bands it played non-stop music of the sing-along variety for its half hour spot. I am sure it eased the monotony of many tedious hours.

VERA LYNN in the 1940s

"Music Hall" compèred by Norman Woolland during the war, was well established at the start of hostilities. In fact its run started in 1932. This Saturday evening variety show was a great favourite. To name all the participants taking part would take far too much space; but I cannot resist a few of the greats I loved. Rob Wilton with his "The Day War Broke Out", Sandy Powell, "Can you hear me mother", "Murgatroyd and Winterbottam", aka Tommy Handley and Ronald Frankau, a fast talking double act. Nosmo King, impersonator and Stainless Stephen, stand-up comic, and numerous others.

A very similar show was "The Happidrome" also a very popular and long running programme. It differed in that between the acts the fictional theatre staff entertained with cross talk and banter. The audience loved it. The manager (Harry Korris) and stage-manager Ramsbottom (Cecil Frederick) tried to keep the gormless call boy Enoch (Robbie Vincent) in some sort of order. Another great favourite, it extended its run beyond the end of the war.

Vera Lynn, now Dame Vera, is happily still very much with us. She had established herself as a singer prior to the war, with band leaders Joe Loss and Ambrose. At the beginning of the war *The Daily Express* held a poll for the British Expeditionary Force, then in France, to choose their favourite singer. They chose Vera, and the *Daily Express* coined the title the "Forces Sweetheart". "Sincerely Yours" her request programme, was first aired 9th November 1941, and heard by both home listeners and our forces overseas. She brought a

warmth and sincerity with her personal approach that was much appreciated by all. She really meant what she said, when she said she cared. On many occasions she did visit the forces families and friends. She was honestly able to say on air, "Your wife has just had a baby boy, I took her some flowers on your behalf, when I went to see her on Wednesday and they are both doing fine."

One can imagine what such a message meant to the father, probably sitting in the desert or perhaps a jungle a thousand miles or more away. Her words and songs were a precious link between the men and their loved ones.

Another request programme that proved very popular and stood the test of time, was "Desert Island Discs". This was devised and presented by Roy Plomley, until his death a few years back. It was first broadcast on January 1942. A simple format that I am sure most of you know. Each guest was asked to choose eight records and three books that they would like to have with them if they were ever marooned on a desert island. There is no record that such a fate ever befell any of the guests. This was a simple theme that proved more successful than Plomley could ever have dreamed possible. It has entertained hundreds of guests from all walks of life and spheres of entertainment, including Royalty. It has provided us with unknown facts about so many people, and a wealth of great and beautiful music. It still continues to be with us.

The show that was originally called Mediterranean-Merry-go-Round, then Middle East Merry-go-Round, finally became simply Merry-go-Round. This was written and performed by members of the three services. Each service devised its own programme. The Army had "Stand Easy" with Charlie Chester ably assisted by, amongst others, Arthur Haynes and Ken Morris. For the boys in a pale blue we had "Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh" with incomparable "Stinker" Murdoch, Kenneth Horne, Sam Costa and Maurice Denham, all supplying their own brand of madness.

Last but by no means least the Senior Service gave us "Waterlogged Spa" with the humour supplied by Eric Barker and his wife, Pearl Hackney, with help from John Pertwee. As mentioned earlier, each emerged in its own right from its progenitor "Merry-go-Round. Each continued well into the peace.

Two shows that started late in the war and created a following, though not to my taste, were "Rocky Mountain Rhythm" and "The Will Hay Show". The first, a speudo-Western cowboy musical show, starred Canadian Big Bill Campbell with a supporting company of "Cowboys and Indians". I very much doubt whether the "Cowboys" had ever seen the inside of a saloon or the "Indians" the inside of a tepee. At least it served up some escapism from the strain of war. With his Hill Billy Band he had built up a following on Radio Luxemberg before the war.

Will Hay starred in a series of programmes under the sub-title "The Diary of a School Master" from August 18th 1944 to the end of the war, which quickly acquired a following. His reputation had already been made with his hilarious characterisation of a bumbling and seedy headmaster on the big screen. There followed a series of films depicting virtually the same role only in the guise of a station master, policeman, fire-chief, convict and several others where he was ably assisted by the cherubic Graham Moffatt and "the silly old fool", doddery Moore Marriott. Although not in the best of health, Will Hay continued his already distinguished career on radio, until forced to retire. Sadly he died in 1949.

I will end my resumé of wartime light entertainment with the never to be forgotten show

'MRS MOPP' (Dorothy Summers) with Tommy Handley

ITMA ("It's that man again") that starred the incomparable Tommy Handley. This was arguably the most popular and innovative comedy series ever written. A truly ground-breaking format that spawned many followers. Produced by Francis Worsley and written by Ted Kavanagh, a weekly half an hour that sparkled throughout the war and never lost its loyal listeners. It introduced them to a cast of immortal characters. Jack Train played Funf, the spy, and Colonel Chinstrap, the boozer, as well as Fusspot Lefty the gangster and Jollop. Maurice Denham was Mrs. Lola Tickle and contributed numerous sound effects. Sam Costa supplied songs and played Lemuel, the office boy. Clarence Wright played the Snappy Salesman and others. Horace Percival was Cecil to Jack Train's Claude, plus the lachrymose deep sea diver, who entreated us not to forget him. Dino Galvani, played Signor Soso. Last but not least there was the unforgettable Mrs. Mopp, "Can I do you now, Sir"? played by Dorothy Summers. Tommy Handley was the King-pin who was the *'raison d'être'* for every other character. His quick talking patter provided the foundation upon which the rest of the cast could perform. He was truly one of the all-time greats of comedy.

The show continued after the war and created many more unforgettable characters. But they are outside the parameters I have set. ITMA was a programme that must have coined more well known catch phrases than any other, before or after. It was a sad blow to the whole country when Tommy Handley passed away on January 3rd 1949. He was a true original, mourned by his fellow comedians and all who worked with him, and millions of his loyal fans.

Now to review just a few of the highly entertaining programmes but not perhaps of the

light variety. Who will ever forget the magazine programme "Monday Night at Eight", which was so popular it was to become a national institution. Although it changed and evolved during its long wartime run its millions of listeners remained ever loyal. It had a weekly short drama called "Inspector Hornleigh Investigates" where the listener is asked to spot the mistake the criminal makes when questioned by the Inspector, the answer being divulged the following week. "Puzzle Corner" was conducted by Dickie Murdoch or Ronnie Walden, and during this quiz a deliberate mistake was made. Again the answer was given later. "Meet Dr. Morelle" by Ernest Dudley was featured. There were many short plays as well during its run. Cyril Fletcher, Jack Buchanan, Frances Day, Syd Walker, Charles Shadwell, Henry Oscar, Basil Radford and Naughton Wayne were just a few of the stars who took part in this outstanding series.

"The Armchair Detective", a great favourite of mine, was a drama series devised and presented by well known writer and critic, Ernest Dudley. Each week, late Friday evening, if my memory serves me correctly, he reviewed current detective and mystery fiction, with a dramatized excerpt from each book reviewed. It lasted many years after its première in December 1942.

Another unmissable weekly half hour was "Appointment with Fear". Written by John Dickson-Carr, each play was narrated by Valentine Dyall of the mellifluous if sinister voice. He later became the ominous "Man in Black". "Appointment with Fear" started in September 1943 and ran for the duration of the war and beyond. Many well known actors and actresses figure in the plays.

Who could possibly forget the marvellous "Saturday Night Theatre". This series of late night plays was first aired on April 3rd 1943 - the first featured a Lord Peter Wimsey story, created by Dorothy L. Sayers. The series lasted for the entire war. I can personally vouch for excellent quality of these plays. This was an area of entertainment where the BBC reigned supreme.

Before leaving the BBC dramatic fare, I cannot possibly leave out one of its greatest successes. The unforgettable character that held us in thrall for over thirty years. The amazing and ever popular amateur detective, Paul Temple, created by Francis Durbridge. He and his wife, Steve, stalked the airwaves before, during and after the war. During its long run, Paul Temple was played by at least six different actors. One of the wartime series featured Carl Bernhard as our hero. Who can forget the rousing music of Rimsky-Korsokov's "Scheherzade", later changed to "Coronation Scot", as the signature tunes to this programme.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the many news-readers who did an excellent job, whether the news was good or bad. They were a familiar part of our lives and became almost like friends we welcomed in. They were Alvar Liddell, Bruce Belfrage; John Snagge, Frederick Allen, Frank Phillips, Stuart Hibberd and Wilfred Pickles. Nor must I forget the War Correspondents who reported the action at no small risk to themselves. Richard Dimbleby, Chester Wilmott, Stanley Maxted, who dropped in with our parachutists at Arnhem, and Howard Marshall. All served us well.

It would be churlish of me not to mention another source of merriment that caused great laughter even in our darkest days. Although heard on our BBC air waves it emanated from deepest Germany. I am referring to the infamous Lord Haw Haw, who at his most serious was often at his funniest. His rather upper crust voice interrupting our news broadcast, had the opposite effect from the one intended. The Germans seemed not to understand the

British psyche. Lord Haw Haw, aka William Joyce, was arrested after the war and, after a controversial trial, found guilty. On January 3rd 1946 he was hanged at Wandsworth Prison. Since then, I am sure, many comedians with a lesser record of comic success have managed to escape the supreme penalty!

The first reaction for many who have read this article and who remember the times and programmes discussed, will be one of annoyance. Not just for my opinions but for the many omissions. If the latter, I plead guilty. I know that this is so. My only excuse is that my choice has been coloured by my own likes and dislikes as I pointed out earlier. Of necessity I have had to be subjective in my choice and realise that it is most unlikely to have pleased all. So I hope you will excuse and forgive, for my omitting what was a great favourite of yours.

(Editor's note: This article will awaken warm memories for many of us. I was so pleased that Eric Hammond mentions the song "My Lovely Russian Rose", which I thought was one of the most touching of the wartime songs. It quickly faded from our scene when the war ended, and the Cold War period began, but it was a lovely number.

As C.D. readers know, my very first job, in 1945, was with the BBC's sound department (still no TV then) and I worked on WORKERS PLAYTIME and, later, VARIETY BANDBOX. We all must have *floods* of memories of different programmes; of music, humour and drama, that sustained us all during those difficult years. How wonderful it would be if *now* - in these days of affluence and advanced technology - the BBC would broadcast, even for just a few hours a week, programmes which would give us melody, warmth, and *real* (un-filthy) humour, similar to those of the wartime period!

Readers may be interested to know that Ernest Dudley, who is mentioned in this article, is now a lively nonagenarian, and a subscriber to the *Collectors' Digest.)*

* *

A POOR LITTLE PAPER

By Derek Ford

What a poor little penny weekly was the *Boys' and Girls' Companion for Leisure Hours* launched on Saturday April 4, 1857, of which I have the only volume of 26 numbers – with 170 engravings – which sold in marble boards for 3s 6d. It was edited by John and Mary Bennett, and published by Houlston and Wright, Paternoster Row, London, John and Mary contributing the serials including "The Philosophic Mouse".

In the twelve pages were to be found regular features on domestic pets and wild animals. Madame Eugenie's "The Girl's Work-Table" instructed on an "Urn stand to be worked in Penelope Canvas", for example. Solutions to "The Happy Hour" of rebuses, puzzles and riddles were in the following issue and you were invited to send in your answers every week for prizes at the end of the year, graded first and second class.

Reader S.A. Fox was warned: Let us whisper in your ear – you omitted to pay the postage of your letter, and it cost us twopence; Peter: Ten words in your short note wrongly

spelt: do not give us the opportunity to make this remark again; Napoleon; We are glad to welcome you amongst the competitors for our prizes; and Rebus 88, for a celebrated lofty mountain of "America" read "Armenia".

Scary headlines ran: 'An elegy on the death of a mad dog'; 'The crowned skeleton'; 'A cockroach in trouble'; 'A flea under the microscope'; 'Rats and their love of water' and 'Fly philosophy'. And there is a weird tale, "Dissection of a Doll", telling of a mischievous boy pulling to pieces a doll until the body leaked cover-seed, and only the head remained. A blue-bottle fly was then caught and put into the head and stopped up with grass. Then the head was buried.

