STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

SPRING/SUMMER SPECIAL 2007

BILLY BUNTER'S TREAT!

GOOD friends and fellow-members
Raise up your glass on high.
Each one of us remembers
Young tales from days gone by.
For fifty years we've flourished
Refreshed by tales of youth.
In memory we've nourished
A love for strength and truth.
Recalling story papers,
Sexton Blake and Co,
School stories packed with capers,
Charles Hamilton in flow.
How lovingly we read them,
Of feats of derring-do.
Old friends (long may we need them!),
Long life to all of you.

Keith Atkinson
(for Northern Old Boys Book Club)

COLLECTORS' DIGEST SPRING/SUMMER SPECIAL 2007

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

The Editor's Chat

It is good to be producing another C.D. SPECIAL but sad that this editorial has to convey news of the passing of two very long-standing friends and supporters of our hobby. At the end of last year we heard of the death of Bill Bradford, a regular contributor to the C.D. who was widely known and loved. In February of 2007 John Wernham, the President of the London Old Boys Book Club passed away. Collectors all over the world have been grateful for John's fine publications from his Museum Press, and many of us hoped that he would live to celebrate his one hundredth birthday - May 2nd - but in the event he left us just before this. Nevertheless he was well into his hundredth year and, happily, the London Club had celebrated his previous birthday with him and Gail Roots, his companion and helper who has also done so much for our hobby.

Tributes to Bill and John appear in this issue of the magazine which I would like to dedicate to their memories.

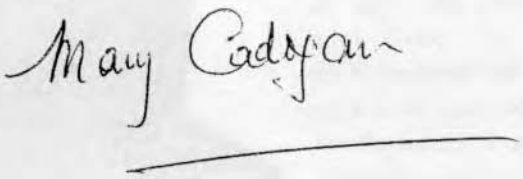
On a happier note it is good that the Old Boys Book Clubs, which meant so much to John and Bill, are still flourishing and that younger members are linking up with them. There is nothing more pleasant than spending time with like-minded book-lovers, as I am constantly reminded when I go to Club meetings, or attend the Just William Day, or the annual Rupert Bear gathering. The interest in our favourite papers and books seems inexhaustible. We never tire of discussing the stories and characters.

Of course new books are always offering us fresh and exciting discoveries too, but I find myself very often returning to those which I loved in childhood or adolescence - the *Schoolgirl, Schoolgirls' Own, Magnet, Gem*, etc, and novels such as *The Scarlet Pimpernel* by Baroness Orczy, and almost any book by Georgette Heyer.

How avidly did we read them - and how good and friendly have they remained! Although circumstances have forced me into using a computer, I often reflect on how "user-friendly" books are when compared with much modern-day equipment. They can be savoured at any time and anywhere without the need of any special apparatus (except a pair of spectacles!).

I trust that you will all enjoy this C.D. SPECIAL. I am already planning the next issue, which I intend to publish towards the end of the year so that it will have a Chistmassy flavour. IT WILL BE A VERY SPECIAL NUMBER SO DO COMPLETE THE ENCLOSED ORDER FORM IN GOOD TIME TO OBTAIN YOUR COPY.

Happy Browsing!



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You'll see that

GEMS OF HAMILTONIA ARE BACK,

IN GOOD MEASURE, BY POPULAR REQUEST

* *

Pink Papers, Cards, a Packet of Fags and a Game of 100 up

by Andrew Miles

Greyfriars School is situated in a beautiful part of Kent with picturesque, idyllic surroundings. Lanes, meadows, towpaths, the rippling Sark, woods, bridges and islands all provide a most charming backdrop for this beautiful School with its high, stone walls covered with ivy. Yet there is another aspect to the charming countryside around Greyfriars School. Undesirables, such as tramps, footpads, racing toughs and bike pinchers, loiter in the lanes behind hedges and trees. They regularly intrude upon the serenity of Greyfriars life. They remind the reader of another world, of the harsh realities of society at large and of life's temptations and pitfalls. Usually, it is rotters and slackers who are attracted to these more sordid elements of their world. I would like to look briefly at this aspect of the Greyfriars tales.

In the vicinity of Greyfriars there are certain establishments in which rotters, slackers and rorty dogs can let themselves go. Each of these establishments is well-staffed with individuals ready and willing to relieve chaps from Greyfriars and Highcliffe of their pocket money. The best known of these is the Three Fishers inn. It is located along the towpath of the River Sark. It is probably the most popular of such places to visit because its higher paling fence makes it very discreet, and surreptitious entry is

Gerald Loder gave his directions, and every fence round the extensive grounds of the Three Fishers was patrolled by Sixth-Formers. "I believe you've made some idiotic mistake, Loder," said Wingate. "I don't believe Wharton and his friends are in the place at all." There was a snigger from the Removites who were looking on.

easily gained by clambering over the fence from a secluded part of the towpath. It contains a spacious and comfortable billiards room with plenty of shady acquaintances available to play and an obliging, beery loafer is always willing to score. Entry can be gained through the backdoor. There is also a smoky parlour in which a range of card games can be played and bets laid on horses. In the event of an unexpected arrival by a snooping beak or pre, a burly, unshaven potman can be relied upon to delay their entrance while the culprit slips out into the spacious, overgrown garden. In a secluded corner of the garden is a large shed in which it is possible to watch and lay bets on illicit prizefights, presumably of the bare-knuckle variety.

The Cross Keys inn is equally insalubrious but, being located in Friardale, is more difficult to enter during the day. It is situated in Friardale Lane, at a little distance from the road. It is possible to slip in a side door. It boasts similar amenities and it is possible to play cards and billiards and, of course, to see a man about a horse there.

Both of these unsavoury establishments appear to offer accommodation to persons of limited means or of questionable character. We are told little of the details of this accommodation, but it usually appears to be only single rooms which would, no doubt, be as dingy as the rest of the establishment.

Any culprit emerging from either of these premises can provide the rather thin excuse that he was taking a short cut up from the river. Since this is technically possible, he may get away with lines, six on the bags or a flogging; unpleasant though this may be, it is preferable to expulsion. If, however, like the Bounder or others, you have a poor record in such matters, your tale is unlikely to be believed. If the rotter returns to school late from a shady excursion, he must remember to suck some cachous and to claim that he took the wrong train and was caught in a carriage with a large number of coarse, racing men.

There are also certain shady activities which are deeply attractive to rotters. Chief among these is putting on a fag. Cigarettes are to be found in abundance in the studies of the Bounder, Hazeldene, Skinner, Snoop and Stott, Angel and Kenney, Loder, Walker, Carne, Price and Hilton. All prefer a more expensive brand, although hard-up chaps like Skinner must usually settle for the cheaper variety. He is, however, always happy to cadge more expensive smokes from Smithy, as is Hazeldene. Similarly, Kenney and Price have no qualms about helping themselves freely to the lavish supplies of their wealthy study mates, Angel and Hilton respectively. Loder, Walker and Carne, the three black sheep of the 6th, seem to have a sufficient supply of pocket-money to be able to afford substantial qualities of the best brand. When one of them runs out of smokes, he is always welcome to help himself to the supply of one or other of his chums.

Whence comes this never-ending supply of cigarettes? The source of supply of these unwholesome items is not regularly specified in Greyfriars yarns. Without doubt, the bad hats do stock up while painting the town red during the Vac. It is, however, doubtful whether these supplies would last for the entire term. The tobacco counter at the sweetshop in Courtfield is one possible source; so, too, is Uncle Clegg's in Friardale. It is also possible to sneak out of bounds to one of the pubs in

the area. There is probably also a specialist tobacconist in Lantham. It is at a sufficient distance from the school to allow the occasional, discreet visit. Over at Highcliffe Ponsonby and his crew of knuts can probably have smokes delivered directly to their studies without raising an eyebrow from Snobby Mobby and the rest of the slack administration at that school. We are told that Mr Mobbs will always loudly clear his throat to make his presence very clear in the passage of the 4th Form studies before entering Pon's study - to give the slackers plenty of time to extinguish their smokes before he enters. In all the Greyfriars yarns smoking is an important symbol of slacking and bucking authority. This is why it appeals occasionally to others, such as Bunter, Hazeldene or Nugent Mi, who enjoy the opportunity to prove to all and sundry that they can be rorty and kick over the traces. Although Smithy undoubtedly enjoys smoking, for him it is also a very important symbol of being up against the beaks and showing his peers his indifference to authority. Price, Loder and Pon, on the other hand, really do not need to impress anyone; their genuine enjoyment of smoking appears to reflect that they are rotten to the core. Hilton, the slacker of the 5th, is casual about smoking, as about most things. He indulges when in Price's company but is happy to forsake it when engaging in wholesome activities - he is a competent cricketer - or keeping company with the better elements of his Form.

Although smoking is presented as a significant breach of school regulations, considerable emphasis is also placed upon its unhealthy effects. Smokers are invariably short of wind and always have bellows to mend in games or in scraps. Hardcore smokers are described as pasty-faced and weedy. From the earliest days, the Greyfriars yarns provide clear warnings about the unhealthy effects of smoking; the fact that only rotters indulge helps to reinforce Frank Richards' message that young people should follow a healthy lifestyle.

Cigars are not infrequently mentioned, but even the most hardened smokers never seem to indulge in them. No doubt the expense, as well as the overwhelming strength of this form of tobacco, is a significant deterrent. On a couple of memorable occasions, Bunter will indulge in a cigar purloined from Mr Prout and pay the severe consequences of internal disquietude!

Playing cards for money is also a key activity for rotters. Nap is the invariable favourite of all the Greyfriars chaps. Entire half holidays have been spent in studies, the boxroom, the Cloisters and on Popper's Island, by rotters playing this enticing card game. The poorer chaps will play for a penny a point, while more reckless plungers may play for up to a half a crown per point. Cheating at cards is unheard of among the Greyfriars chaps, although Ponsonby will think nothing of using his slick card-sharping skills to fleece Greyfriars mugs such as Bunter or Nugent Mi. He does not, however, ever attempt to fleece his Highcliffe cronies - not out of any respect for friendship, but, rather, because he knows that they would twig his game! The keen-witted Bounder has well-developed card-sharping skills but will only use them in a good cause. On one memorable occasion he effortlessly cheats Ponsonby for the exact sum which Ponsonby had fleeced from a foolish fag. Once he has made that sum, he puts it in his pocket and proceeds to play honestly. On another memorable

occasion Bunter, with several pounds in his pocket, which he has borrowed from D'arcy, is swindled of the entire amount by two card-sharping touts in a third-class train carriage. On that occasion he plays poker for half crown points and is led astray by his fatuous greed.