But it was interesting to learn that the greater part of boys' marbles are made of a hard stone found near Coburg in Saxony. "We are not able to answer your query why the lighted lanthorns attached to the kites invented by Sir Isaac Newton should neither blow out nor burn the kites. It was no double an easy matter for this great genius to devise a preventative for either occurrence," in reply to an article on flying a kite. And at Bath Abbey, on the tenth bell, is:

"All you of Bath that hear me round,
Thank Lady Hopton's hundred pound."

Articles, dare I say, pinched from the numerous periodicals of the day, were acknowledged from Hogg's Instructor, The **Field**, **The Builder**, Fraser's Magazine, Carlisle Patriot, Gloucestershire Chronicle, Family Friend, Drummond's Letters, Weekly Visitor, and Blackwood's Magazine. And I am sure Hans Andersen would have been surprised to see his short story "The Angel and the Child" in the fourth issue.

In the May issue are particulars of The New Epingle Puzzle, from the inventor, H. Stone, 10, Thornhill Place, W., Pentonville, price 1s 6d per box, which contained a quantity of white peas and a considerable number of short wires, 1¼" in length, pointed at both ends. The peas were to be soaked sixteen hours in cold water, and were then ready for use. A triangle could be formed by taking three of the wires and inserting the ends into the peas, add two more wires and the letter A was formed. From this simple form one could advance to forming a pyramid, table and chair, cube and a basket (all illustrated), a birdcage – and even a model of the Crystal Palace front was illustrated. But Meccano it was not.

At number 26, dated September 26, 1857, the weekly became a monthly of 32 pages for two-pence, with a new publisher, Henry Lea, 22, Warwick Lane, London. A new serial "Don't Be Too Positive; or, Frank Shipley and his ducks" was by Richard Chandler, and "Aunt Mary" still contributed. The Christmas number contained numerous riddles by readers (the answers in the January *Companion*). A fair sample were: Why was Pharaoh's daughter like a London milkwoman? Because she takes a little profit (prophet) out of the water; Why is the letter P like a Roman emperor? Because it is near O (Nero); Why may we consider the Queen the poorest lady in England? Because she cannot give her husband half-a-crown. But they failed to print the answers to why are clairvoyants like certain solders?

* *

Statistics for Schoolboys!

By HARRY MANNERS

With the aid of ice and stimulants, Manners has worked out some startling statistics of St. Jim's. If you don't believe them, we shall not be surprised!

I FIND figures fearfully fascinating. To my mind, numerical intelligence is intensely interesting and intriguing.

What I mean to say is, I get a real kick out of contemplating, for instance, the fact that St. Jim's fellows write each year in impots a grand total of 1,000,000 lines.

I worked this out myself. Not content to leave it at that, I tied a block of ice round my head and worked out what it measured. The answer came to about 100 miles.

Think of it, lads! The lines written each year by the long-suffering inmates of our home for the sons of gentlemen, placed end to end, would stretch from St. Jim's to London and all the way back to St. Jim's again! Get a load of that solemn and awe-inspiring thought!

This little calculation of mine made me ambitious. I worked out other St. Jim's phenomena in statistical terms. I can now put before an eager world facts and figures that throw a lurid light on St. Jim's and its inhabitants.

To begin with, I have ascertained that the quantity of ginger-beer consumed in Dame Taggles' tuckshop during the summer months would fill a swimming-pool measuring 100 feet by 25 feet and having depths varying from 2 feet 6 inches in the shallow end to 10 feet in the deep end.

Again, if all the jam-tarts eaten at St. Jim's each year were used as a floor covering, they would cover an area sufficiently large to provide courts that would enable the entire school simultaneously to play games of "squash." (Loud laughter—I hope!)

If Baggy Trimble were presented with a penny every time he told the truth, he would probably, by trying hard, earn himself in the course of a year the sum of twopence.

If Knox were presented with a penny every time he appeared in public wearing a happy smile on his face, he would receive an average of one halfpenny a month.

Here are some more startling facts I have unearthed :

The quantity of ink used by the fags in decorating their fingers and faces is sufficient to give the entire woodwork of the school a brand new coat of blue-black once a year.

Herries' bulldog's playful little habit of fixing his fangs into fellows' bags keeps one Rylcombe tailor and two assistants in affluence for three months out of every twelve.

Supposing Grundy's improvement at football to be maintained at its present rate, he will become a really efficient player by the time he is 156 years old.

If Dr. Holmes fined himself a shilling every time he said " Bless my soul ! " he would be bankrupt within five years.

If wielding a cane for half an hour made a man one per cent stronger, Mr. Ratcliff would take half a term to become the strongest man on earth.

Assuming that the quantity of tact and judgment possessed by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy is measured by the size of his monocle, he would have to wear a monocle with a diameter of 6 feet before he possessed the average amount of commonsense.

If House differences were decided on the size of fellows' feet, New House would always be Cock House.

Considerations of space prevent me from going further into these illuminating statistical sidelights on St. Jim's. Before I conclude, however, I should like to give you the results of a painstaking inquiry I have made to find out just what the average St. Jim's fellow is like.

THE AVERAGE ST. JIM'S CHAP

Is 5 feet 3 inches high.

Weighs 8 stone 6 pounds.

Has fair, brown-black, ginger hair and blue-grey-brown-green eyes.

Belongs to the Fourth-and-a-half Form.

Plays 17⅝ games of cricket and 26⅞ games of footer each season.

Wears out 3⅜ suits a year.

Receives annually 18½ whacks with the cane.

Says " Yaroooooh ! " $78\frac{9}{10}$ times and " Ow ! By dose ! " 23¾ times a day.

If wielding a cane for half an hour made a man one per cent stronger, Mr. Ratcliff would take half a term to become the strongest man on earth !

Smokes 3⅜ cigarettes and eats 243½ jam-tarts every year.

Slides down the banisters 1⅜ times a week.

If you correspond exactly with this exact scientific description, then, dear reader, you can fairly claim that you are the exact counterpart of the average St. Jim's man. That you'll feel no end bucked about it goes without saying.

I think that will be all for now !

* *

GOODBYE MR CHIPS-THE 1939 FILM VERSION

by Laurence Price

This classic 1939 film adaptation is perhaps equally, if not more, loved than the original story. As the 1969 musical version and the 2002 television adaptation only too clearly demonstrated, no remake can match the original. It gave its star, Robert Donat, an Academy Award for Best Actor and made a star of the lovely Greer Garson, herself to be a future Academy Award winner for Best Actress in *Mrs Miniver*, for which film James Hilton contributed to the script.

Various changes were made to Hilton's book, but, unlike the later adaptations, they are in the main, very successful. One of the bigger changes, although it seems to fit quite seamlessly into the film, is that Chips meets Katherine (Ellis) while he is holidaying in the Tyrol with Staefel, rather than the more prosaic Lake District, and, after a brief separation, they fall in love in Vienna. It certainly didn't seem to worry Hilton, who wrote to Donat from Hollywood after seeing the film; 'I feel I must write to congratulate you on a really wonderful performance... Everybody here is raving about it, and it is indeed a peculiar delight to an author to see a performance which, in so many ways, brings to actuality his own private and personal dream.'

By 1939 Robert Donat was already established as a quality actor both of stage and screen. He had already made acclaimed screen performances in Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps* in 1935 and a 1938 adaptation of A.J. Cronin's *The Citadel*, for which he had been nominated for an Academy Award as Best Actor. In between, he had starred in the disappointing and lacklustre 1937 film version of Hilton's *Knight Without Armour which* had been hijacked by his co-star, Marlene Dietrich.

Initially the part of Chips had been planned for Charles Laughton, which seems hard to comprehend now, but Donat read the script in September 1938, and, despite fears by some that such a virile leading man could destroy his career by playing the part of an old schoolmaster, he accepted the part with enthusiasm. After the difficulties of making such films as *Knight Without Armour* he enthused *'Oh, the relief of starting with a script finished down to the last comma; and of knowing that if a scene isn't finished by six-thirty you can work on it for another two days without anyone worrying...Chips is...full of subtle, rather indefinite light and shade, and to trace his life and varying emotions through a period of sixty crowded years wants a great deal of careful thought and preparation.'*

He wrote to James Hilton to discover his source for Chips. Hilton replied 'I don't think I can satisfy you since Chips was not ...any single actual person, but a combination of several schoolteachers whom I knew very well - including, incidentally, my own father...The original of Brookfield School is the Leys School, Cambridge, and if you ever feel like visiting it, in order to gain the atmosphere, please visit W. H. Balgarnie, who lives across the road from the School and in himself is a little bit of Chips...' Donat mounted the letter in his dressing-room.

Donat, however, had a model for his Mr Chips in the person of the famous architect, C. F. A. Voysey, who was the uncle of his then wife, Ella. He carefully watched the movement, the gestures and the hands of the elderly gentleman. He had this to say about developing the role. *'I never prepare my lines carefully for old Mr Chipping, or try out gestures before a mirror. I just sit and think how I shall feel when I am very old - the rest comes automatically...An actor should not be content to interpret a situation as he thinks it would affect others. His*

business is to feel the situation himself, feel what is really happening to him and act accordingly - not with his brain alone, but with his emotions. Sympathetic sensibility is the actor's most important qualification.' It was Hitchcock himself who had taught Donat to think about his acting in this way during the making of *The 39 Steps.*

The lesson certainly paid off as he gained the praise and respect of his peers when they saw his performance as Chips. Spencer Tracy cabled him; 'May I say without reservation that your Mr Chips is the finest performance I have ever seen on the screen. I should like one day to give one remotely approaching it. All the awards of former years must now be melted and one moulded for you. In deepest respect...' James Stewart told a reporter, 'Every screen actor in the world should go and study Robert Donat as Mr Chips. There is something so magnificent in this character study and performance that it seems almost a miracle that it could happen...' Praise was lavished on him, too, by James Cagney and Paul Muni. Donat was only thirty-three years old when he created this memorable role, amongst the best loved in cinema history.

All this praise was confirmed when, on the night of 29 February 1940 Donat won the Oscar for Best Actor. He had beaten the expected winner, Clark Gable, for his performance as Rhett Butler in *Gone With The Wind.* Vivien Leigh, who received the Best Actress Award for her Scarlett O'Hara, cabled congratulations from herself and Laurence Olivier. Spencer Tracy again cabled Donat: 'Congratulations. The enthusiasm with which the announcement was received would have made you feel good I am sure and it is shared by the entire industry. Unquestionably yours was the most popular award that has ever been given.' Similar praise came from other quarters.

Some more words from Donat himself. *'I feel Chips was a sort of universal father - nearer and freed from the barriers that so often restrict us from getting close to our own fathers and teachers. That is the only way I can account for the public's reaction to my performance in the film.'*

Seriously ill, with pneumonia and a back injury, thirty-year old Greer Garson was lodging at Dr Brighton's Tavern in Brighton in the Christmas of 1934. Amongst the newspapers and magazines her mother provided her with to read was a copy of British Weekly which contained a special holiday supplement. It contained a touching short story by an up-and -coming author, James Hilton. The title was *Goodbye, Mr Chips.*

Over the next few years Greer became the toast of the London stage, and while performing in *Old Music* at the St. James Theatre in August 1937 she was seen by Louis B. Mayer. A short time afterwards, she was under contract to MGM but spent a frustrating year in America, with no suitable parts offered to her. The cast was being gathered for the MGM production of *Goodbye, Mr Chips*. Myrna Loy was in the offing for the part of Mrs Chips. In the meantime, Greer was again suffering from back pain and she was even considering an operation that would lay her up for a lengthy period. Myrna Loy had departed for Twentieth Century Fox and Greer was approached and told the role of Mrs Chips was now available. Director Sam Wood, author James Hilton and producer Victor Saville all considered her suited for the part.

But initially Garson did not want the role; she thought the part was too small, and after a frustrating year in Hollywood she didn't want to go back to England where the film was to be made. Venting her frustration on a friend called Miss Burns she shouted, 'How can I do anything with that sparrow of a woman? The role is a first act curtain. Have you read it?' 'Yes,

I have.' replied Miss Burns. Greer said, 'Do you understand?' Miss Burns replied, 'No, because if you do that Christmas scene the way I know you can and will, they will never forget you.' Garson relented and took the role. Her screen tests made a breathtaking impact on both Saville and Hilton. Sam Wood affirmed, 'It's alright, I think we have our Mrs Chips.'