It is clear in all the episodes featuring cards that there is little pleasure in the game itself, only a desire to make money. Again and again weaker players stagger away in the state of a squeezed orange. It is interesting that Ponsonby, although always keen to swindle Greyfriars chaps at nap, usually prefers to play bridge with Gadsby, Monson and Vavasour. They are all happy to spend entire vacations playing from afternoon until well past midnight. The Bounder will occasionally join them, but usually seems to prefer nap. He certainly has the intellect to play bridge but never seems to encourage it at Greyfriars. Skinner also has the intellect for bridge, but not the resources to join Ponsonby and Co at the table.

Card playing is invariably accompanied by heavy smoking; there are many descriptions of just how thickly laden with tobacco smoke the atmosphere becomes. There is little doubt that alcohol must also accompany some games in the pubs or at hired villas during the hols, but it features in very few episodes. The Bounder drinks champagne in the very early days and tempts Hazeldene to do likewise, but the presence of alcohol is usually only implied at most. Bunter, while on holidays and in the mood for fatuous folly, will occasionally try to order a cocktail or whisky and soda. He does so to try to show that he is no goodie-goodie and that he is a real man. The Famous Five invariably intervene to ensure that the contents of these alcoholic beverages are only taken externally by the fat Owl.

Another of the attractions of pubs, as well as of houses of the wealthy, is the billiard room. Games of 100 up, with a quid on the game, feature regularly in the escapades of rotters. As with card games, there seems to be little interest in the game itself but an intense desire to make easy money. Billiard sharpers, as unscrupulous as card sharpers, periodically occur in the various yarns. It is also around a billiard table in a disreputable establishment that Ponsonby and others will make the acquaintance of adult rotters who will take them up for various nefarious reasons. It never appears to occur to naïve teenagers - even to so sharp and unscrupulous a young rascal as Pon - that a grown-up man such a as Captain Marker, with considerable experience of the less desirable aspects of life, would have an altruistic interest in the company of schoolboys. Nevertheless, whether he realises he is being used or not, he is flattered by the company bestowed upon him and happy to fall in with various nefarious plans. No doubt he aspires to emulate them in his adult life. Even the cynical Bounder is occasionally lured by one of these rascals.

Backing horses and following the racing results are also regular activities for rotters. Throughout the Greyfriars saga there are countless references to sporting papers, often coloured pink, and to their significance. All rotters seem to like to follow the results closely and to back a particular horse on its form. Fine judges of horseflesh though they believe themselves to be, rotters seem only to end up making generous contributions to bookmakers' bankrolls. Invariably, when they place a bet, the greasy individual accepting the money assures them that they are on to a good thing. These unsavoury, overweight individuals, with names like Banks or Spratt, all share battered bowler hats, a greasy countenance, loud waistcoats and a propensity for misplacing the aspirate. It never appears to occur to the bad hats that a tout would not be so pleased to accept a bet if he were certain that the horse would not lose!

One of the most significant challenges for a rotter interested in the gee-gees is the logistic exercise of placing a bet - "getting on". Certainly, bets are laid during shady excursions out of bounds on Half Holidays or after Lights Out, but these are not sufficiently frequent to allow regular bets to be placed. Moreover, the date of the excursion may not be sufficiently close to race day. Form Masters' telephones are a popular way of communicating with bookmakers, as are anonymous notes. The threat of getting copped while on the 'phone and the close supervision of boys' correspondence make both options risky. Tipping a hard-up or naive Junior - such as Nugent Mi or Bunter - is also risky because the involvement of a third party increases the likelihood of detection. Juniors are also known to blab. Generally speaking, most of the local bookmakers are happy to accept bets on tick from established clients. They know that the young gentlemen from the big school are well supplied with cash and, through fear of exposure, terrified to leave a debt outstanding. The young gentlemen, in turn, are always happy to make bets on tick because of the unfailing belief that they have spotted a winner this time; this means that they expect to be collecting a payment, not making one. Many a time and oft do both Greyfriars and Highcliffe chaps lose their shirts on horses which do not live up to expectation. Despite the bitter disappointment at losing, the financial embarrassment and the

occasional struggle to pay a bookmaker whose manner changes from obsequious to menacing, their keenness to plunge again as soon as possible is never dulled.

Travelling to Wapshot for an afternoon at the races is a popular way to spend a Half holiday, but is not often possible. Race days do not occur every Saturday and, moreover, they may often clash with school fixtures, compulsory practice days or, of course, Extra School. In addition, it is not practicable to join the racing crowds travelling there by train. It is necessary to hire a car in order to arrive and depart as discreetly as possible. Nevertheless, while at the races, a rotter can bet directly with bookmakers, rub shoulders with a mob of racing touts and smoke to his heart's content.

As can be seen, there is a wide range of exciting activities in which rotters can indulge at Greyfriars, but a busy routine, strict supervision and study searches make a rotter's life perilous. There are many useful places in studies for the concealment of illicit items. For cigarettes, these include loose floorboards, crevices in the chimney, books with most of their pages cut out to create a hollow, toffee tins or butterscotch packets and camouflaged places in unused lumber in the drawers of desks. The usual preferred place of concealment for racing papers is underneath the cushion of the study armchair. Possession of playing cards does not, per se, appear to constitute an offence, but using them for gambling certainly is. Generally speaking, card-playing does not occur except in the studies of rotters and then only for money.

Many of the best-known yarns featuring the trials and tribulations of a rotter feature him being dunned for payment for a racing debt which he just cannot afford to pay. A rotter's life does not run smoothly; a run of bad luck and a series of spectacular losses can incur debts mounting up to as much as £20. For some, such as Hazeldene, their resources are just too slender to have any hope of raising the wind. In such cases, the cash must be raised by borrowing from good chaps or from a gullible and good natured sister. Even scapegraces with generous relatives and plenty of pocket-money encounter occasional cashflow problems. In desperation, they increase their ultimate liability by placing even more bets on tick, until the debt becomes so alarmingly high that their credit is cut off.

Several yarns feature the temptation to steal as the unfortunate victim is hounded by demand for payment and threats of exposure but recoils in horror at the prospect of overstepping the line of probity and committing blatant theft. Occasionally, a theft is committed but the money replaced or returned before discovery. In such instances the culprit desperately attempts to refer to his misdeed as borrowing. All yarns featuring this theme present a superb narration of the mental anguish of various rotters, but not one of these characters ever permanently reforms.

In the early days of the Magnet in particular, there are some examples of Greyfriars chaps falling into the clutches of a Jewish money-lender as a result of gambling debts. This theme vanishes from later yarns, perhaps to allow the focus of the tale to be solely upon the foolishness and desperation of the gambler and his dichotomous relationship with local touts.

Breaking out after Lights Out is extremely hazardous; there may well be a beak or Pre on the prowl or an unexpected dormitory inspection. A downy beak like Quelch

will not be taken in by a dummy in the bed. On more than one memorable occasion, Redwing occupies the Bounder's bed and pretends to be fast asleep, while leaving the dummy in his own bed. Quelch, satisfied that there is a sleeper in the bed in which he is interested, takes no more than a cursory glance at the bed which is normally occupied by one of the most upright and honourable chaps in his Form.

The most exciting gambling prospect for a hardcore rotter of the Greyfriars saga is a visit to a casino. For Smithy, Pon and others it is the highlight of a trip abroad. Such excursions are only possible during vacations or whole Holidays. It is quite possible for a gang of rotters to take a day trip across the Channel to France to spend the afternoon and evening awestruck by the allure of the green, baize-covered tables. On these occasions we see the futility of systems and how easy it is even for an extremely wealthy rotter to stagger away penniless. During the Hollywood series, the Bounder, lured by a quick-witted, gold- digging adult rotter, visits an illegal nightclub/ casino which is raided by the police and he spends a night in the cells. Yarns featuring French or Swiss casinos usually form the backdrop for a particularly dramatic and spectacular manifestation of the worst aspects of the character and subsequent temporary reformation of the Bounder or Hazeldene. The reformation brings about a rapprochement between the rotter and the Famous Five and a period of bland conformity to the straight and narrow before the next reckless outbreak.

Although many Greyfriars yarns often feature repentance, contrition and apparent reform, the same rotters repeatedly turn back to the irresistible attractions of pink papers, smokes, playing cards, the click of billiard balls and the rattle of the roulette wheel. This does not mean that these characters are necessarily rotten to the core. Rather, they are plausible characters in whom good and evil are in regular and repeated conflict. This cycle of "rotterfulness" is one of the most fascinating of the recurring themes of the Greyfriars yarns.

For generations, schools have been criticised for failing to prepare students for life, for only making them expert in the elucidation of dead languages and other useless skills. The recurring theme of the rotter lured into dangerous and unsavoury pastimes is a timely reminder for all Greyfriars readers to beware of the evils in the wider world. Frank Richards is much praised for his attempts not to preach or to present himself as a prig; nevertheless, his splendid tales would have done much to alert his adolescent readers to the dangers and temptations of the world around them.

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WANTED: Boys' Friend Weekly covering Rookwood School 1915-1926, either single issues or bound volumes. GRAHAM BRUTON, Flat 1, 23 Surbiton Hill Park, Surbiton, Surrey, KT5 8EQ.

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WANTED: No 49 Vol 2 Bullseye, John Richards, 9 Hedgerow Drive, Kingswinford, DY6 7SA. Tel. 01384 295436. E-mail: jonvivrichards@aol.com.

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Greyfriars Vignettes

by Ted Baldock

MEMORIES

When the dew
Of youth was on us, and the unclouded blue
Above us, and hope waved her wings o'er all,
The ancient elms, green court, and tinkling call
Of Chapel bell, gowns flitting o'er the view
To Hall or lecture ...
Nor time nor place not circumstance can render
Our hearts indifferent to those years long fled,
With their rich store of recollections tender.

Wilton, R. Lyra Pastoralis

In the shadowy realms of sleep many small doors in the recesses of the mind open. Doors of which we are unaware in our waking moments. They reveal visions and thoughts from the far distant days of yesteryear. They merge and mingle in our dreams, incidents and activities in which we have participated, things we may have said and done - and read.

So it is that we are recalled to certain moments, the reading of particular books which have left a permanent impression in our minds. It is in the unconscious state of sleep that they manifest themselves - fleeting thoughts which carry us into another dimension. So proceeds the panoply of images, those strange, often dear phantoms, as we lie in the kingdom of sleep, that blessed state bestowed upon us by the kindly deity Morpheus.

Herbert Vernon Smith stood at the Remove landing window looking at the cheery activity in progress in the quad. There Harry Wharton and Co. and sundry other removites were giving Horace Coker a rather exciting time midst much laughing on their part and stentorian protests from the fifth former.

Smithy was feeling at odds with the world in general. Events had not been going too well with him of late. Certain horses had failed singularly to live up to the expectations of their owners. Two had quite outrageously trailed in the rear of the field after having been tipped as 'sure winners' by no less an expert than Joseph Banks as 'sure winners', ("special inside information Master Vernon Smith"). As a result Smithy had invested - if that is the correct term in this instance - quite a large sum of money on each of them, the unhappy result being that his wallet, usually rather a bulky appendage in his pocket, now presented quite a slim appearance.

There was another contributing factor to the Bounder's evil mood. Events had not been particularly uplifting in the city of late. Whether the Bears had been savaging

the Bulls or the Bulls had been unsporting to the Bears is not too clear. But of the end result there was no doubt whatever. Mr. Vernon Smith had lost a considerable amount of money which, of course, had led to a diminishing return of the usual flow of 'fivers' and not infrequently 'tenners' in Smithy's direction at Greyfriars.

Ample reason surely for the lowering contortion now firmly embedded on his naturally hard features. Reason - perhaps - also for the powerful kick he had bestowed upon the trousers of William George Bunter when that youth, ever hopeful, had had the temerity to request a small loan until a postal order which he was hourly expecting should arrive.

To add to the mounting annoyances, Joseph Banks from his dingy retreat, the 'Three Fishers', was seeking early payment of former betting debts and hinting at rather unpleasant consequences should they be too long delayed. All of which did noting to improve Smithy's savage mood. His bosom chum, Tom Redwing, had tried to bring oil to bear upon troubled waters with little success. When the Bounder was up against it he became a difficult character to reason with and Tom had been rudely rebuffed, after which he had remained, although silent, very anxious for his friend.

It has been said that troubles, once started, tend to advance in battalions. This was proved fairly conclusively in the formroom that morning. Mr. Quelch had been a trifle sharper than usual when Smithy had come up with a construe which was decidely far below the level demanded by the Remove master. It was just another little pin-prick and did little to improve the Bounder's present ill humour.

Life has ever proved to be an up and down affair. There must be few who would disagree with this assessment. Certainly Vernon Smith in his present predicament would agree. It was only that morning, having suffered the sharp edge of Mr. Quelch's tongue, in form, that Harry Wharton saw fit to approach him and upbraid him for being in less than his usual excellent form in the match with St. Jim's a day or so previously. A match which had been almost lost owing to the Bounder's momentary lack of concentration. Life was indeed a little unkind, even a trifle beastly at times. So thought the Bounder on receiving this latest 'pin prick'. He had been less than gentlemanly in his reply to the Captain of the Remove, and Wharton had turned his back and left him fulminating.

We, the onlookers of the unfolding drama of the Greyfriars story, may take comfort in the sure knowledge that Smithy will triumph over his troubles, and that Joseph Banks will receive his just reward in the fullness of time. This is, I believe, one of the enduring charms of the Greyfriars tales. We know that we shall never, however bleak the circumstances, be losing any of the fellows we know so well.

Except for the occasional rustle of a newspaper or the clink of a coffee cup, a cathedral-like silence reigned in Masters common room. With their labours over, relaxation was the order of the day, or rather evening. A bright fire was crackling cheerfully in the hearth and Mr. Twigg, who waged a daily battle in guiding the

destinies of the second form, had his carpet-slippered feet comfortably resting on the fender. It was very peaceful and eminently desirable after a day in the form room where complete attention and application were ever a little difficult to maintain.

Mr. Hacker and Mr. Capper were locked, with heads close together, over a game of chess. Judging from the expression on Mr. Hacker's face - always a trifle acid - it would appear that the game was not going exactly as he would have wished. Mr. Capper, on the other hand was looking positively smug, if a public school master may be accused of such a commonplace failing.

Mr. Quelch was not among the members of the staff in the common room then, he being closeted in his study poring over the love of his life, the long awaited "History of Greyfriars". A sharp observer of the scene would not have failed to notice that the remove master had removed his telephone from its moorings, thus ensuring the desired peace from any interruption. It has long been the custom of scholars to 'sport their Oak' when engaged in serious study. A custom which may possibly seem rather unsociable yet quite essential if peace is to be protected from intruders.

But life never seems to proceed as we would wish. Heavy footsteps were heard approaching in the passage. Mr. Quelch paused with suspended pen and listened, hoping against hope that the heavy tread would continue past his door and proceed elsewhere - anywhere so long as it did not stop at his door. He recognised those footsteps immediately as belonging to his colleague, Mr. Prout, the fifth form master. There was no mistaking the ponderous and heavy sound they created. Here was the 'enemy' at the gate.

He sat very still and waited, the while breathing a silent prayer that his peace would not be shattered.

The two masters were old friends, both being long time colleagues on Dr. Locke's staff. In their long careers they had shared many vicissitudes, but there were times ... The heavy footsteps stopped and there was a tap on the door. The remove master remained silent hoping perhaps that Mr. Prout would assume that he was not at home and take himself off. Alas for such wishes. Prout knocked again and a fruity boom was heard, "Are you there, Quelch, I wish to speak to you". Then the door was opened and the plump features of the fifth form master peered into the study. "Why, Quelch, there you are, did you not hear me knock?" he exclaimed. Mr. Quelch, throwing in the towel, as it were, replied: "Oh is that you, Prout, come in, I was rather busy..." He broke off, accepting defeat with such grace as he could muster and Prout rolled in.

Thus was another evening of quiet study shattered. However, Mr. Quelch being the gentleman we know him to be accepted the situation with equanimity. We see these two old friends comfortably established before the fire. The one eager to reminisce upon bygone days with their many and varied escapades and conquests. The other sitting quietly listening, inwardly smiling at his companion. 'Old Pompous' liked nothing better than an audience, the difficulty being just how to stop him once he was in full flood. As he boomed on, the remove master fought a battle to prevent himself from nodding off. Perhaps the welcome heat of the fire may have contributed to the

problem. Had Quelch succumbed to sleep it would have seemed unforgivable.

One may picture the scene should such a catastrophe have occurred. A swelling and purpling Prout, a booming outburst of indignation followed by the slamming of Mr. Quelch's door as he stormed away. But we know that a night of thunder, wind and storm will be followed by a serene and sunlit dawn which is no small relief to those among us who know and admire these two gentlemen so well.

"Where is that fat villain."

Such was the cry echoing up and down and beyond the remove passage.

"I'll pulverise him, I'll slaughter him, let me get my hands on him and I'll kick him from here to ..." Exactly where the Owl was to be kicked was not divulged in the ensuing uproar from Harry Wharton's study.

It was an old and familiar story - as old, almost, as the Eden tree. We are told that there exists nothing new under the sun and here was fresh evidence - if it were needed - to verify this old adage.

Food was missing. In this case a handsome cake which had arrived that morning from Wharton Lodge and which, with what amounted to almost criminal negligence, Harry Wharton had failed to place in the cupboard. He had also failed to lock his study door. It was this simple devastating fact that was generating all the ire and excitement. True, it was a rather special item of confectionary. It was large and of noble appearance, in fact it was quite magnificent. It may be safely said that it was a king in the hierarchy of cakes. It has been dispatched by special carriage from Wharton Lodge as a reward to the Captain of the remove to celebrate an especially good report of work accomplished during the previous term.

Carefully unpacked, it had been carefully placed in the centre of the study table, there to repose until the great moment of celebration, that magic of moments - teatime.

But alas, "the best laid schemes of mice and men" going oft agley was once again to be proved in no uncertain manner. It has been alleged (not without good reason) that William George Bunter could detect the aroma of a cake from the most remarkable distance. So it was that the Owl became aware that something very special in cakes had arrived in the remove passage. It was but the matter of a minute or so to determine just where it was located. The rest was, for Billy Bunter, comparatively easy. Awaiting the moment when the occupants of the study were abroad he had by methods best known to himself achieved possession of that giant among cakes.

In a dusky - and dusty - corner of the box-room the Owl had gone to ground. It was an excellent place for anyone desiring temporary privacy to be out of the public eye for a while. In a far corner concealed by a barricade of trunks and boxes he had established his fat person, together with the cake, the absence of which was causing so much uproar and mayhem in the passage below.

He sat for a moment and gazed upon that mouthwatering specimen before him. In cases like the present it was well to get on with the serious matter of destroying the

evidence, and he lost no time. Very soon the unmistakable sounds of champing jaws and the process of mastication were heard in the dimness of the box-room. Dusky as it was, Bunter could see well enough to proceed with the delightful task while, faintly in the background, it seemed a long way off, the shouts and threats of Harry Wharton and Co. could be heard.

The situation was in no way original. It had happened many times in the past and the Owl was quite aware that, although the immediate present spelt danger for him, eventually after quite a short period of time the excitement, the wrath and threats of vengeance would become quieter and more subdued, and would eventually die way. Relative calm would be restored. For the moment, however, discretion would seem to be indicated, and it may be said that the Owl on these occasions represented the very epitome of this virtue. Meanwhile his jaws were working overtime on the rapidly diminishing cake.