Greer was interviewed by Hollywood gossip columnist, Hedda Hopper, at about this time. During the interview Greer broke down and asked that what she said be forgotten. Hopper honoured this for years but in 1950 related that back in 1938, 'She was heartsick. Greer added herself up that night as a failure in Hollywood, going back to face the homefolks and play what she thought then was a secondary, inconspicuous role in a mediocre picture.'

And although she would remain nervous and unsure of herself throughout the making of the picture, things did get better when she arrived back in England. Once at the MGM Denham facilities she was given a tour of the twenty-three sets that were emerging on the soundstages for *Goodbye, Mr Chips.* Repton School in Derbyshire was used for location filming. Filming began officially on 28 November, 1938.

The scene when she is introduced by Chips to his fellow masters at Brookfield was scheduled for 20 December. There was more than a little irony in the lines she had to say – "It's so nice to meet you all - and just a little terrifying."

She received tremendous support from the experienced Donat as she found herself completely disorientated on the set; she was distracted and confused by the process of moviemaking. "'He'd say 'Look here, my lovely. The camera's over there,'" she recalled. "Bob was the dearest man. Although I knew him only while were working together, I have the happiest memories of a very special human being with an exceptional talent."

Paul Henreid, later to become famous as Ingrid Bergman's idealistic husband in *Casablanca*, played the part of Max Staefel. He recalled "Greer was extremely nervous about her ability and came to Bob Donat and me in tears twice a week. 'I'm just not getting it. What shall I do? Please, Paul, Bob - help me out.' And we did, and Sam Wood—helped her too."

Despite all this help and encouragement, Garson remained constantly wrong-footed about her role, at times seeming petulant, self-pitying and ungrateful. She even wrote a letter to Hilton, asking "And what do you intend to do, sir, to deliver me from this sweet wraith?"

Others, however, clearly felt very differently about her role and performance as the 'sweet wraith'. *Variety* proclaimed, "No more laudable film has come out of England, in Greer Garson the picture introduces an attractive young English actress of outstanding talent and charm....She plays her romantic assignment as the wife of Mr Chips—with rare understanding and tenderness. The reticent love scenes are masterpieces of emotional power."

The New York critic Alexander Woolcott proclaimed, "In a year in which the great nations of the world seem to be choosing partners for a dance of death this cavalcade of English youth becomes suddenly an almost unbearable reminder of something which in a mad and greedy world may be allowed to perish from the Earth. I am only here to testify that in my own experience, the most moving of all motion pictures is the one called *Goodbye, Mr Chips.*" And the *New York Herald- Tribune* remarked, "Greer Garson, as the woman who marries Mr Chips in spite of himself, conspires with him to give a performance of enormous sincerity which makes her relatively brief appearance in the film electric and haunting."

And for what Greer Garson had considered a 'secondary, inconspicuous role in a mediocre picture' playing the part of 'that sparrow of a woman' she was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress. This was, however, the year of *Gone With The Wind* and

James Hilton

GOOD-BYE, MR. CHIPS

2/- NET

she was beaten to the post by Vivien Leigh as Scarlett O'Hara and was in competition with other unsuccessful nominees including such Hollywood luminaries as Bette Davis in *Dark Victory* and Greta Garbo in *Ninochtka.*

Donat, as previously mentioned, won an Oscar for his portrayal of Mr Chips. Lillian Burns thought this was, in part, due to Greer. "She inspired him to be more human, more loveable, than he had ever been on screen before - just as Kathie influenced Chips."

Despite Garson's own reservations about the role it opened the doors of MGM, and Hollywood, to her. By 1942 she would be MGM's and Hollywood's, leading lady. And it can be said Hilton did accede to her request to deliver her from the 'sweet wraith' of Mrs Chipping. He played a large part in two of her later and greatest successes, as part of the screen writing team for *Mrs Miniver* and as the author of *Random Harvest.*

On 20 December 1946 Time magazine was issued with a portrait of her on the cover. Inside, an article began: "In an expert piece of sentiment called *Goodbye, Mr Chips*, a young English actress, who looked rather like a goddess sculptured in butterscotch, made her brief screen debut, and without fair warning even to herself, stole the film. Though nobody clearly realised it at the time, she also started something new in screen history. The something new was to make *Mrs Miniver* and *Random Harvest* two of the five greatest screen hits ever manufactured..."

And of Hilton himself? There is a Hollywood anecdote that he quietly turned up for every performance of *Goodbye, Mr Chips*, afternoons and evenings, when it was showing at the Roxy on Sunset Boulevard, so delighted was he with the faithful treatment given it. He would watch it endlessly, laughing and weeping at the highs and lows of old Chips's life.

* *

STORM AND STRESS

by Ted Baldock

> And the storm that I had raised came faster
> and louder; it blew and it rained, thundered,
> listened, and hailed; interjections, verbs, pronouns,
> till language quite failed...
>
> W.A. Butler. *Nothing to Wear*

"Ah, Twigg, any dear fellow, well met, how very opportune Sir, have you by any chance seen Quelch?"

Mr Prout's boom was full and fruity and - it may be said - condescending to a degree as he addressed Mr Twigg, master of the second form at Greyfriars school.

Mr Twigg, by nature an inoffensive little gentleman who carried a permanent expression of worry upon his features, was proceeding along masters passage when his path was effectively blocked by the substantial form of the fifth form master. The seemingly innocent enquiry placed Mr Twigg in something of a quandary. Less than three minutes previously he had seen and spoken to Henry Samuel Quelch with whom he had collided as the latter was hurrying round the corner in the direction of the door into the quadrangle. The gist of his remarks,

hastily given to Mr Twigg, were that on no account was he to inform Prout, should he enquire, that he had seen him.

Quelch was avoiding Prout. He was attempting to escape from his ponderous colleague. This was no unusual circumstance. Many people, both staff and boys - even the venerable Dr. Locke, the Headmaster, had been known to take evasive action when Mr Prout loomed upon the horizon.

But Mr. Quelch, with his instincts as a gentleman strong upon him, was feeling not a little guilty, for Mr Prout was a good fellow in many ways and he hesitated to inform him point blank that at that moment he had no desire for his company. He was shifting his quandary - as it were – onto the narrow shoulders of little Mr. Twigg, probably quite unconscious that it fell a trifle short of his customary conduct towards his colleague. Prout had the unfortunate propensity of causing fellows and masters to take untoward steps upon occasion - such as vanishing round nearby corners to avoid his voluble and 'bull dozing' attitudes.

Mr Quelch had a pressing engagement in Friardale village that afternoon. He was to join battle with the Vicar in their weekly game of chess at the vicarage. It was a social engagement - one of a very few - which the Remove master would not have willingly forgone. It was of long standing, and although chess might have been the primary activity, these two gentlemen had much in common. They met on very familiar ground having been firm friends since those now far distant days at university. The green lawns and grey old college buildings of Oxbridge loomed very large upon these occasions, and reminiscences were bandied back and forth as the chess game progressed. It was a pleasant interlude in the lives of both gentlemen and as such highly prized.

It was a situation in which Mr Prout had no place whatever. Prout liked nothing better than talking at people when he managed to corner them. Mr Quelch and the Vicar conversed easily with many diversions into the past as they pitted their chess skills against each other. Tea was wont to follow. It was in fact the 'high spot' of the Remove master's week.

Hence his hurried flight and fortunate escape from Prout. That gentleman having failed to capture his original 'prey' fell upon poor Twigg whose feeble remonstrances were brushed aside like leaves before an autumn wind, having no effect whatever. "Come, Twigg", he boomed, "come to my study, I have something I wish to say to you".

Little Mr Twigg, although he lacked many things, was wise in his generation. He knew that once in Mr Prout's study he was lost, experience had fully proved this sad fact.
"I - I'm so sorry Prout, but a previous engagement you know, I promised Lascelles .....".
"Nonsense Twigg, I have something of the utmost importance to impart to you - a matter of some gravity, come, my dear sir sit down".

Twigg, who was not renowned for his moral fibre in such cases, was taken firmly by the arm and marched into the fifth form master's study.

All was lost. It was rather reminiscent of Mr. Stryver and Sidney Carton in a modem context. Certainly it was the very worst of times for Mr. Twigg.

"Sit down Twigg, sit down, now sir I have something to say to you, something which must be said, sir ... some boys of your form, sir..."

Mr Twigg sighed, then he coloured slightly and bridled.
His boys. What on earth had Prout to do with his boys? "Really Mr Prout I fail to see ....".
"Fail to see sir, fail to see", boomed Prout. "Then I will enlighten you sir." It was then that Mr Twigg committed a very brave act - which translated to the battle-field would have probably

earned him a decoration. It was the act of a desperate man - a hunted and goaded man no less. "Mr Prout, I really fail to see how the conduct of my boys has any relevance for you". This was fighting talk indeed. Little Mr Twigg was seeing red, of the deepest hue in no uncertain manner. "What - what", spluttered Mr Prout his features assuming an alarming shade of puce. "No concern sir, no concern. Really Twigg the good name of the school is at stake here. Fruit has been purloined sir, theft has been committed sir, apples have been taken from the Headmaster's garden, from his favourite tree, his Blenheim Orange sir - certain boys of your form ...."

Prout was growing alarmingly red with indignation as he swung into his stride, he began to splutter more than ever as he searched for further and more damning epithets. Here we are confronted by two battles raging concurrently. One in the quiet, studious atmosphere of the Vicar's study at Friardale being conducted in a most gentlemanly manner, the other, in Mr Prout's study, at Greyfriars, which is beginning to show all the portents of developing into something quite regrettable.

Mr Quelch versus the Vicar of Friardale, and Mr Prout versus a cornered and most uncharacteristic Mr Twigg. The lines are drawn, the battles rage. In the little secluded world of Greyfriars such storms are not unusual (are they unusual anywhere?). They rise quite suddenly mostly for little logical reason. Skies darkened, thunder began to roll, elements tore themselves asunder, mayhem reigned. Then, just as suddenly the clouds passed over and the sun came out once more, and all was blissful again.

For the world of Greyfriars was - and is yet - a very human place peopled by amiable and understanding characters. Even Paul Pontifex Prout who it is generally agreed is his own worst enemy, is a well-loved if much laughed at figure. The diminutive Twigg is rather a shy violet until, as has been related, he is goaded beyond a certain limit. Henry Samuel Quelch is his own man in whatever circumstances one may care to imagine.

One must assume that the Vicar of Friardale, a seldom mentioned and rather shadowy figure, has other duties in addition to the weekly chess campaign. It has been rumoured, quite unjustly, that his Sunday sermons during the warm summer season provide an excellent inducement to gentle nodding slumber. Such rumours are without foundation, being originated, probably, by certain youthful members of his congregation who possess a less than tasteful sense of humour.

In the common room that evening there was a congenial Prout whose 'boom' was considerably muted, a placatory Quelch, the mood being - as it were - a species of penance for the 'white lie' he had caused Mr Twigg to convey to Prout earlier in the day, and a greatly relieved Twigg.

All which was admirably suited to make the coffee apparently taste rather better than usual and the biscuits that degree crisper. Even Mr Hacker was observed to smile, a somewhat supercilious contortion as he surveyed the three masters, usually at odds over some small matter conversing so amicably together, even the second form master being allowed to have his 'say' which in itself was nothing short of revolutionary.

The storm had subsided, the clouds had rolled by, the sky was blue and the sun was shining. All was well once more in the little world of Greyfriars - until the next time.

* *

LESLIE HOWARD
An English Gentleman
by John Hammond

On June 1st, 1943, an unarmed civilian aircraft containing thirteen passengers was shot down by Luftwaffe fighter planes over the Bay of Biscay while en route from Lisbon to London. One of the passengers on board was the actor Leslie Howard, who was returning from a lecture tour in Spain and Portugal. When the news of his death was announced, his friend Anthony Asquith said: 'we have lost one of the greatest men in British films. People thought of Howard as a film star, but he was infinitely more than that; he was a brilliant technician. He had the art of the cinema at his finger tips.'