It is a quiet summer evening. The days' work is over and Gosling, the ancient custodian of the Greyfriars gate, is standing gazing with a meditatory eye along the shadowy, tree-lined reaches of Friardale Lane, waiting for the precise moment when he would perform the ceremony of 'Lock Up'.

Gosling was fond of the old well-trodden way. Crusty he may have been but there were certain things which never failed to touch a softer spot within him, a spot largely unknown to the world at large. Although unable to explain this emotion aroused in his ancient breast, it was an undisputed fact. He was fond of Friardale Lane.

Crustiness is, I imagine, much like any other characteristic, revealing itself in varying ways and styles. That with which the ancient Gosling was inflicted would be quite unlike - for example - the type exemplified by Mr. Quelch, the master of the remove. Could there possibly be an educated and well-informed crustiness distinguishable from the common or garden variety which we associate with "Gossy"? Surely an interesting question to debate.

There can be little doubt about the fact that the narrow winding lane which leads up to and beyond Greyfriars is a popular and well-loved lane. It has figured with different degrees of importance in so many Greyfriars adventures over the years that it has become, almost, a living relic in the memories of many readers.

"I shall have to take your name, Master Coker."

"Oh, don't be an old ass, Gosling, open up, there's a good fellow."

"Wot I says is this 'ere, you are late and I must book you."

"Don't say anything, Gosling. Just open the gate and let me through."

But in this particular duty Gosling is a slave to the letter of the law, which, at times, can prove a little dismaying not to mention exasperating to any fellows seeking entrance.

The above exchanges may be regarded as typical between Gosling and the unfortunate late-comer, the ancient keeper of the gate being adamant and punctilious to a degree in the execution of his duties.

There is a little lane I know
Not a hundred miles away
Where in my youth I loved to go
Where I would like to stay.
'Tis leafy, overhung by trees
It's cool and shady too,
By a furzy common where the breeze
Stirs day long 'neath the blue.
This little way meanders on
As seasons wax and wane
Steeped deep in history centuries long
And never does it change.
Faint echoes of the past are here
There's laughter and much mirth
To us, who know, it is quite clear
That this is hallowed earth.
Hard by there stands a grey old pile
Rich in history deep
Monastic in its style, the while
But now a school it keeps.
Greyfriars, not without its fame,
Stands four square to old time.
Forever may it stay the same
In a world of some decline.

* *

CALLING MORCOVE FANS!

I'm pruning some duplicates out of my Morcove Collection and can offer these Schoolgirls' Owns (weeklies) at £2.00 each, plus postage. (A discount of 10% if 10 copies or more are ordered.) 70,73, 78, 80, 81, 88, 90, 92, 94, 95, 96, 103, 106, 283, 284, 286, 288, 365, 444, 449, 490, 499. I may also soon be *seriously* thinning out my Schoolgirls' Owns so, if you are interested, please let me have a list of the numbers of you require.
MARY CADOGAN, 46 Overbury Avenue, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 6PY. Tel. 0208 650 1458.

* *

Gunby Hadath

by Chris Harper

My tastes are fairly catholic and, on the basis that we discuss Hamilton, Brooks and the Blake authors quite a lot, I wanted to focus on someone mentioned less often.

I wondered whether it should be someone like Harold Avery or Harry Collingwood, who are both favourites of mine, but in the end decided upon Gunby Hadath - perhaps that much better known to you - who is, with Richard Bird, probably my favourite school story author. (Perhaps we can come back to Avery and Collingwood another time.)

First of all, I have to confess to being by-no-means an expert, but such information as I have, I would like to share with you. The main object is to convey at least some of my enthusiasm so that those of you less familiar with Gunby Hadath will feel spurred to remedy the situation as soon as possible!

The paper I have the softest spot for is *The Captain,* closely followed by *Chums*, and I am fortunate enough to have a complete run of both. Hadath contributed to *Chums* until the year before it ceased publication in 1940, but he is most notably associated with *The Captain.*

A little background as to Hadath, the man. He was an all-round athlete himself. Captain of his school, St Edmund's, Canterbury, he later went up to Cambridge where he won college colours for cricket, rugby and soccer, none of which seemed to interfere with his scholastic achievements as he was awarded an M.A. with classical honours. After leaving university he became a member of the Wanderers Cricket Club and Brian Doyle's *Who's Who of Boys' Writers* tells me that he did play representative matches for the Gentlemen of Surrey. Perhaps he would have been equally distinguished on the rugby field, but, unfortunately, whilst a member of the Paignton team, on the eve of a trial for Devon, he was, apparently, sufficiently badly injured to draw a line under his progress in that field. It was then, perhaps, not surprising that sporting events were always prominent in his stories, and technical detail was always correct.

Also perhaps not surprisingly, Hadath chose to join the teaching profession and he was appointed senior classics master at the Guildford Grammar School. It was while he was there that he apparently developed his lesser-known talent for song-writing. Indeed, so successful were his songs, which were performed by people like Clara Butt, that he was able to devote the whole of his attention to them, later turning to writing, for which his admirers will be everlastingly grateful. As those of you familiar with *The Captain* will know, although public school stories were always featured, it was only about halfway into its 25 year run that they dominated the magazine to the extent to which we remember it.

The beginning of this period would have been about 1909 and it was in that year that the first school story by Gunby Hadath, entitled 'Foozle's Brilliant Idea', appeared.

This was the first of ten short stories concerning the exploits of a very interesting and enterprising schoolboy. Those of you familiar with *The Captain* will know that there was a half-yearly voting competition for the best story in the preceding volume. In fact, although 'Foozle' was awarded 12th place, it was the highest placed of school stories. Hadath was obviously extremely popular because the next voting competition showed him even higher. The final volume of *The Captain* appeared in 1924 and there was, of course, a Hadath novel in it, which was 'Pulling his Weight', given in six instalments.

Apart from *The Captain* and *Chums*, his stories appeared in many of the Amalgamated Press annuals, and the *Boys' Own Paper* of course, some under his pen-names John Mowbray, Felix O'Grady and James Duncan.

Those of you familiar with Hadath's work will, I hope, agree with me that he displayed a very keen understanding of the schoolboy and his ways. The stories nearly always came across with a good deal of humour, but he never allowed it to take such control that the situations developed into slapstick, which so often happened with other authors.

His characterisations were very carefully drawn. A character intended to be liked was, indeed, likeable and human. In my opinion, he was one of the few whose stories could be read and enjoyed at different levels by different age groups. Perhaps, in this respect, like Crompton's 'William' stories or, indeed, Hamilton's. A good example of this is the story of his I have only recently re-read called 'His Highness of Highfield'. It centres on what appears to be a happy-go-lucky character, Hudson, who is, in fact, quite a complex individual, and his antagonist, Dryden.

He wrote some sixty books in all and his stories have, seemingly, been popular in France, Belgium and Scandinavia as well as the United States. His popularity in France, together with the fact that he commonly wintered in the French Alps, was, no doubt, the reason for him being honoured by a French town. Several of his stories have been produced in Braille, too, and he was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

Practically all of Hadath's serials and short stories that appeared in *The Captain* were later published in book form, in some cases with the titles changed. Thus, 'The Feats of Foozle' became 'According to Brown Minor'. I have practically all of Hadath's novels, including the original 'Feats of Foozle', published by Adam and Charles Black in 1913. Another of his exceptionally well-drawn characters can be seen in the 'Sparrow' stories, collected as 'Sparrow in Search of Expulsion', 'Sparrow Gets Going' and 'Sparrow in Search of Fame'. He also wrote stories of life during the Second World War including 'The Swinger', 'The March of Time' and 'Fortune Lane'. The last of these, I understand, was the subject of a film.

Although Hadath is usually associated with the school story, this was not his sole theme. He wrote a very good historical story 'The Boar of Blaye', set against the background of The War of the Roses. This appeared in *The Captain*, too. He also wrote a number of adventure-type stories, including 'The Seventh Swordsman', 'The Mystery at Three Chimneys' and 'St Palfrey's Cross'.

To my mind, the only criticism that could be made of Hadath's work, and even that is highly subjective upon the reader, is that those looking for a straightforward yarn could find his brand of humour and sometimes subtle characterisations rather getting in the way of, and perhaps taking over, the story.

* *

Let Us Now Praise Infamous Men And The Authors Who Begat Them

by Derek Hinrich

Any commentary on Sexton Blake inevitably leads to a consideration of his great adversaries, but such consideration tends to concentrate upon the mention of half a dozen or so characters - George Marsden Plummer; Zenith the Albino; Leon Kestrel the Master Mummer; Dr Huxton Rymer and Prince Wu Ling (first among G.H.Teed's repertory of villains); Mr. Reece and the Criminals' Confederation; and King Karl of Serbovia. These, I suppose, are the cream of the first eleven but there are others worthy of note, the lower order perhaps, who are largely passed by.

William Murray Graydon (the father of Robert, the creator of the Criminals' Confederation) wrote more Sexton Blake stories than any other author and he created at least one notable villain, Basil Wicketshaw, unmentioned nowadays, I suppose, because Graydon either gave up writing Blakes in about 1930 (he was then 66) or he was dropped by the Associated Press because his style was considered old fashioned, and nobody took over Wicketshaw as George Marsden Plummer was handed on.

But Wicketshaw had presence... "The thin, masterful lips, the clean-shaven features, cut like the cameo of a Napoleon who lacked one spark of conscience or mercy, the deep-sunken eyes that of a sudden changed from a velvety black to a sapphire tint." He spoke in a languid drawling voice and, despite his north country sounding name was in fact, "Count Ivor Zuross, the outlawed Rumanian nobleman who had years ago been banned from his own country and from all decent society, the forger and swindler, daring and dangerous adventurer, ruthless assassin, who was wanted by the police of every capital in Europe. The very prince of criminals, a

masterful genius with a perverted brain, fertile in resource, and utterly fearless in his actions... the organiser of such amazing crimes as no one else had ever conceived of, the chief of a band of rogues as daring and desperate as himself, men bound to him by such blind loyalty that at his bidding, under the spell of his impelling magnetism, they would have followed him down the dark path of the River Styx, throttled Charon and seized his boat, crossed the black stream, and stormed the gates of Hell.