Leslie Howard was born in London in 1893 and his first job after leaving school was to work as a bank clerk. But Leslie was not cut out to be a banker and hankered after a career on the stage. For twenty years he pursued a career as a stage actor in London and New York, playing a variety of roles ranging from farces such as *Charley's Aunt* and *Just Suppose* to more serious parts in *Outward Bound, Escape* and *The Petrified Forest.*

But it is as a film actor that he will be particularly remembered. His first important role was the part of Philip Carey in a film version of Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* in 1934. Here he played opposite the then little known Bette Davis, who gave the performance of her life as his slatternly girlfriend. In the following year he gave another fine performance as Sir Percy Blakeney in *The Scarlet Pimpernel,* a part in which he had to appear in a variety of disguises. In 1937 he appeared opposite Joan Blondell in *Stand In,* an amusing satire on the world of Hollywood. His portrayal of the methodical accountant Atterbury Dodd, who gradually comes to realise the importance of human values, is still worth watching today. The film is shown occasionally on television.

His portrayal of Professor Higgins in Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* (1938) was a part tailor-made for him. Wendy Hiller as Eliza was a perfect match for the pedantic Higgins, and the whole film is a delight to watch. In 1939 came his famous role as Ashley Wilkes in the classic movie *Gone with the Wind.* For this part he had to have his hair dyed, which he hated.

He joked to friends that the only reason he had got the part was that he could stay on a horse, whereas the other actors tested for the part fell off. (Leslie was in fact a skilled horse rider.) In the same year came the haunting romantic film *Intermezzo*, in which he played opposite the newly discovered Ingrid Bergman. This touching film, which also starred Edna Best, is told with sincerity and conviction. It is now regarded as a classic Hollywood "weepie" and is available on video.

With the coming of the Second World War Leslie Howard made a series of highly patriotic films, which is one reason why the Nazis hated him so much. First came his role as Philip Armstrong Scott in *49th Parallel*, the story of a U Boat crew who attempt to escape through America and Canada. His portrayal of a gentle, reclusive Englishman might have been written with Howard in mind. Next came the part of Professor Horatio Smith in *Pimpernel Smith* (1941), the story of an apparently absent-minded Cambridge don who assists people to escape from the Gestapo. *Pimpernel Smith* was also produced and directed by Howard. It was a theme close to his heart, for he had many friends in Austria who had been persecuted by the Nazis.

It was brave of Howard to say to the Gestapo chief (played by Francis L. Sullivan) 'you are doomed. Captain of Murderers', especially when one recalls that the film was made in the darkest days of the war when victory for the allies was by no means certain. The film remains an inspiring testimony to the human spirit in face of adversity.

His next role was perhaps the most famous one of all: that of the Spitfire designer R J Mitchell in *The First of the Few*. In this memorable film, also starring David Niven and Rosamund John and featuring stirring music by William Walton, Howard movingly conveyed the dedication and courage of Mitchell, without whom the Battle of Britain would have been lost. *The First of the Few* was again directed and produced by Howard, as was his next film *The Gentle Sex*, an uplifting story depicting the role of women in the war effort. Howard only appears briefly in *The Gentle Sex*, yet the whole film bears the stamp of his personality.

The younger generation today have probably never even heard the name Leslie Howard. But to those of us who remember the war years he is still a name to be remembered and to be thought of with affection. He was a quiet, thoughtful man with an unmistakable voice who embodied the English virtues of gentleness and calm. In an increasingly noisy world his films still have much to say to us today.

Readers interested in Leslie Howard may like to know that his daughter, Leslie Ruth Howard, wrote a fascinating biography of him called *A Quite Remarkable Father* (Longmans, 1959). His son Ronald Howard also wrote a study of the last four years of his life, *In Search of My Father* (St Martin's Press, 1981). Ronald Howard also edited a collection of his father's articles and broadcast talks under the title *Trivial Fond Records* (William Kimber, 1982).

* *

GEMS OF HAMILTONIA from Pete Hanger

When his eyes opened, again it was to see the sunrise. Another day had dawned on the Pacific, and Ken's weary eyes turned, from point to point of a cloudless horizon. No land, no sail, no hope! Another burning day, and he knew that it must be his last. His brain was dizzy, the sea singing strange lullabies in his throbbing ears. The memory of his ship, of his shipmates, was dim in his mind now, like the memory of something that he had known, long ago. Weak, exhausted, too far gone to feel the pangs of hunger, and thirst, he lay across the floating log, scarcely stirring as the sun, climbing to the zenith, poured down its burning rays upon him. *BFL 355*

Bunter had an aristocratic prejudice against low persons; but so long as they were properly respectful, he could be kind to them. And the tattered lad was both respectful and grateful. Bunter liked gratitude. He seldom received any - not so much because it was an ungrateful world, as because he never did anything to inspire it. *MAGNET 1195*

Claude Hoskins took his chum by the arm, and led him away, as it were to execution. Hobson suppressed a groan and submitted to his fate. Not for worlds would he have hurt old Claude's feelings. He admired old Claude, and was proud of him. And after all, he had listened to Claude's music before, and lived to tell the tale. It was only one more sacrifice on the altar of friendship. But he was glad to remember that it was only five minutes to class - even maths! *BILLY BUNTER'S POSTAL ORDER*

The thing was, in fact, simple. You selected the horse that was going to win, you backed him, and he won - whereupon the bookie handed you six to one, or ten to one, or a hundred to one, as the case might be. There was no limit to the possible profits. Bookmakers, at such a rate might go "broke" one after another; but there were plenty of bookmakers - and Bunter was prepared to reduce them all to bankruptcy. *MAGNET 1068*

Bunter gained his feet with wonderful celerity considering how injured he was. He jerked his fat ears away and rubbed them. In spice of the fact that his back was broken, he seemed to feel most pain in his ears now. Perhaps his back was not broken. *MAGNET 958*

.....Bunter could no more have managed the dancing skiff on the racing tide than he could have commanded a battleship. *MAGNET 1024*

Bunter required several snacks to bridge over the awful gulf that separated one meal from another.

Still, Bunter had really hurried. He had stayed only to scoff a box of chocolates that he happened to know were in Bob Cherry's room. He stayed to finish the box, for it was probable that if he left any Bob might eat them himself before Bunter had another chance. In matters of this kind Bunter was a thoughtful fellow, and looked ahead. *MAGNET 1142*

At Greyfriars, Bunter's French was the worst in the Remove. But the best French in the Remove was not particularly useful in France. With the obstinacy which is a well known characteristic of foreigners, the French persisted in speaking a language quite different from that acquired so laboriously at Greyfriars. Bunter had been in France before, and he had been far from satisfied with the pronunciation of the natives.

MAGNET 1178

"If you fellows think I was thinking of tea —"

"Well, you couldn't possibly be thinking of anything else at tea-time, I suppose," remarked Nugent, "unless it was supper." *MAGNET 1213*

.....Even Bunter realised that it would look - not exactly dishonest, but perhaps a little dubious and questionable - if it came out that he had borrowed a book from one fellow and sold that book to another fellow, fellows would make out that he was a shady young scoundrel. They were always making out something of that kind! *MAGNET 1303*

"Sure you saw the fat scoundrel go into the cloisters, Greene?"

"Quite!"

"I told him to take the parcel to my study."

There was a doubtful tone in Coker's voice. It seemed difficult for the great Horace to assimilate the fact that his lofty behests had been disregarded. *MAGNET 1275*

The sea was a sheet of molten silver in the gleam of the stars; like dancing silver the water creamed over the reefs. The island lay a black mass against the starry sky. Feathery palms stood out, tall and graceful, against the stars. It was a night of the South Seas - a night of almost unearthly beauty - in grim variance with the demon's work that was going on onboard the anchored schooner. *BFL 577*

"What about opening the hamper - and blow Coker?" asked Potter.

"Um!" said Greene.

"Well, I suppose there's a limit" said Potter "But what do you think of him for a silly, fatheaded, burbling, babbling idiot?"

"Of all the idiotic, gabbling, dunder-headed chumps -" said Greene. "Of all the thickheaded, potty, dotty, batty burblers -"

Greene broke off suddenly, as Coker looked in again. Coker evidently had heard. Hopes of the hamper fell to zero.

"Look here, Greene that's a bit too thick I" said Coker.

"I -I meant - I - I didn't mean—" stammered Greene in dismay

"Calling Potter names like that –"

"Potter's a bit of an ass, I know, "but slanging him like that is a bit too thick, and I tell you so plainly, said Coker severely.

"Pi - Pip – Potter!" stammered Greene. "I - I never - I mean -"

"I heard you," said Coker coldly, "and I tell you it's too thick. What has Potter done, if you come to that?"

"Oh! You - you see -" Greene floundered.

"I think you ought to apologise to Potter for calling him such names," said Coker; and if you jolly well don't I'll jolly well bang your head on the table, so there!"

Greene gasped.

"Sorry, Potter!" he articulated.

Potter grinned, "All serene, old man!" he said.

"That's right," said Coker approvingly. "Now I looked in again to ask you fellows if you'd mind unpacking that hamper while I'm gone to the Remove -"

Would they mind?

"And don't wait for me," added Coker. "Don't worry if I'm not back when you start tea."

"We - we - we won't!" gasped Potter.

Coker nodded and strode away again. Potter and Greene looked at one another in eloquent silence. Potter carefully shut the door before he spoke. Coker might not have made such a happy mistake a second time.

"Jevver see such a born idiot?" he asked.

"Never!" said Greene.

"Jevver hear of one - outside a lunatic asylum, I mean?"

"Never!"

"What I can't understand," said Potter, "is this - why did they send Coker here, if there was a vacancy in any home for idiots? Why do his people let him out loose?"

Greene shook his head, implying that he gave it up. Then Coker was dismissed from mind, and they started on the hamper. They did not mind unpacking it - not at all! And they did not worry because Coker was not there when they started tea!

MAGNET 1311

Bunter knew what it felt like to miss a meal. It was awful, fearful, excruciating - like a nightmare, only worse!

MAGNET 1541

* *

OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB (LONDON)
ANNUAL LUNCHEON Sunday 14th September 2003
Toast to "The Club" - given by Roger Coombes

Sometimes, when I am asked by friends whether I am available on certain Sundays during the year I have to reply: "No, sorry, I have a book club meeting on that date". If, showing curiosity, they enquire farther I inform them that it is called the OBBC or LOBBC.

"What's that then?"

London Old Boys' Book Club

"That's a bit of a mouthful, isn't it?" they remark. "What's it about?"

(Now, I will ask you in the tradition of Frank Muir and Denis Norden, as in the old radio panel game "My Word" - remember that? - not to lose sight of that remark.... "A bit of a mouthful".)

So, in the briefest possible terms, I explain about the history of the Club and its purpose or raison d'etre (that is your actual French!).

"So, where in London is your Club - Piccadilly.... Mayfair.. .Park Lane?"

Well, it doesn't have a permanent home or venue. It meets in members' homes or in hired halls in Chingford, Loughton and even here in Yateley.

"Oh, so all the members live in London except you?"

Well, most do but there are others in Leicestershire, Warwickshire, along the South coast, one's recently moved to Scotland.. ..oh, and even in the USA.

"I see.. ...and the members are old men?"

Well, not really, the age range is probably from the 80s down to the 30s, and they're not all men. Some wives attend and there are ladies who are members in their own right.

"Really? And you all, including the women, read these old boys' papers - The Magnet and The Gem?"

Well they are at the core of the Club's interests - the stories by Charles Hamilton, written under various names - but we look at other boys' papers such as Nelson Lee and sometimes girls' papers too.

"Girls as well? But from what you say it's nothing to do with books then, is it?"

Well it is. In the six years or so that I've been a member we've had talks and discussions on Winnie the Pooh, Alice in Wonderland, Just William, Jennings and some of the characters of Enid Blyton.... to name just a few....as well as newspaper strips and comics like Rupert, Tintin, Asterix and Dan Dare which have also appeared in book form.

"So just children's literature then?"

Well yes....well, not quite, because we also delve into adult detective fiction such as Sherlock Holmes, Sexton Blake, Lord Peter Wimsey and many others. And some members are keen on western and science fiction.

"A wide range of literature then?"

Oh yes.. ..and then of course members often reminisce about old films and radio and television programmes!