"The man who held his satellites in slavish thrall, moulding them to his own ends, sucking their brains from them as spiders suck the life-blood of flies entangled in their webs. The man whose audacity had spurred him so far as to attempt to kidnap, and carry off to Germany, a gathering of reigning monarchs and commanders of the Allied forces who had met in secret conclave at a country residence in England."

This was in 1916, some two years before Blake encountered that other Rumanian adversary, Zenith the Albino. While Zenith was rumoured to be a member of the Rumanian Royal house (a branch of the Hohenzollerns), Wicketshaw appears to have been drawn from an older strain of Balkan nobility. I would not be surprised to learn that the blood of Vlad the Impaler ran in his veins (without, however, any of Bram Stoker's embellishments).

Plainly Wicketshaw's schemes were as colossal as those of Baron Maupertuis, of the Netherlands-Sumatra Company, "the most accomplished swindler in Europe" who so bedevilled Sherlock Holmes in passing (the case is mentioned, but never related, by Watson) and he was well worthy of Blake's steel. They crossed swords on twelve occasions between 1916 and 1929. The passages I have quoted are taken from SBL1/26, *The Embassy Detective,* and give the flavour of the man.

William Murray Graydon, by the way, is one of two Blake authors mentioned in *The Oxford Companion to Edwardian Fiction* where he is credited with "writing fourteen books for boys from 1897 including *The Fighting Lads of Devon, or, in the Days of the Armada* (1900)", but no mention of Sexton Blake. The other is Cicely Hamilton, an unsuccessful provincial actress, lesbian feminist suffragette and socialist who, amongst other things "concentrated on writing sensational stories for cheap periodicals (preferring them to love stories)." Surely this cannot be a reference to *The Union Jack?* Apart from being the first woman to write Sexton Blake stories, I do not think Miss Hamilton need detain us. She wrote eight stories in the *UJ* between 1905 and 1908.1 have two and they are unremarkable.

An equally memorable opponent of Sexton Blake who merits more attention is Dr Ferraro whose criminal enterprises plagued Blake innumerable times between 1921 and 1940. Ferraro, too, was a man of parts. Blake's own estimation of him (in *UJ2/1290, Hands up London*) was quite complimentary in many ways.

"Dr. Ferraro was a fine surgeon originally. Indeed he was a man of great scientific attainments who might now be occupying a great position in the world - if it wasn't for some odd kink in his nature that turned him towards the excitement and hazards of crime. He might have been a great general in the war against disease, but instead he turned all his undoubted abilities to the organisation of crime.

"He built up a gang of crooks, and has engineered some remarkable coups,

which brought me into conflict with him. I have, with a bit of luck, succeeded in curbing his activities and breaking up his gang, most of whom are now either in prison or dead, but my work will not be completed till I have him, too.

"...but curiously enough, I have a great liking for him. He has always worked on the great scale, always shown a good deal of imagination. Unlike the generality of criminals, he has continually varied his methods, which is why he has never been put behind bars... Once in Africa, we actually travelled together, assisting each other on the most friendly terms..."

In addition to these attributes Dr Ferraro is a master of disguise, the virtually indispensable *sine qua non* of any self-respecting master criminal. The case in the story quoted concerns the theft from an absent-minded scientist friend of Blake's of the secret of his latest and potentially terrible discovery, a substance, called nihillite, which when activated destroys all matter not actually alive and turns it to grey dust (a tree, for instance, is safe but a plank is not).

You will note that Dr Ferrarro's descent into criminality is attributed by Blake to a kink or flaw in Ferraro's brain. Several of Blake's adversaries suffered from this sad defect. One such was that famous surgeon Dr Huxton Rymer and another was that wizened Punchinello, Professor Kew, the head of St. Cyr's Hospital, who, at a whim took to a life of crime in 1913 and continued to plague Blake for a dozen years, first in stories by his creator, A.C .Murray (and often in company with the thuggish Count Ivor Carlac), and then in his last appearances by Gilbert Chester, once with Chester's precious pair, the Hales.

Gilbert Hale was an Old Harrovian, the son and grandson of Sheffield ironmasters. Having squandered his inheritance by his early twenties, he was saved from bankruptcy in 1923 by the lady whom he later married. Eileen Hale had been the secretary of a City moneylender before she took up with her future husband. She saved him and betrayed her employer by destroying all Hale's paper which the shylock held. Thereafter the Hales set up home in a Knightsbridge flat and proceeded to live well on nothing a year, like the Rawdon Crawleys. They were Bright Young Criminal Things similar to G.H. Teed's Three Musketeers, but rather more engaging. Gilbert swiftly became a jack of all crimes, equally adept at forgery, fraud, confidence trickery, and safe-cracking. I expect he cheated at cards, too. Eileen Hale subsequently was said to be American. I suppose she could, even so, still have been working in the City, but Blake's opponents often developed as they went along (not only his opponents. Inspector Coutts had two different Christian names, for example, before "George" was settled upon).

The Hales last appeared in *Detective Weekly* early in 1939 and they would have been in their late thirties by then, but surely still with some criminal life left in them, but although Gilbert Chester continued to contribute to the *Sexton Blake Library* until 1949, we had heard the last of the Hales. Perhaps he thought the time was no longer propitious for them, though wartime and post-war austerity would undoubtedly have offered rich pickings for such a couple. But by 1944 all the great criminals of the golden age had made their last bow.

For sheer malevolence and viciousness, however, no-one - not even the Mysterious Mr. Reece - exceeded Peter Brim, alias Peter the Spider, who gave Blake no end of trouble in 1927 and '28. Brim was a criminal mastermind whom Blake stumbled across almost by chance when he was asked to investigate the strange disappearance of an Indian fairground wrestler whom he eventually found had been forcibly substituted by Brim for a raja Brim had imprisoned whilst he looted the raja's fortune. Thereafter Brim tried to lure Blake into a trap by arranging for him to be engaged on a bogus investigation.

Brim was a monstrously, obscenely, fat sadist with a high-pitched voice, a worthy companion to Count Fosco or Caspar Gutman in the gallery of fat villains. The odd thing about Brim, too, was that although he operated with a considerable gang which he ruled with ruthless terror so that no-one dreamed of grassing, he had achieved this position with "no previous" as the police say. Certainly Inspector Coutts had never heard of him when asked by Blake, and found nothing in the files either. Surely he must have served an apprenticeship somewhere?

By the way, Ladbroke Black who wrote this splendid series in The Union Jack must have had a fondness for the name Peter Brim, for some four years later it turns up again as that of another character in *SBL2/354 Presumed Dead,* who this time is on the side of the angels (though perilously near joining them at one point). Peter Brim is the name of a sturdy, good-hearted but naive smallholder who is ruthlessly framed for murder by another vicious mastermind and condemned to death. He escapes from prison by chance and Blake takes up his case. The mastermind eventually takes poison to escape the gallows. This villain does not himself really merit inclusion in this list as he appears only once and then almost peripherally.

Still, I think it's long enough to be going on with for now.

Library Chat

by Derek Ford

There was still this lead Eric Parker illustration when Gilbert Chester wrote this 1942 SBL casebook. The prologue tells of the confusion of a threatened Napoleonic invasion. Peregrine Bryant is about to quite Swaffenham on a nag he has overpaid for, when he meets up with Mr Decker. 230 guineas are still owing to Decker for land, and a receipt, dated June 3, 1805, is improvised on the back cover of Bryant's *The Compleat Angler* as quittance. Unfortunately, he meets highwayman Martin, is shot, and his body conveyed to the Caesar's Arms, where the landlord, Jack Trinder, rummages among his belongings and takes the book 'The Angler'. And there is a parrot to cry "put it under the bed" as he does so.

Now there is Jack Trinder's grandson, Ben, being nagged at by his wife to give his "heirloom" books from the Caesar's Arms days to salvage, including 'The Angler,

By GILBERT CHESTER.

A Thrilling Detective Adventure of Special Topical Interest.

THE PROLOGUE.

THE narrow cobbled street was agog with excitement as Peregrine Bryant entered the George and Dragon, a well-kept coaching house that stood in the heart of the small country town. Both before the inn and also private houses, conveyances were loading up. And the clatter of iron shoes on the cobble stones added to the confusion.

"A place in the coach, sir?" the landlord echoed, as Bryant put a question. "Bless you, no. There's not a chance of it. Nor one neither, if there was a 'undred coaches leaving this very hour. "Arf off their 'eads they is. An' you can't blame 'em. I'd be off myself if I hadn't my blessed all sunk in this 'ouse, and what's stored down there in the cellars."

"But surely——?" Bryant began, when a jangling noise in the distance broke the surrounding uproar—bells clanged harshly together.

"That'll be 'Opewell Church," the

which has never been claimed Hunting this is now Edson Maule who has become possessed of the diary of Peregrine Bryant.

Sexton Blake is consulted by a descendant of Bryant's daughter, Amyas Judson, to find Maule, whom he is employing, who has disappeared. Tinker finds that Maule has been murdered in Ben Trinder's back yard.

Blake continues the case for a search for the Caesar's Arms. Old Lady Quarlle, whose hobby was noting down the names of public houses, is consulted. Her ancient parrot Satan screeches "put it under the bed" when the inn is mentioned. She recalls an elopement in 1859 when their chaise smashed a wheel on the bridge leading to the inn. Later Lady Quarlle is found dead in bed. Then Judson is found stabbed and his body thrown in the river.

RAF officer, Jim Hills, a friend of the Trinder family, borrows the fatal 'Angler'. Returning to camp be leaves the book on the train, he is doped and ends up at the Caesar's Arms, where Blake later rescues him. It is the home now of a certain Mr Decker.

Blake then puts the sister of Judson in the protection of Hills at the Avalon Hotel, where she is staying. He recovers Bryant's diary and reads about Decker's receipt in the 'Angler': "So the land at Shuttlwick is now unencumbered... "At the Avalon, Judson's sister receives a telephone call from "Lady Quarlle" to go immediately to her country cottage where she has found important papers. With Hills she catches the train... and they end up tied in a disused station with a suitcase time-bomb. At the Avalon, Blake is handed a note to tell him they have gone to Lady Quarlle's. He is just in time to grab the suitcase and fling it away.