"So, all in all, the title of your Club is very misleading, isn't it?! Perhaps it should be called:

"The Southern England, encompassing Scotland and North America, Old Boys' and Girls' Books, Papers, Comics and Newspaper Strips and Adult Detective, Western and Science

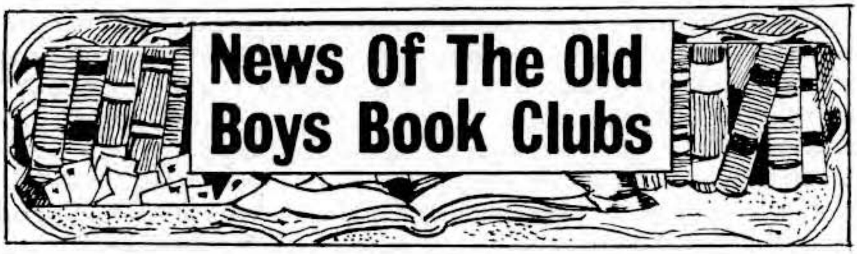
Fiction and Films, Radio and Television Club"?"

I suppose so, I muse.. ..but that's a bit of a mouthful, isn't it?

Ladies and Gentlemen, members and guests, I give you...

............THE CLUB!

* * *



LONDON O.B.B.C.

Chairman Andrew Pitt welcomed members to the August Maidstone meeting which, on a lovely sunny day, began with drinks on the verandah. Our genial hosts were John Wernham and Gail Roots.

After the reports from the Treasurer and the Librarians, the meeting heard the news that the Acraman Hamiltonian Collection, now on loan to Broadstairs Council, would shortly be on display. It was suggested that it would be worth writing to the Council for details of what will be displayed.

John Wernham then recounted a conversation with a printer - Mr. Coker (whose wife is, of course, referred to as Aunt Judy!) who attempted to explain the reasons for the popularity of the Bunter books. Easy: a "hook" at the start of each chapter to get you interested, then eleven words per line of "firm" text, to aid readability, short paragraphs full of entertaining phrases (such as those used by Hurree Singh) ... so now you all know, and can get cracking on producing a masterpiece - by the next meeting!

John went on to compare the characters at St. Jim's and Greyfriars. The former have an aristocratic air (with names like D'Arcy, Blake, Digby, Lowther and Herries, with their aristocratic forbears), compared to the Bull, Cherry, Nugent and Brown of Greyfriars... with mere Colonels and Majors! The moral complacency of St. Jim's is stirred up regularly by rotters such as Racke and Cardew... but Greyfriars is more 'robust', with a different ethos. "Nice boys read the Gem - rough boys read the Magnet!" was how it was said in days of old. (Our genial host fell into the former category, of course.)

John ended by posing the question: Why has Greyfriars lived on more than the others? Many suggestions were offered - perhaps the msot interesting from Mary, who said that with Greyfriars characters, she always feels that one can see the 'man within the boy' - with St. Jim's there is perhaps not the breadth and depth of character.

Then it was time for tea, and - as always - Gail had done us proud.

Mary Cadogan began the second half with an item about her current favourite character, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur. Mary's fascination, and familial connections, with India - the 'country of contrasts' - have led to an affinity with the graceful and intelligent *Inky*. As she recounted, Frank Richards liked the idea of putting an Indian boy on equal terms with the other boys - and equal he was (and more!), as the first encounter with the bigoted bully Bulstrode showed. The flowery and humorous language belied a strong and resourceful friend - especially in the excellent Arthur Da Costa series. Truly, a superb creation of the Great Man!

Andrew then presented a quiz, kindly donated by the Northern OBBC - in which one had to fill the gaps in a story, using the names of Greyfriars characters, based on their sound, rather than just spelling, e.g. "There was a LOCKE on the gate". Suffice to say, Mark Taha sprinted through it - and took first place. Secretary-for-a-day Len Cooper came second with Dave Marcus and Ray Hopkins occupying third and fourth places, respectively.

As the meeting drew to a close, all that remained was to thank Gail and John for their hard work and hospitality... not forgetting the splendid pots of plum, blackcurrant and mixed-fruit jam which some of us purchased and took home to our own 'Billy Bunters'!

My financial, secretarial and librarial duties over - I bid you all a fond farewell.

LEN COOPER

P.S. Andrew Pitt has heard that double-videos of Kenneth Moore playing GK Chesterton's *Father Brown* will soon be on their way - so do keep an ear to the ground!

* *

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

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

Part 10: Adventure 1955-1956

by Ray Moore

The first new picture strip to appear in the pages of 'Adventure' in 1955 was a third and final cover series appearance for 'Nick Swift of the Planet Patrol' (1568-1589). Original artist **James Malcolm,** who had drawn the first two series, had ceased to work for Thomsons the previous year and here Nick was drawn, probably to better effect, by **Ron Smith.**

In this tale Nick Swift and his crew of Planet Patrol 41 return to Earth after a six month mission in space to find London helpless under a blanket of snow and ice in the height of summer. In short order they discover that this new 'Ice Age' is being caused by a weird satellite that is in orbit around the Earth and which is using the sun's cosmic rays to shift the planet on its axis and thus distort the seasons.

While attempting to shut off the effects of the satellite the men of Planet Patrol 41 are attacked by a fleet of flying saucers which they subsequently track to a planet named Hespia, a world that they discover is suffering the same climatic changes as the Earth, the instigators of the changes in both instances turning out to be an alien race called the Volcans who create the artificially sub-zero conditions as a match for the weather conditions on their home planet. With the Volcans happy to leave a path of frozen worlds in their wake as they move across the galaxy, an alliance between the Hespians and Planet Patrol 41 ensues in an attempt to rid both

home worlds of the aliens' icy grip.

The first new internal strip to be published in 'Adventure' in 1955, printed in red and black across the paper's centre pages, as had been the norm for most of the internal strips published in the paper in the last two years, was 'Danger Guards the Inca Gold' (1585-1597). This strip, also drawn by **Ron Smith,** told the tale of explorer Brett Marshall who, with his knife-throwing friend Don Manuelo, comes to the jungles of Peru in his jet-powered airship Trident II and ends up in the valley of San Bogarde. Here the pair hunt for a horde of ancient Incan treasure that has been stolen from its rightful owners by a bandit chief named Rafello who intends to use it to finance his private army.

Once Nick Swift had helped to thaw out the Home Counties he was replaced on the cover by another, much older, 'Adventure' favourite 'Solo Solomon' (1590-1598) drawn by **James 'Peem' Walker,** making it the only 'Adventure' cover strip published in 1955 and 1956 not illustrated by **Ron Smith.** In this strip Solo and his frequent travelling companions grizzled Windy Waters and frock-coated Doc Milligan travel to the 'Leaning T' ranch in Wyoming cattle country to answer a call for help from an old friend whose cattle are being starved of water by a local outlaw named Brad Boland who has dammed the river that leads through the ranch.

Up to now none of the 'Adventure' strips that had begun in 1955 seem to have been based on earlier text stories but this then changed with the next centre-spread offering 'Red Skull Branson' (1598-1609) drawn by D C Thomson newcomer **Ian Kennedy.**

This strip begins in Singapore harbour when boat skipper Jim Branson comes to the aid of the second mate of another ship who is being tortured for information by a gang of Malays led by a cowled figure with a red skull painted on his hood's face-piece. Branson rescues the other sailor but later falls foul of the gang himself who, as the price for his interference, brand him on the forehead with their red skull emblem. In turn, Branson not only swears vengeance on this gang for his permanent disfigurement but also on crooks in general and thus begins his career as a globe-trotting crimebuster. A career move which sees him travel from Columbo to Hong Kong and Cape Town to West Africa and sees him encounter the nefarious likes of Sira the Toad and a pride of highly dangerous Leopard Men.

In some respects this strip, with its maimed hero fighting crime, had certain similarities with a strip that had appeared in 'Adventure' in 1947 titled 'Blue Dragon Pyke' (see SPCD No 654) which had itself been based on a text story that had appeared in 1932 but its true source was a text tale that had appeared in the paper in 1935 also titled 'Red Skull Branson' (688-699). Given that each Branson series, both text and strip, ran for twelve issues you might be persuaded to think that they matched up episode for episode but this was not the case. As was often true with text to strip adaptations it sometimes took the strip at least two episodes to cover the same ground as a single episode of the text series so here, for example, the tale expounded originally in 'Adventure' No 690 was recounted in strip form in issues 1601 and 1602, and issues 1603-1605 presented a slightly modified version of the episode that had first appeared in No 693.

The next 'Adventure' cover strip was 'The Red Rovers' (1599-1629), continuing the artwork of the highly adaptable **Ron Smith,** and was significant as the first football picture strip to appear in any of the Thomson papers, a genre which they would have marked success with in the decades to come.

The stars of this strip were Lanky Hutton, a young doctor who also just happened to be

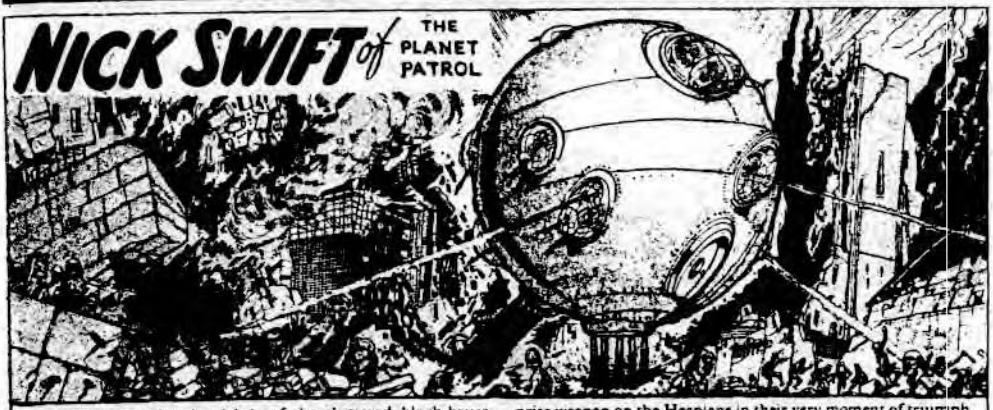
INSIDE—High-Voltage Thrills With Blue-Lightning Brand!

Adventure

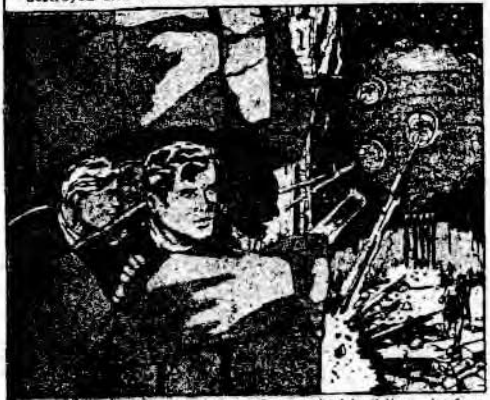
EVERY TUESDAY 3d

No. 1587—JUNE 18, 1955

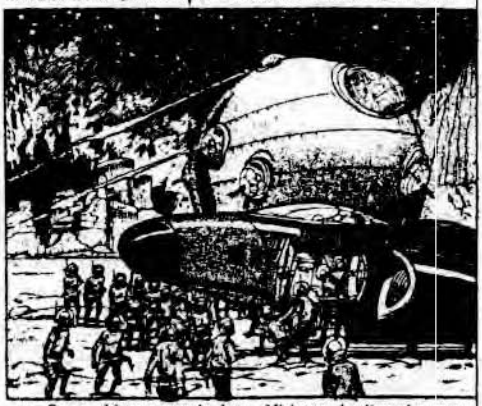
NICK SWIFT of THE PLANET PATROL



1—From amidst the debris of the shattered block-house, the sphere of armoured metal staggered aloft, flames flashing from the two rocket units which provided both upthrust and forward movement. Flashes of a more deadly kind came lancing from the numerous gun-turrets studded into the flying tank, scything into the advancing ranks of the Hespian battlers. The last of the Volcan invaders, their city now destroyed and over-run by the rebels, had sprung this surprise weapon on the Hespians in their very moment of triumph. Nick Swift and his crew of the Inter-Stellar Police, who had piloted the poorly-armed Hespians to victory despite the superior odds, could only flee helplessly from the death-dealing broadsides, joining the rebels in a mad dash for cover. The space cops knew only too well that, inside the armoured globe, was a Brain, the last of the five warlords who ruled the invaders from space. And the Brain was making a getaway!