A gun crashes, then they are pursuing Decker to his death under a railway engine. And the explanation of the foregoing is revealed by Sexton Blake. When Peregrine Bryant paid over those 230 guineas the large strip of land he got back was along what was then a desolate stretch of coast. But the land illegally remained in the hands of the Decker family, who had become millionaires as the marshland grew into a thriving seaside town. But as Blake says "of course there are considerable legal difficulties ahead".

And for a bonus to that great case we got two magazine corners and a "Laughter in Court": Wife: "The happiest time of my life was when my husband was in Mesopotamia. He says it was his happiest time too, so I wish to goodness he was back in the blessed place" - and there were eight other examples.

As a footnote to the above, I recently read of a computer programme Netsumm, which was able to reduce books of any length to a single sentence. I imagined the above SBL: "Blake fingers highwayman 'Angler' to million pound property swindle". With that sort of "read" you would be able to complete the Sexton Blake papers before you drew your pension!

Sexton Blake on Radio

by Norman Wright

The very first Sexton Blake radio serial began on 26 January, 1939. It was an adaptation of Berkeley Gray's (E.S. Brooks) *Sexton Blake Library* novel, "Three Frightened Men", which had been published in October, 1938. Obviously some preparation had gone into the serial for the BBC did not just pick one of the countless Blake stories already there and waiting. The blurb on the title page of "Three Frightened Men" prepared readers for the dramatisation. "This story is specially written for the great Sexton Blake radio serial. Do not miss it." Readers could easily have missed that brief note, tucked away as it was under the author's name. What is interesting is that Brooks should have been selected to write the story for the dramatisation. I've always regarded him as one of the best Blake writers but not everyone would agree with that. Even more interesting was that Brooks chose to write this Blake tale under his Berkeley Gray pen-name. He'd invented the 'Berkeley Gray' name in March 1937 for his second Norman Conquest novella in *The Thriller* but, apart from the boys' novel "The Lost World of Everest" first published in *Modern Boy* and then published in book form by Collins (first in 1941 and then many times right through to the 1960s), he'd not used it for anything other than the Norman Conquest stories in *The Thriller* and for the Conquest novels. My thought is that Brooks believed the publicity surrounding the radio serial might help sell a few of his books. So he wrote the story as Berkeley Gray with an eye to book sales on the strength of the publicity - and who can blame him.

Another point of interest in this Blake novel is that Brooks introduces Chief Inspector Bill Williams of Scotland Yard into the story. Now, as many of you will know, Bill Williams was Norman Conquest's protagonist and as far as I am aware this was his only appearance in a Blake story.

If listeners had failed to notice the announcement of the radio serial in the Sexton Blake Library they could hardly fail to sit up and listen at the editorial announcement in *Detective Weekly* some three months later:

> ONLY TWO WEEKS - and then begins the great new wireless serial play bringing our famous Sexton Blake over the air to you for the first time. There have been Sexton Blake films, and to-day this grand character stands out as the most famous detective of fiction still in existence. When most of our fathers were young they read and were thrilled by the adventures of Sexton Blake of Baker Street, and to-day this great man and his assistant, Tinker, are more popular than ever - and with the fathers as well as the sons, and, indeed, with mothers and daughters, too. Sexton Blake is a personality everybody enjoys reading about - and now everybody will be able to hear him in one of his most thrilling cases broadcast by the BBC. "Enter Sexton Blake", which is the title of the radio play, will have its first dramatic instalment on Thursday, January 26th, at 3.15pm in the London Regional programme,

> and also at 7.30pm in the National programme. From then on you will hear it at these times every following Thursday for twelve weeks. And here's where *Detective Weekly* is out to score a big hit! ... We have arranged to give you the story of this radio play in serial form, starting the same week as the broadcast.

When the radio serial found its way into the pages of *Detective Weekly* in the issue dated January 28th, 1939, the cover boldly proclaimed: "Enter Sexton Blake - Story of the RADIO PLAY begins inside". The paper certainly made the most of Blake's radio debut. Much of the editorial, was taken up with it:

> Now, however, comes a new venture which will bring him (Blake) countless new friends who, though they will almost certainly have heard of him, have not before actually sampled the excitement of following his gripping adventures. This week Sexton Blake goes on the air! Commencing this Thursday, the B.B.C. are broadcasting a specially adapted serial play..."Enter Sexton Blake", featuring George Curzon in the role of Blake and Brian Lawrence as Tinker, will be broadcast in twelve instalments in a new feature entitled 'Lucky Dip'... make sure to listen to this grand entertainment. And make sure, too, to follow the story of the play week by week in *Detective Weekly.*

The following week, banner headlines proclaimed, "Sexton Blake on the Air", above a huge Parker illustration of Blake and Tinker speaking into an enormous microphone. The editor gleefully informed readers that the circulation had gone up sharply due to the radio show, but that they still had to do their bit by passing on their copy of the paper to a friend who had not yet made its acquaintance. *Detective Weekly* continued to serialise the story for the radio show's twelve week duration.

"Enter Sexton Blake" was adapted for radio by Ernest Dudley, who was soon to become well-known, to radio listeners as the "Armchair Detective" – and who has visited the London Old Boys Book Club on a couple of occasions.

E.S. Brooks, never one to waste a good plot, was later to adapt "Enter Sexton Blake" and use it as the basis of his 'Ironsides of the Yard' novel "Mad Hatters Rock", published by Collins in 1942 - and incidentally, one of the easiest of the Ironsides novels to find as it was reprinted frequently in cheap editions.

The first Blake radio serial obviously went down well with listeners and a second serial featuring the detective began on 12th March, 1940. It was entitled "A Case for Sexton Blake" and was serialised in four issues of *Detective Weekly* beginning in number 371 on March 30th, 1940. This time it received less attention than its predecessor with a scant: "Sexton Blake on the air - story of the radio play starts inside."

Edward Holmes was the author of this adventure and he set his story in a castle on an island in a remote part of Northumberland. It had plenty of atmosphere and plenty of suspects, any one of whom could easily have been the murderer who

The Story of the RADIO PLAY

A CASE for SEXTON BLAKE

by **EDWARD HOLMES**

"The Man Walks Again" both the book and the film

Here it is! The Story of the B.B.C.'s Great Serial-Play . . . Starring SEXTON BLAKE.

SIR ROGER POWERS could stand

stalked the secret passages wearing the legendary iron mask, made famous by Alexandre Dumas:

> "It is a mask of iron. Black with age, its surface holds still the marks of the hammers that wrought it - wrought it in the profane image of a human face. Crooked fingers curl about the head of iron, lift it, until its basilisk stare meets the returning glare of the one in black.
> "Beautiful - powerful - terrible mask! Now again shall you walk in the night - walk with me and bring death to the house of Marthioly."

The tale had plenty of powerful description and a good deal of action and danger for Blake and Tinker before the identity of 'The Man in the Iron Mask' was finally revealed.

The radio adaptation of "A Case for Sexton Blake" was by Francis Durbridge, whose own famous "wireless" creation, Paul Temple, had made his debut just two years before, in April, 1938.

But to get back to "A Case for Sexton Blake". This time the part of Blake was taken by Arthur Young and Tinker was played by Clive Baxter. Arthur Young regularly appeared in dozens of radio and television plays before his death in 1959.

The Radio Times for March 15th 1940 featured good old Blake and Tinker on the cover - probably the only time they did. With the caption "Sexton Blake on the Job" there is a photograph of the two actors standing in front of a microphone with large magnifying glasses in their hands. Arthur Young looks far too old for Blake - certainly as I imagine Blake - while Clive Baxter looks suitably young for Tinker. SB appeared as part of the "Crime Magazine" segment, going out at 6.25. The programme consisted of: "Barton of the Yard" written by Jack Henry and Patrick Heale. This was followed by "The Odd Trick" - a five minute thriller. Then "Stop Press" - whatever that was about. Finally came "A Case for Sexton Blake".

The BBC in their infinite wisdom did not retain a single episode of either of those two early Blake serials.

Incidentally, Edward Holmes, the author of "A Case for Sexton Blake", was an editor at Amalgamated Press. Among the papers he edited was the short lived *Wild West Weekly*. He went on to be founder editor of the long running and highly successful *Knockout Comic*. It was Holmes who introduced Sexton Blake to Knockout which he scripted a splendid SB serial strip entitled "The Secret of Monte Cristo' - that had many similarities with the plot of "A Case for Sexton Blake". Only in the *Knockout* strip it was The Count of Monte Cristo rather than the Man in the Iron Mask who was causing all the trouble. This particular adventure was the only Sexton Blake strip in *Knockout* to be drawn by the great Eric Parker.

In 1967 the BBC produced a series of 'one off' Blake plays. They were written by Donald Stuart and starred William Franklyn as Blake, David Gregory as Tinker and Heather Chasen as Paula Dane. When I was involved with the Sexton Blake episode of the documentary "The Radio Detectives" it was found that the BBC did not have copies of any of the episodes of these 1967 recordings. The fact that most of the

Clive Baxter as Tinker and Arthur Young as Sexton Blake

episodes survived is mainly down to our own Ray Hopkins who taped them off air in 1967 on open reel tape. About 20 years ago Ray let me have the tapes and I dubbed them on to cassette. I made copies for people and those people in turn made copies for others. Nowadays copies of these recordings can be found all over the internet on PM3s, BUT they all originated from Ray's recordings - well done and thank you Ray!

* *

EXPELLED!

by Frances-Mary Blake

Carberry - Bully of the Sixth

Of course at a major public school like Greyfriars there was a strict discipline, unlike today - well, in state schools anyway.

Apart from lines, gatings, detentions, canings - even the seldom-imposed and so more dramatic floggings - there remained the final and apparently irrevocable sentence of Expulsion! (Not called Exclusion as the politically correct term is used nowadays.)

Unlike Herbert Vernon-Smith, who was expelled or threatened with expulsion more than anyone else, there were some 'bad hats' at Greyfriars who didn't escape the ultimate punishment.