2—Crouched in the shelter of a wrecked building, the four space cops watched the electron guns sweep the area clear. This done, the flying tank rose to roof-top height, then slowly began to move across the shattered city. "Once that bouncing ball gets beyond gun range, we'll move out of here and try tailing it," gritted Nick. "We've got to keep tabs on the Brain—with that guy at large, the Volcan armies will soon be taking the warpath again!"



3—Some thirty seconds later, Nick was leading the way through the burning city, heading in the same direction as the armoured ball. As they sprinted on, the space cops were joined by a handful of Hespian stragglers, but the chase was abruptly halted by the Volcan guns when they reached the city wall. The flying tank had landed beside a Volcan space ship and, while the guns held the pursuers at bay, the Brain and his bodyguard transferred to the waiting craft.

CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE

A GREAT NEW STORY STARTS INSIDE!

Adventure

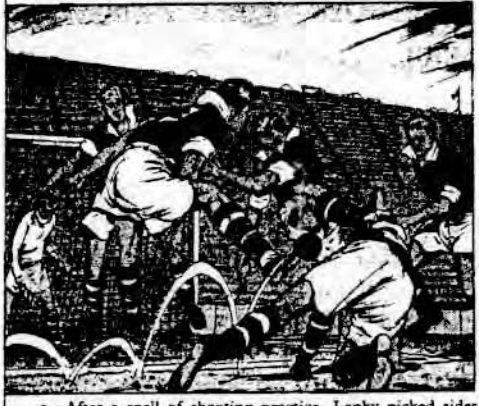
EVERY TUESDAY 3d

No. 1626—MARCH 17 1956

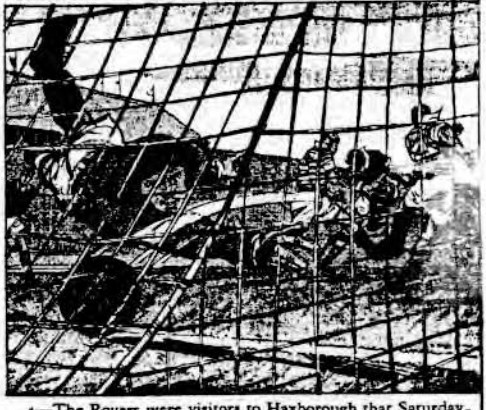
THE RED ROVERS

1—"We've got to pull our socks up, Lanky," voiced Mr Bacup, the manager-chairman of Redstoke Rovers. "We're fourth last in the League table after thirty-four matches. I don't want our first season in Division One to be our last!" Lanky Hutton, the young doctor who skippered the Rovers from goal, frowned thoughtfully at the large League Table in the chairman's office. "Right, Mr Bacup," he promised. "I'll start the lads on intensive training!"

2—Next morning, when the Rovers turned up at their Mill Road ground for training, Lanky called the players together and told them what Mr Bacup had said. "We must avoid relegation," he concluded, "and the only way is practice—and more practice!" The Rovers had their first surprise when they took the field—suspended from the crossbar of a goal were barrels, at different heights. "Try to shoot accurately through any given barrel," instructed the skipper.



3—After a spell of shooting practice, Lanky picked sides for a training match—and produced surprise number two. Instead of a football, the Rovers' skipper brought out a small-sized rubber ball. "You'll need to keep your wits about you to play with this," he chuckled. Wearing gym shoes, the players found it no easy task at first to keep the smaller ball under control, but by the end of that week's training they were keen to try out their new skill in Saturday's League game.



4—The Rovers were visitors to Haxborough that Saturday, and right from the kick-off Lanky's training methods showed results. The Redstoke side, passing with inch-perfect accuracy, stormed down the field almost before the Boro' defence knew the game had started. Left-winger Dougal Hamilton's cross put centre Sammy Shand in possession and, with the two Haxboro' full-backs converging on him, Sammy blazed in a shot through the gap to give 'keeper Ferguson no chance.

(CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE)

the skipper/goalkeeper of Redstoke Rovers, and his team-mates, group of characters that were already familiar to 'Adventure' readers thanks to three earlier season-long text series that had begun with 'It Takes Guts to be a Goalie' in 1952/53 (1440-1476).

Taking over the 'Adventure' football spot from Baldy Hogan and his Burhill Utd team, who had graced the papers pages between 1946 and 1952, Lanky and his Redstoke team in their three previous text series had risen from Third Division obscurity to the point where, at the beginning of this picture strip series, they were about to experience life in Division One for the first time.

All in all it turned out to be a difficult season for Lanky and the other Redstoke players as a local financier Silas Burbank tried to ruin the team in order to gain possession of their Mill Road ground, a circumstance that Baldy Hogan had had to face, more or less, in 'The Team's Gone Broke' in 1948/49 (1245-1265), one of a number of plotlines in this series that owed something to old Baldy Hogan scripts. Still, despite Burbank's best efforts, Lanky and his men do manage to avoid, not only relegation but also the financier's best entrepreneurial efforts to send them into liquidation.

It was then two sports based strips in the paper at the one time when 'Red Skull Branson' was replaced in the centre-spread by the **Ron Smith** illustrated motor racing yarn 'First Home Flynn' (1610-1631) in which crack freelance driver Bob Flynn and British engine expert Sam Sperry combine their skills to produce the 'Sperry Special', a match for any other car on the track, a superiority that is particularly galling to the unscrupulous Conrad Pelin, boss of the continental racing giants Auto-Vitesse, who makes it his business to bring about the demise of the 'Special' by any means he can.

To celebrate the arrival of the 1955 cricket season Lanky Hutton and his Redstoke team-mates took a well earned summer break to make way for 'The Terror Tests' (1630-1640) with Ron Smith once again 'carrying his bat' through another picture strip series.

Although 'The Terror Tests' was basically a new tale it was still spun from old cloth in that it owed a great deal in its concept to a text story that had appeared in 'Wizard' in 1948, starring the great athlete Wilson, titled 'The Black Olympic Games' (1169-1185). In the original Wilson story a team of British athletes are kidnapped and forced to compete in the African jungle against native competitors for their very lives which, if you substitute athletes for cricketers, you have the basic premise for this cricket yarn as a Great Britain XI, whilst touring South Africa, is put into a similar predicament.

Artist **Ron Smith's** virtual monopoly of the artwork provided for the 'Adventure' picture strip then continued with 'The Wires Must Go West' (1632-1651) in the centre pages, the title of the strip being a fairly neat summation of what it was actually about. Thomsons over the years had always had a predilection for including stories that reflected and extolled the pioneering spirit, such as 'Jerry of the Rails' which appeared in the 'Wizard' as early as 1927 (251-254) about the building of a railroad through darkest Venezuela, and 'Boss of the Cable Coils', again in the 'Wizard' in 1940 (899-908), about the laying of the Trans-Atlantic Telegraph. This otherwise new strip, telling of the construction of the first telegraph line across the vast expanse of the prairies and mountains of the American West, was very much in that tradition.

Once the Great Britain XI had narrowly won the series of 'terror tests' 2-1, the focus of the action of the next **Ron Smith** illustrated cover strip shifted from Africa to the Andes

Mountains of South America which provided the majestic backdrop for 'Young Eagle' (1641-1654), a strip developed from an earlier story with the same title that had appeared in 'Adventure' in 1930 (428-457).

The original story was a much longer and more complex affair than the later simplified picture strip, and while they both begin in fairly similar fashion soon the picture strip version starts to jettison whole chunks of the original to introduce scaled-down plotlines that only apply to itself. Both versions begin with a fourteen-year-old wild boy, the sole survivor of a plane crash in the Andes a decade previously, returning to civilization with the aid of his giant eagle companion, Swooper. In the picture version it then becomes a tale that hinges on a gold mine inheritance which will allow the boy to embrace civilization beginning with a proper education at a good school, whereas in the original, after tasting the 'delights' that society can offer, the lad can't wait to return to his life in the mountains as fast as the wings of his giant bird companion can carry him.

The last centre page strip to begin in 'Adventure' in 1956, again drawn by **Ron Smith**, was 'The Silent Raiders'(1652-1672). Set during World War II this was the story of a Commando unit named the Long Range Desert Group who, in the Libyan desert in 1942, created havoc among the supply columns that supported Rommel's Afrika Corps.

'The Silent Raiders' had no textual precedent and neither did the next cover strip featuring the return of 'Ryan of the Redcoats' (1655-1666) drawn again by, who else but, **Ron Smith.** This time around Bob Ryan has his mettle tested when he is sent out on a mission to see if a ghost can be responsible for a series of accidents that have occurred at the Dawson Creek lumber camp.

The final strip to begin in 'Adventure' in 1956 was the fifth **Ron Smith** cover strip in a row 'Jungle Jackson' (1667-1678). This was the story of Jim Jackson who swaps his job as a vet in England for that of a warden at the Omweru River Reserve, a large game sanctuary in Central Africa and who, as well as looking after his exotic animal charges, has to cope with a gang of ivory poachers and an unscrupulous wildlife film maker. The strip was an occasionally faithful adaptation of a story that had appeared in 'Adventure' twenty years before 'Jungle Jackson - Wild Beast Doctor' (806-821) although it is obvious that a good deal of sub-editing has been employed in order to carve the latter from the former.

Next time we will chart the course of the 'Adventure' picture strip on into 1957, a year of TT racers, Vikings and frogmen and the further exploits of one or two old faces.

Once again, closing may I just make my usual 'thank you' to Derek Marsden, whose notes on the earlier versions of these strips were, as usual, masterful.

* *

EVEN HEAD GIRLS WERE NOT IMMUNE TO MISCHIEF-MAKERS

by Margery Woods

The population of Cliff House School usually fell into roughly four categories: the Power-seekers; the Upholders of good old honest play-the-game; the Rebels; and the Silent Majority who got on with their own little lives and made up the numbers.

The first category was the most dangerous and caused the most pain to their victims. The third category made the most noise and showed off most, often causing trouble when members of category two endeavoured to show them the error of their ways or tried to save them from themselves. The last category could be easily led but occasionally threw up a minor star who burned fiercely for a while then faded back into obscurity when the going got too tough.

In a cast of this size with some two hundred pupils, a full complement of teachers, catering and domestic staff there was endless scope for power play and conflict. Those long-suffering teachers were not always credited with the amount of trouble they had to cope with, but young readers were unlikely to feel under-standing in that respect unless in the isolated cases when a favourite mistress was targeted by the trouble-makers.

So to be Head Girl or School Captain carried a great deal of responsibility, authority and tact, and needed a girl of exceptional qualities. Cliff House's first Captain, Stella Stone, one of Frank Richards' original characters at the school, fulfilled all these requirements and was idolized throughout the school—with two notable exceptions. No prize for identifying Connie Jackson and Sarah Harrigan, both of whom desperately coveted the honour held by Stella.

Stella faced moral blackmail and betrayal by Connie on more than one occasion. Once,

Illustrations by T. Laidler

during her early years, Stella shocked the school by turning curt and impatient, moods usually foreign to her friendly and caring nature. But the girls did not know that Stella's father had suffered a financial disaster and her mother was also very ill. Nor could the family afford the expensive medical treatment she needed. (No NHS in those days.) Then to Stella's astonishment Connie offered financial help towards those medical expenses. But there was a catch. Stella must resign her captaincy, which Connie was determined to win. In any case, unless Stella's father was able to recoup his finances she would have to leave Cliff House at the end of that term.

When read in the climate of 21st century society this plot sounds pure Victorian melodrama, but it was still acceptable as a tear-jerker in the year 1921. Possibly written by Horace Phillips, who was adept at involving the emotions of young readers, and older ones when wearing another of his hats, before he went on to create his own great school, Morcove.

Connie had her own surprise for the girls when the awful news broke that Stella was resigning. She turned all sweetness and light during her election campaign, posing a problem for the more perceptive girls. How long would it last? And only one girl knew the truth. This was Augusta, who had overheard most of the conversation between Stella and Connie. But Stella had sworn her to secrecy. Connie's bid for popularity begins to succeed, but Augusta, who is very fond of Stella, is determined to spoil Connie's chances. At the election Connie wins by only a single vote because Augusta has locked up the entire Third Form because they always contradicted the Fourth regardless of whether right or wrong.

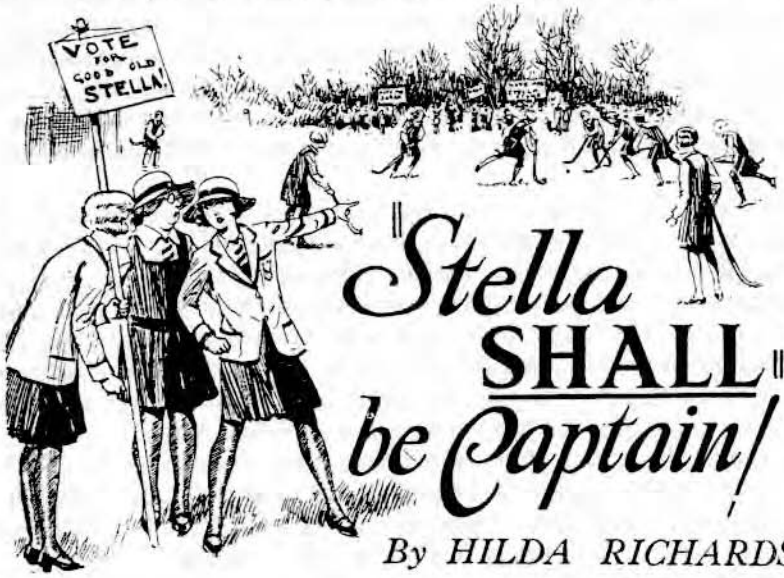
But it is not long before Connie reverts to her true self, dishing out lines and detentions on the slightest pretext. A combination of japes, schemes and defiance, plus Miss Primrose's growing doubts about Connie as Head Girl, drives Connie into sheer tyranny. She loses control altogether and thrashes the hapless Bessie Bunter unmercifully. After this Connie has to go—though not from Cliff House; the bad ones never do. They are too valuable for future tales of conflict.

Stella is persuaded to resume her captaincy, hopeful news comes from home and the girls have a whip-round to return the money Stella had accepted in such heartbroken desperation from Connie and peace returns to the school—for a little while.

Later, Stella faced the same threat from the new upstart Gail Gregory, the niece of peppery Sir Willis, the school governor. He is in financial difficulties and in obligation to his brother, Gail's father. Gail has come home from India and Sir Willis is instructed to see that she has everything she wants at Cliff House. Gail doesn't want much: only to have all her own way, be elevated into the Sixth, and rule the school. Gail has had lots of practice at this in India where she has ruled her father's native workers like a tyrant. However, the Cliff House girls are not so malleable. Stella is one of her first victims and we hear little of her in this long series, so many others play their part, even Miss Bullivant, as Gail calls on Sir Willis whenever she is crossed and he dare not check her because of his dependence on her father. It is Rosa Rodworth who finally brings about a brilliant and satisfying finale which sees the downfall of Gail and Sir Willis.

Stella's other major adversary is Sarah Harrigan. In her first major series in the SCHOOLGIRL the basic plot is an old regular standby, that of the heroine's relative, in this case a brother, being accused of theft. Stella hides him but Sarah noses this out and reports it to the police, making sure that this becomes public knowledge in the school. Stella feels she

THE CLIFF HOUSE ELECTION! Last minute sensations in this magnificent long complete story, featuring Barbara Redfern & Co.



"Stella SHALL be Captain!"

By HILDA RICHARDS

has no option but to resign and Sarah stands for the election which must take place. As did Connie before her, Sarah tries to emulate a leopard in need of a disguise in order to drum up support. But now Clara Trevlyn takes a hand. She decides the chums must try to prove Stella's brother's innocence.

Gerald Stone has been accused of stealing two hundred and fifty pounds given to him to take to the bank by his employer, an architect. But Gerald seems to have lost the money. Clara knows the elderly architect and says he is very absent-minded so she goes to see him to ask if the money could possibly have gone missing from the envelope before Gerald set off for the bank. Old Mr Grierson promises to have a thorough search and discovers the money still in his desk drawer. He had given Gerald an empty envelope. Of course the point arises that two hundred and fifty pounds, even if in the old white fivers, should have given the envelope a certain thickness, yet neither Mr Grierson nor Gerald notices this. But in the great excitement when Clara bursts in with the news nobody gives a thought as to why the envelope wasn't given a last minute check before Gerald set off for the bank. The main thing is that Sarah is demoted and Stella triumphantly restored to her captaincy.

There is a hint of Stella's future career in this series when distress hits the Third Form. Their adored mascot, a tiny kitten called Tweety (could this name foretell a somewhat ominous future?) is very ill. The tearful youngsters are sure Tweety is going to die, until Barbara Redfern remembers Stella once mentioning her ambition to be a vet and takes Tweety to the Captain. Stella works a spot of magic and Tweety recovers.

In her next major encounter with Sarah Harrigan Stella is working very hard at studying for an important exam she must pass before she can begin veterinary training. This is the start of a new term and will be Stella's last one at Cliff House. Now she has an unhappy duty to

perform. Her uncle is guardian to Brenda Fallace, a slow, unfriendly Fourth Former who is a crony of Lydia Crossendale. But Brenda does admire Stella very much and would do anything for her. Stella's uncle is not satisfied with Brenda's school reports and has asked Stella to speak to Brenda about working harder. Brenda does promise to try harder but ructions begin when Sarah, for reasons best known to herself, removes a letter addressed to Brenda from the rack in the hall and pockets it. Several girls have seen this and protested. Stella has to settle the argument and order Sarah to hand back the letter.

This letter is from a Mrs Briggs whose daughter has got into difficulties while swimming. A girl in a boat dives to her rescue and then hastily vanishes. She has a Cliff House hat and Mrs Briggs advertises for anyone who knew the girl or saw the incident to contact her, for she wants to give the rescuer a hundred pounds reward. Brenda has seen it all and writes to Mrs Briggs, though not with any idea of collecting the reward herself. But Sarah has also seen the advert, knows who the rescuer is—a relative who has run away from school for a good time and isn't going back until she's ready—and Sarah decides she will claim the reward. Now the woman has replied to Brenda to ask her if she will identify Sarah as the rescuer as she wants to be sure the right person is receiving the reward.

Sarah demands that Brenda goes to see Mrs Briggs and identifies her as the rescuer. When Brenda refuses Sarah threatens to make trouble for Stella which will get her expelled. Stella walks into this scene and says she'll risk expulsion rather than give in to Sarah's malicious scheming. She takes Brenda herself to see the woman and tells her Sarah is not the girl who rescued her daughter.

Sarah fulfils her promise to report Stella for breaking bounds, only to have Babs & Co instantly say they were breaking bounds and Stella had followed to stop them. Doing her duty as prefect and Captain.

Oh to inspire such selfless devotion to save someone from disgrace! It must have bitter

FIRST OF A NEW SERIES of Long Complete Cliff House School Stories, Featuring Babs & Co. and Stella Stone

gall in Sarah's throat as she receives a sharp reprimand from Miss Primrose and is told to make sure of her facts in future before she makes her reports.

This strong series (SCHOOLGIRL 569,570,571,572) continues with Sarah being visited by a strange girl who offers a bribe of cash and the repayment of Sarah's debts if Sarah will prevent Stella from taking that vital exam. Sarah can't believe her luck. (Well, they say the devil looks after his own.) She devotes all her energy to treachery and tricks to ruin Stella's chances, but good has to win out. Thanks to Babs and the chums—and a spot of clever thinking by Jemima Carstairs—Sarah fails, and Stella passes the vital exam.

The girls were sad to see her go but happy for the bright future they were sure lay in store for this much loved Captain of Cliff House. Meanwhile, they were left with Sarah and Connie, who would keep them fully occupied with their special brand of tyranny.

Frances Barratt of the Sixth acted as Captain for a while until an election was arranged to elect Stella's successor. Naturally, Connie and Sarah each nominated themselves and ran campaigns which failed to succeed. Dulcia Fairbrother, the popular Games Captain won the election and became a very popular School Captain.

And the readers sat back and waited for the fireworks to come when Connie and Sarah decided it was their turn to rule. And come they did, with all the treachery and spite of which these dreadful girls were capable.

Apart from the occasional unhappy hiccups such as Connie, Sarah, and a few upstart newcomers like Gail Gregory, Cliff House was fortunate in its two long-reigning school captains, senior girls who possessed kindness and understanding and, most important of all, inspired complete trust in the youngsters over whom they had so much authority.

Which is exactly as it should be.

* *

The Life and Works of ALFRED BESTALL
Published by Bloomsbury at £20.00 Reviewed by Mary Cadogan

(This review was first published in NUTWOOD NEWSLETTER, No. 48)

Caroline Bott's eagerly anticipated book about "Uncle Fred", her godfather Alfred Edmeades Bestall, provides many insights for enthusiasts of his achievements. It is large (over 330 pages) and can be divided into three sections: the first is a chronological account of Alfred's life and work; next we have his travel journals and sketches and, finally, 34 pages of detailed lists of his artwork taken from his own notebooks.

To begin at the ending (!) these lists are extremely interesting for all those who appreciate AEB's work. As well as providing information about the subjects tackled and the publications in which they appeared, these show the fees which Bestall received. In his pre-Rupert period, his illustrations were wide-ranging and prolific. The lists could send collectors on long and ultimately rewarding quests to locate the magazines, books and papers in which these treasures could be found and studied

As befits any book about AEB, the text throughout is liberally punctuated with

representations of his artwork. These range from sketches in letters and notebooks, through his magical children's book illustrations and stylish cartoons in *Punch*, to the indisputable jewel in his crown, Rupert.

Perhaps surprisingly, the longest section of the book is that which comprises his travel journals. It occupies 170 pages, covering visits to Wales in 1912 and 1913, and to Egypt, the Middle East and Europe in 1924. AEB's coverage of these includes many drawings which feature picturesque or rugged people in what were then (and often still are) exotic settings.

One sees how Bestall, the artist, responds wholeheartedly to mountains, rivers and truly verdant scenery in Wales and, for example, the Sphinx by moonlight or the place where the Wise Men were first thought to have seen the star which led them to Bethlehem. What is also interesting is his capacity to convey so much of the atmosphere of Luxor, Jerusalem or Damascus in his prose accounts of them which are often highlighted by facsimile reproduction of pages of his letters and sketchbooks.

Caroline Bott starts the book with a short from-the- heart Foreword by Sir Paul McCartney in which he speaks of Rupert's innocence and optimism, and comments "For the British, Rupert is an institution - like the Queen. Britain just wouldn't be the same without him."

Caroline explains that as far as possible she has let Alfred tell his story in his own words, through extracts from his letters and diaries. She provides a linking narrative which works extremely well. There are several telling accounts of his thoughts and feelings about Rupert and the responsibility of producing the saga which was to influence so many children. His respect for his predecessor, Mary Tourtel, is conveyed, as well as his determination to maintain the general atmosphere which she had established in and around Nutwood. At first Bestall was "terrified" of his role as a "mentor" of young readers:

"I frankly didn't want the responsibility but ... gradually ideas came. It was immediately clear that I could not match Mary's method of going from plaintive wistfulness to the edge of terror. The only method I could think of aimed at livelier action, better continuity, frequent gentle humour ... and more chance for Rupert's initiative..."

He was later to feel that producing the Rupert pictures and stories was perhaps *"the most vitally important job in Fleet Street"*, and to regard Rupert as "a major part of his Christian life" (AEB remained faithful always to the Methodist faith in which he had been brought up).

Amongst the many gems in this book is the publication in facsimile of a letter to Alfred from Enid Blyton in 1927 in which she praises his pictures for *The Play's the Thing: "Every one of your drawings is exquisite and admirably suited to the childlike spirit I wanted to give the plays"*.

Although, particularly in his pre-Rupert period, AEB did so much splendid work as an illustrator of children's books, it was then primarily what he calls "The Big Shinies" – prestigious magazines – which attracted him. He admitted to a fixation with *Punch* (to which he was to contribute over 100 drawings and cartoons). Long afterwards, in 1985, he was to say *"My hectic, snobbish Punch – Tatler spell 1923-30 has just about been forgotten..."*.

Alfred's childhood had its share of vicissitudes. Born in Mandalay in 1892, where his Methodist minister father was a missionary, he and his sister were sent home to Britain and separated for some time from their parents. Alfred had a spinal injury and a speech impediment, and his sister was apparently "mentally impaired".