First to be expelled was ERNEST LEVISON of the Remove in December 1908. He had arrived in *Magnet 18* so only managed a short career at the school before turning up later at St. Jims. (He became a thorough rotter there until the coming of his younger brother brought about his total reform.) At Greyfriars his major fault was suspicion.

He was not particularly defiant of authority and his stories merely depicted antagonism with his Form and especially with Harry Wharton. He became 'bad' only in his last episode, when he went pub-haunting, but at the last moment he exonerated Wharton whom he had falsely accused. His expulsion followed. (In later years Levison visited his old school on several occasions as a re- formed character.)

CARBERRY, a Sixth Form prefect, had been bad from *Magnet* No.1. A bully, a coward and a breaker of school rules, he was in fact the forerunner of Loder who would easily take that place after Carberry was rather unexpectedly expelled in *Magnet* 107 (Feb. 1910). This was richly deserved for he was always an evil influence in the school. One of Carberry's associates in crime had been HERACLES IONIDES, the Greek dandy and bully. Although at the time he avoided Carberry's sentence, he vanished from *The Magnet* soon after January 1911 after a short and violent stay of two years. Presumably he was 'asked to leave'.

Some weeks later (*Magnet 173*) a spiteful and treacherous junior entered the Remove. ESAU HEATH took an evil dislike to Bob Cherry and so cleverly engineered Bob's expulsion over a stolen postal order that only Wharton and Linley still believed in their chum. With echoes of *The Winslow Boy*, Major Cherry proved his son's innocence in the next number and Heath was expelled instead.

Another newcomer to the Remove was expelled in a single dramatic episode (*Magnet* 198). FERNEY was a misfit in the Form who hated all those boys who had burned his precious American comics. He reacted by stealing the Craven Sports Cup, an act of revenge for which he was at once expelled.

RUPERT VALENCE, again of the Sixth, resembled a senior Hazeldene. Expelled for poaching on Sir Hilton Popper's estate in 1912 (*Magnet* 221), he returned to Greyfriars almost immediately in disguise (*Magnet* 224). Courtney kept his secret, correctly believing that Valence had learned his lesson, and indeed he was allowed to stay on under his own name. (However, early in 1918 he was forced to leave *The Magnet* for ever after its then editor, J N Pentelow, killed off Courtney and made Valence to blame, so the Sixth were badly disrupted by a substitute story.)

GADSBY of the Shell was a thief. He made a brief appearance and was sacked in a single number (*Magnet* 233, 1912) for the theft of a valuable postage stamp.

THEOPHILIS FLIPPS arrived and left the Remove in *Magnet* 246 (1912). His faddish enthusiasms and mad ideas to use harmful substances in the name of healthy living proved so dangerous that the Head and Mr. Quelch felt bound to send him away. Accordingly he was semi-expelled for the safety of the school.

"*His Own Betrayer*" (*Magnet* 279, June 1913) was FRANK CLEVELAND. In a dramatic, tragic episode he paid for one dreadful error at his previous school. Although redeemed by an act of courage, and forgiven by the Removites, he wished to depart when the truth of his background emerged. (Other far worse characters would escape such punishment, either through luck or last- minute repentance, like Gilbert Tracy, Edgar Caffyn and Edgar Bright.)

SIR HARRY BEAUCLERC, BT. came to the Remove a year later (*Magnet* 330) after a farm boy had first arrived in his place. The baronet was an atrocious young cad who antagonized all the Form. He was tossed in a blanket but continued scheming to get Bolsover disgraced through a forgery. When his misdeeds were discovered he was swiftly expelled and made an unlamented exit.

CECIL SNAITH was the second Shell member to deserve expulsion (*Magnet* 403, Oct.1915). He stole money from the Remove dormitory and was forced to confess his crime following a relentless cross-examination. Unusually he soon returned to the Greyfriars neighbourhood (*Magnet* 418) and

Flipps - The Terror of the Form

Ulick Stone - A Nasty Young Rogue

made trouble for the Bounder who was then on the path of reform. All to no avail and he departed for good. (Although a substitute writer resurrected him for a tale in 1923!)

In 1916 no German prince (even if naturalised) was likely to be popular in the Remove but, in a three-part series (*Magnet* 422-3/433), PRINCE RUPPRECHT VON RATTENSTEIN was rotten to the core and a snob to boot. Only Fish and Bunter toadied to 'His Highness'. The mischief-making prince did his worst to cause misunderstandings and quarrels in the Remove and even with the Cliff House girls. This 'snake in the grass' sought revenge on Wharton and concocted a plot with Banks the bookmaker, but it all backfired and he was *Kicked Out of School*, 'with rage and malice in his heart, never to return.'

Most expulsions took place in the earlier years but a few occurred from 1929 onwards. ULICK STONE (*Magnet* 1130-31) was a nasty young rogue who was deeply involved in his father's plans to steal the fortune of Arthur Durance. The son took the kidnapped boy's place in the Remove but he was first suspected, then exposed by the Bounder, and fled from Grey friars just in time to escape the police. He would most certainly have been expelled.

RALPH STACEY starred as Harry Wharton's enemy-double in a classic series (*Magnets* 1422-333,1935). Bitter hatred arose between the two 'cousins' as Stacey's blackguardly ways were always being blamed on Wharton. After weeks of misguided favouritism, Quelch began to lose faith in his new Head Boy, even if the process was a gradual one and therefore more realistic. Stacey was unique in that he welcomed expulsion at the end and went head-high to rejoin his father and live abroad.

ARTHUR CARTER'S expulsion was the last (Magnet 1561-72). He arrived in the Remove in 1938 with the sole intention to disgrace his distant relative William George Bunter so that he and not Bunter should inherit from a rich uncle. This long series required much effort and assistance from the rest of the Remove to save the fatuous Owl from his unscrupulous foe. The final number concluded with a painful scene in the Remove classroom, where Carter was revealed as the real thief. (And Bunter never inherited anyway!)

In addition to the above, at least four expelled Old Boys turned up later at Greyfriars in order to make trouble.

There was PHILIP BLAGDEN, once of the Sixth, who got the Head to appoint him as cricket coach but really wanted to search the vaults for treasure. Instead he got penal servitude for a murderous attack on Mr. Quelch (*Magnets* 854,855,1924). BARTHOLOMEW WIDGERS, late of the Fifth, wanted revenge on Mr. Prout and

came back to cane him. It was he himself who got the caning (*Magnet* 1237). FRANZ KRANZ was the mysterious Old Boy who was also interested in the school vaults (*Magnets* 1354-58,1934). And RANDOLPH CROCKER, another Old Boy Sixth-Former with a grievance, stayed close to Greyfriars and made a great nuisance of himself before being returned to prison (Magnets 1615-25,1939).

Crocker - Posing as a Cobbler

One more expulsion can deserve a special mention. HAROLD SKINNER had the 'honour' of returning to the Greyfriars Remove after 77 weeks' absence. Skinner was expelled towards the end of 1911 (*Magnet* 196), having been at the school from the very first episode. When he made the blame, and even a possible prison sentence, fall upon Wharton for his own assault on Loder, it seemed that he was finally expelled. As *The Magnet* says: 'Skinner left Greyfriars the next morning, and the old school knew him no more – and was glad to know him no more.' But Frank Richards may well have decided that Skinner's loss was an unnecessary waste. Skinner did possess real ability and could be amusingly witty in the years that followed his return in *Magnet* 274 (May, 1913). No matter that he tricked his way back into the Remove. This was the success story of the Expulsions saga.

I have not named Bunter or Coker as examples because only final expulsions (apart from Skinner) have been discussed. Both Bunter and Coker certainly provided, a number of entertaining episodes but they must inevitably return.

Expulsion was one way of clearing out an unwieldy or unnecessary character, especially in early *Magnets*. So that there never was too much 'dead wood' in the Remove.

It will be noted that most of the expelled were dealt with by 1916. Then there were no more until Ulick Stone - lovely name! - in 1929, after which only another two before the end.

The four returned Old Boys were never featured in previous *Magnets* but arrived suddenly and departed without trace.

However, all in all, I believe that Vernon-Smith, the Bounder, easily holds the record for expulsion stories. Of course he should have been expelled on arrival for his first drunken appearance! But then what would we – and Greyfriars - have missed!

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Tributes read at John Wernham's Funeral Service in Rochester Cathedral on 1st March 2007

John Wernham *DO FICO FCO* ***Osteopath***

JOHN WERNHAM

A Tribute from Mary Cadogan

We all know of John's distinguished career in osteopathy, both as a practitioner and a teacher. We also know, of course, that he was a man of many parts and his enthusiasms spilled over from his primary work into several other fields - we might say, into byways as well as highways.

I am here to talk about one of these - his passion for some of the books and stories which he read in childhood and continued to love throughout his life. These are the stories written by "Frank Richards" and, in particular, those which were published in the weekly boys' papers *Gem* and *Magnet*, featuring those famous fictional schools, St Jim's and Greyfriars, and the celebrated, larger than life and ever-resilient character. Billy Bunter.

John always maintained that these books and papers provided young people of several generations with fine standards and values, and because of his great interest in them he became the President of the London Old Boys Book Club in 1962. He filled that office with untiring energy and enthusiasm for forty-five years, until he died.

I am now paying tribute to him not only on behalf of the London Club but also of the Northern and Cambridge Old Boys Books Clubs, and of the Friars Club. Members of all these organisations have been grateful over the years for John's

expertise, helpfulness and dedication.

He did much to keep alive and accessible those old influential stories by issuing a wide range of publications about them. For reference purposes and for posterity, he also acquired and maintained a very large archive of old papers and books and some of the original artwork associated with them.

I knew John for nearly forty years and was always impressed by the determination with which he tackled so many meticulously demanding tasks. He was the epitome of that well-known adage - "If you want to get a job done, always ask a busy person". There is no doubt that with his osteopathic school and clinic John was an extremely busy man. However, every publishing proposition which I and other club members put to him was received with interest and positive relish, even though in the early days of his Presidency much of the typing, printing and binding of these publications had to be done entirely by himself.

Like so many members of the book clubs which I am now representing I am very proud to have known John and to have numbered him among my friends. We shall continue to treasure many memories of him - as an erudite and witty speaker and writer: as a healer and as a friend.