Alfred was mainly educated at Rydal Mount, a Wesleyan public school in Wales. He

The life and works of ALFRED BESTALL

illustrator of

Foreword by **Sir Paul McCartney**

Caroline G. Bott

won prizes for classics and drawing, was good at sports and matriculated without difficulty. He has commented that most of his school textbooks were "disfigured" by his drawings, and not surprisingly he passed a scholarship to the Birmingham Central School of Art, and later attended the LCC Central School of Art in London.

He began - unsuccessfully – to submit material to several well- known national journals in 1915. The First World War interrupted his artistic career: Alfred was determined to enlist but his many attempts to do so were frustrated because of his physical frailties. He was small, and his chest measurement was apparently an inch too short. Nevertheless, he was eventually accepted for service in Mechanical Transport. He became a driver-mechanic in the 35th (Bantam) Division. Some of his experiences at or near the Western Front are described in this biography. He saw at first-hand several of the harrowing experiences of war, but his optimism held him in good stead. His journals gave more attention to how he drew posters for concerts, and made portraits of his fellow soldiers and, from snapshots, of their girl friends. He continued to submit his work to "The Big Shinies", and to *Blighty*, and eventually acquired footholds in *Punch* and *The Tatler*.

In 1935 Alfred took over from Mary Tourtel as the regular Rupert artist. Until the avalanche of tributes and appreciation which began to occur towards the end of his life, he seemed extraordinarily unaware of his vital contribution to the Rupert ethos. He writes unassumingly about his own efforts, and with admiration of colleagues with whom he worked - particularly Frederick Chaplain. His controversies with the *Daily Express* and questions of political correctness are only lightly touched upon.

There seems just one hint of romance in AEB's life story, when in the 1930s his diaries mention his relationship with a lady from his Church. He never married nor had children, but seemed to feel that his non-parental role gave him a special insight into childlike illusions and aspirations. Several of his lively and touching letters to children are reproduced in the book.

In the Second World War, when the Rupert saga was reduced to only one frame a day, Alfred gave much of his time and energy to ARP work. His picture of his Wardens' Post was hung at the Royal Academy. His later years of semi-retirement are well documented; also his surprise at the media acclaim which he was then given. He writes appreciatively of his meetings with Paul McCartney, Terry Jones and George Perry - and mentions *"the delightful, new, middle-aged society, Followers of Rupert"*.

It goes without saying that Caroline Bott's book is a not-to-be-missed treasure into which we shall now, and often in the future, dip with relish.

MARY CADOGAN

* *

Don't forget to order your copy of the Christmas Special!

* *

FORUM

From RAY HOPKINS: Thank you for another splendid issue of the good-old C.D. Always a pleasure to be greeted by one of Bob Whiter's winning illustrations and to look forward to an accompanying article inside. I can still recollect the thrill I received when Herbert Leckenby sent me my first C.D. No. 64 of April 1952, a light tan cover with a splendid drawing of Gussy in a top hat. As an old St. Jim's man I specially appreciated my intro. to the jolly world of O.B.B. And inside, what a thrill, a letter from Frank Richards. I had always thought that the D'Arcy cover was Bob's first but, much later, when I was happily finding older copies, I found I was the possessor of Bob's drawing of the Rio Kid, with blazing guns and blooded headband on the cover of C.D. 53, May 1951. I go back a bit further than Bob but he's an artist and I'm not. Oh, well...

For a long time the evocative articles about Greyfriars by Ted Baldock have been bringing a lot of pleasure to C.D. readers. His atmospheric descriptions are so apt and his interactions of the schoolmasters who cannot get away from one another give rise to many a chuckle. I was especially tickled to learn in the current C.D. that Mr. Prout's carpet slippers are rose-patterned. Not quite the footwear one would imagine a former big-game hunter would appear in. I have always thought that Charles Hamilton was thinking of Theodore Roosevelt when he invented Mr. Prout.

From MARK TAHA: My comments re the June C.D.:

Page 10. I remember reading about that in E.S. Turner's "Boys Will Be Boys". I intend to read that series some day. I wonder how I'd have handled it? Re Colonel Moran, he appeared as a character in "Flashman and the Tiger" and was stated to be sixty. I believe that Holmes and Watson were 40 and 42 respectively.

Page 21. Were there any girls' schools in which prefects carried ashplants? I know some used corporal punishment, including Cliff House in the "School Friend" at the beginning, but did any allow prefects to use it? (Editor's Note: I know of none.)

Page 33. Did they really plan to cast Michael Redgrave as a teenager in 1938?

Page 40. I'd have chosen to go to Highcliffe, but NOT on a scholarship! I rather like its attitude towards work and enforcement of rules!

Bagshot was Rookwood's nearby rival. The junior captain was called Cecil Pankley. St. Winifred's, of course, had its own stories, as did St. Kit's. I've never heard of St. Bede's. My knowledge of Narkover is confined to the Will Hay film. I must say it did have its attractions but I'd have been too worried about my possessions! St. Frank's, I have wondered if that was a school or a lunatic asylum! And I'd have been both annoyed with the irritatingly perfect Nipper and frightened of being anywhere near Handforth! Rylcombe, incidentally, might have been called a Grammar School but was a public school like the rest: its pupils all seemed to be boarders, many of them from Australia.

Page 53. Real-life namesakes. To start with Greyfriars. I recently read an obituary for an architect called Patrick Gwynne. I'd heard of Gerald Loder, that character certainly had the ideal qualifications for a political career. There was an early socialist leader called Harry Quelch. From the Remove, one of our leading fighters a few years back was Henry Wharton (say he had succeeded in running away from Greyfriars...). There was a Hollywood scriptwriter called Frank S. Nugent (not unthinkable), a Senator Dick Russell. I think there was an actor

called Tom Brown and author called Richard Hillary (with one l, I think). As an attender at Eurosceptic conferences, I remember seeing somebody called Peter Todd there, tall, but not a solicitor and not with a particularly big nose! I know there have been real-life John Bulls.

As for St. Jim's, wasn't Tom Merry named after a real-life artist? And I remember a sportswriter called Victor Railton.

Page 56. I seem to remember that Fullwood had reformed by the Ezra Quirke series - it was, I think, mentioned that he'd just taken up football and showed a real talent.

From NORMAN WRIGHT: Funny that someone should be asking about 'The Cherrys' books as I had a similar question passed on by Book and Magazine Collector. The books were written by Will Scott. There were fourteen of them beginning with "The Cherry's of River House", published in 1952 an ending with "The Cherrys and the Blue Balloon" in 1965.

From TERRY BEENHAM: I take this opportunity to write a few words of appreciation of your continued editorship of CD. I see that it is now 16 years - a long time. You have set and maintained a high standard for every issue. There is always something in it to interest most collectors of the "Old Papers". Thank you Mary.

My particular interests are Sexton Blake and now, increasingly, the old comic papers. I am now much more appreciative of the comic artwork of Reg Parlett and Roy Wilson than when I originally read them as a young lad. At one stage of their career there was a similarity in their work. I also, of course, enjoy reading the old Greyfriars stories.

Sadly, I am not at all gifted with the ability for writing, otherwise there may have been more than the 2 contributions I have made to CD over the years.

* *

continued from page 4

Biggles, of course, written by Peter Berresford Ellis and Jennifer Schofield, is now published, and not by any old publisher, but by the London Old Boys' Book Club's Norman Wright, an expert in the field (or should it be airfield?) himself, and a writer and researcher of some renown. This new edition, a superbly-produced and glossy paperback, is limited to 300 numbered copies, each signed by the authors, and has been re-typeset, corrected and revised, with an amended and updated (and pretty well comprehensive, it seems to me) Bibliography occupying 24 extremely useful and informative pages.

'SPCD' Editor Mary Cadogan has written a new Foreword, especially for this edition, in which she makes a telling and thoughtful point: "I sometimes wonder whether we would have won the Battle of Britain if Johns had not, through his stories and aviation articles, provided inspiration and encouragement to so many potential young flyers."

I was one of those "inspired and encouraged" by Johns' stories in the last days of the boys' weekly paper 'Modern Boy' in the late-1930s, but I was a bit too young to join the R.A.F. then (around 9!) though I did serve in the R.A.F. for two years (as a non-flyer) about ten years later.

For the record: "By Jove, Biggles!" was originally published in 1981, then reprinted in 1985 and 1993, this last under the title "Biggles! The Life Story of Captain W.E. Johns." I must honestly say that I prefer the last title and it should have been retained, I feel, for this latest and revised edition. The 'By Jove!' bit makes it sound as though the book is a humorous 'spoof' instead of the fine, well-researched biography that it is. But there, I'm probably being pedantic.

And while I'm being pedantic, why do the authors, in their list of 'Acknowledgements' credit

Daniel Kirkpatrick as 'the author' of "Children's Writers", when he was, in fact, the editor of that excellent and monumental reference book of 1978? (Anyway, the correct title is "Twentieth Century Children's Writers".) They also get the title of the 1942 radio play written by Johns, with G.R. Rainier wrong; it was 'The Machine That Disappeared' and not 'The Machine Which Disappeared'. It was Fiona Hutchison who played the female lead in the 1986 'Biggles' feature film, not Hutchinson as listed in the book's index. And they don't seem to be aware that film actor Michael York recorded an audio-tape of Biggles' adventures a few years ago, or that there was actually a pub named 'Biggles' just off Knightsbridge, in London, in the early-1980s! Or indeed, that the popular saying 'Good Thinking, Biggles!' originated in the R.A.F. (to praise someone for coming up with a good idea) and was current in my R.A.F. days in the late-1940s, and has been widely-used in the British film industry for many years...! I just thought I'd mention these odd points in case there might be another 'revised' edition at some future date...

The authors also don't mention that the 13-year-old schoolboy Johns was a keen reader of the famous 'Boys' Own Paper' and an issue of 1951 published a photograph of the lad stating this fact. Later Johns published stories and articles for the 'BOP' and came to know its last editor, Jack Cox quite well. Cox is quoted in the book. And when I interviewed Cox for a BBC radio programme 'It Takes All Sorts' in the 1960s, he spoke warmly of Johns and said that the circulation of the 'BOP' always seemed to go up whenever he published a Johns item!

W.E. Johns and Sexton Blake were both born in the same year: 1893, which also saw the death of the great boys' school story writer, Talbot Baines Reed.

1932 (we're jumping ahead a bit, but read the book to fill in the gaps!) saw not only the launch of the magazine 'Popular Flying', which Johns both founded and edited (and often part-illustrated as well!), but also the birth of Biggles in several short stories in the magazine (the first Biggles story of all, by the way, was 'The White Fokker'). The first Biggles book 'The Camels Are Coming' also appeared in this year, a collection of those short stories. Johns was to publish over 70 Biggles books and his famous flying hero became, of course, one of the most popular characters in juvenile fiction. (An item for trivia fans: 'Jane', that popular glamour girl in the 'Daily Mirror' picture-strip, also made her bow in 1932! Did Biggles ever meet Jane? Sadly, we'll never know...)

W.E. Johns also created such memorable characters as Worrals of the W.A.A.F., Gimlet and Steeley. But the most remarkable character he ever created, apart from Biggles, was himself. His life was a dramatic and exciting adventure story - and its all here in "By Jove, Biggles!", and Berresford Ellis and Schofield do the whole saga proud with excellent page-turning writing, facts and anecdotes, and their meticulous research is evident. Even the famed 'Lawrence of Arabia' is there - did you know he was in the R.A.F. for a time? This particular story, in which Johns' was personally involved, is here.

The book is very well produced and printed, and the front-cover is a joy to behold: a colourful kaleidoscope of marvellous Biggles magazine and boys' paper colour covers in all their glory.

Everyone who has ever thrilled to a Biggles story will revel in this marvellous book, which answers every question you can imagine about the intrepid air ace and his friends and his enemies - and his wonderful creator. Two book titles from the past perhaps sum up this publishing event: "Biggles Flies Again" and "Biggles Presses On".

By Jove, the book's a winner...!

* *

Editor: Mary Cadogan, 46 Overbury Avenue, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 6PY
Printed by Quacks Printers, 7 Grape Lane, Petergate, York, YO1 7HU. Tel. 01904 635967