I would like to end by quoting from *Hamlet* and saying of John:

He was a man: take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again.

The war service of Sergeant John Wernham (Army Film and Photographic Unit)
Tribute at his Funeral 1st March 2007 - by Kay Gladstone. Imperial War Museum Film and Video Archive

Sergeant Wernham was no ordinary sergeant.

During the Second World War John was one of an outstanding group of young soldiers whose task was to film and photograph the operations of the British Army at home and overseas.

I first met John in 1992 when he recorded an interview at the Imperial War Museum, where his films, and the very special sound of his voice, are now preserved. I am therefore only able to describe one short episode in his long and extraordinarily varied life.

This episode began in the Autumn of 1941. While serving as a signaller in Yorkshire, Private Wernham had spotted an appeal for soldiers with film or photographic experience to join the newly formed Army Film Unit. John's experience consisted of five years as a boy pupil at the London School of Photo Engraving, then five years photographic work in the world of advertising in Fleet Street.

He immediately applied and was one of twelve to be accepted after interview. The next three months were spent training with still and ciné cameras in Green Park in

the centre of London. Their Army instructors assessed the results of their work at the Curzon Cinema nearby. The men then sailed in the troopship Queen Mary to Egypt. They arrived in Cairo just before the advancing German forces caused panic in the city and so were quickly evacuated to Palestine. What then occurred may have been one of the defining moments in John's military career, and is best evoked in his own words, taken from his brief memoir "The Professor Goes to War":

"At the Army Camp at Hedera, we sat around looking blank until the commanding officer decided to enrol the services of a sergeant from a regiment of Guards for the purpose of making cameramen look like soldiers. For this purpose he placed six men in line at about a two yard interval and a similar six at about the limit of hailing distance; he then instructed that each man should drill his opposite counterpart. The dreadful cacophony that resulted was slightly reduced in that only five men were in operation; one was silent. The sergeant approached with military precision and said, "Drill that man ". I said, "No, it is undignified, I am a cameraman and I am not going to shout". That was the end of the matter. In the mess that evening the sergeant looked his displeasure, was obviously puzzled and rather embarrassed.
The moral of this story is that a cameraman is a law unto himself and, quite literally, master of all he surveys. Yet without cooperation he cannot function."

John was appalled by some aspects of military life, particularly the petty tyrants who abused their authority by abusing those of lesser rank, and the system which placed such bullies in positions of power. He recalled various confrontations with several majors, which gave him a special loathing for officers of this rank; then added in his mischievous tone - for this was in 1992 - "Don't let John Major hear this, or I shall be in trouble!" John himself was equally at ease talking to a general or a private and expected to be treated with the same dignity and courtesy which he accorded others

Returning to 1942, John's special qualities, both as an individual and as a cameraman-photographer, must have been recognised very early by his commanding officer, for when his comrades returned to Cairo, he was told to stay on.

He was set an exceptional challenge - to make a silent recruitment film to encourage Arabs in the mandate, who had been in revolt against the British for the past decade, to support the British cause. When I watched this film with him ten years ago, John recalled his liking and admiration for the dignified Arabs. Had he not been their guest, he was assured, they would have slit his throat!

John enjoyed the stimulus of meeting in Tel Aviv several people with an interest in photography, Jews who had been doctors and lawyers in Germany and were now working as bakers and labourers, volumes by Goethe and Schiller their only link with their past. John's comment "I always like meeting foreigners, I am interested in their history" must have set him apart from many of his compatriots at that time.

Sergeant Wernham, as he and all other cameramen were now ranked, returned to Egypt in time to film the Battle of El Alamein. Thanks to his professional ingenuity he

was the only cameraman who was able to record on ciné film the actual night-time opening barrage of guns, which appeared in the campaign film "Desert Victory". These were cut in with the other night shots specially taken later at Pinewood Studios, the headquarters of the Army Film and Photographic Unit during the war.

John spent the remaining three years of the war in East Africa, as the sole Army cameraman and photographer in that vast area. Between assignments filming the King's African Rifles in training, an East African bakery, Kenyan village life and the Victory over Japan parade in Nairobi, he was occasionally persuaded to practise osteopathy.

Reflecting on his war service John recalled that his military superiors must have soon realised that "in spirit I was a non-soldier". Yet he possessed to a high degree one of the noble military virtues, that of self-discipline. The proof of this lives on in the form of the films which he crafted with such rigour that not a single sequence was wasted in the editing. He was right to be proud of this, and when I asked him what effect the war had had on his life, he replied "It gave me professional status in two schools - pictures and healing".

I last saw John on Remembrance Day in 2006 at Pinewood Studios, where in recent years a small ceremony has been held beside the plaque which commemorates the lives of the forty fellow combat cameramen of the Army and Royal Air Force killed during the Second World War. As the oldest surviving member of the Army Film Unit Association - on whose behalf I pay this tribute - and upright as ever, this centenarian laid the poppy wreath. John's regular attendance at this event, and at the more joyous gatherings which the Association arranges each year, always escorted by Gail, was an inspiration to his comrades, mere youngsters between their mid nineties and late eighties.

I like to think his attendance at these events reflected the fighter in him, the determination and courage which spanned his two careers of photographer and pioneering osteopath. Or in his own words, perhaps an epitaph, "I am a fighter, but not in a military sense".

JOHN WERNHAM

A Tribute from Henry Lee DO Maidstone Graduate

John Wernham was a great man in the true sense of the word.

He was formidable and commanding. At times he was intimidating and belligerent, yet he was also charming and funny. With his work he was passionate and intelligent resulting in treatment that was general but specific, delicate and effective. And by remaining focused and single minded, he became respected and inspirational.

John Wernham was born May 2nd 1907 the youngest child of 11, coming into the world at an impressive 12 pounds. Aged 8 the family moved from London to Essex, to a place called Thundersley. It was here where early contact was made with the

Littlejohn family, the head of which was to have a profound influence in later years.

He returned to London as a young man and embarked on a promising career in photo-journalism. This was cut short by a conversation he had with John Martin Littlejohn who casually asked the young Wernham whether he had ever considered studying osteopathy. This obviously stirred something inside him and much to the annoyance of his family and friends he signed up to the British School of Osteopathy.

Now the school at that time was almost single-handedly run by Littlejohn whose high intellect and gentle but determined manner were to make him one of the most significant men in the history of Osteopathy. John Wernham would continue to pursue the vast and detailed work of Littlejohn through the rest of his life. It was at this time that he also met another great friend and influence, Teddy Hall.

The growth and development of the British School was cut short by World War II, where he put his photographic skills to good use working for the film and photographic section of the military intelligence in Africa. Although this was his official capacity apparently a good many patients were also seen!

Following the end of the war, 1947 marked two significant dates. The first was the death of Littlejohn and the second was John Wernham's marriage to Jessica. With her love and support these events triggered what were to become the Maidstone Years. Premises were bought at 30 Tonbridge Road and the old X-ray machine from the BSO installed. Over subsequent years a stream of graduate osteopaths would work there under the instruction of John Wernham. The clinic was run as a charitable establishment offering affordable treatment to the people of Kent, as it is to this very day.

In 1954 at the suggestion of Teddy Hall, Wernham was one of the founder members of the Institute of Applied Technique, now renamed the Institute of Classical Osteopathy. This came about by a desire to maintain the philosophy and practice of osteopathy in an attempt to stem the tide of medical control within the profession.

Later John Wernham was instrumental in founding the European school of Osteopathy but his insistence in teaching fundamental principles led to his withdrawal to concentrate on his own work at 30 Tonbridge Road.

Then in 1984, at the age of 77, when most men would be comfortable in their retirement, he took on a huge challenge. He opened a new college, he Maidstone College of Osteopathy at undergraduate level, to teach osteopathy as he knew it. I was lucky to be one of the early cohorts of students and though the building at that time was cold and bleak the instruction was special. The basic sciences were taught by specialist tutors but the osteopathic content of principles, practice notes and technique were taught by John Wernham in person. The political climate at that time was uncertain, but many of us knew we were onto a good thing and I for one am very proud of my Maidstone DO.

1993 marked the sad loss of Jessica Wernham, after 46 years of marriage.

I and a few colleagues had the opportunity to work alongside the great man in his private practice. I was always struck, when confronted with difficulty, how I could always approach him. He would come to my assistance sometimes up to 10 times a

day. His style was sometimes old school and he once referred to my technique as 'bovine' as I muddled my way through a two-man technique. They call it character building!

His journalistic and printing skills were useful throughout his career enabling him to publish many manuals and Year Books on his beloved osteopathy. No more so than his two volumes of osteopathic technique co-written with his friend and colleague Mervyn Waldman.

Politics and degree requirements took the Maidstone College to Nescot, now known as the Surrey Institute of Osteopathic Medicine.

But over the past 10 years, with the care and support of his dear companion Gail Roots, life remained busy as ever. Important and deep links have been forged with foreign groups of osteopaths from Ireland, Belgium, Finland, Sweden, Japan, Canada, Spain, Switzerland, Germany and Italy. But perhaps of his many talents it was on the treatment table that he was at his greatest, being able to translate from the lecture room to relieving distress and disorganization in his patients' bodies. He did this for 70 years and was quite simply a genius.

It seems quite ironic that, at the end of his career, according to the General Osteopathic Council, by continuing to treat patients as an osteopath and not registering with them he was acting outside the law. Their opinion was of no consequence to him and he continued to do what he thought was right. Those early osteopaths were made of stern stuff.

John Wernham was a good man. A man dedicated to his profession. Motivated by what he could do for his fellow men and not by monetary rewards.

Quite simply we owe him a tremendous thank you. It has been an honour and a privilege. And we will miss him

God bless.

* *

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ALFRED EDGAR: THE MAN WHO LOVED THRILLS

by John Hammond

One of the most famous adventure series of the 1930's, still fondly remembered today, was "The House of Thrills", originally published in *Bullseye* and later reprinted in *Film Fun*. "The House of Thrills" featured a mysterious recluse, John Pentonville, who lived alone in a gloomy old house. Now retired after a life of adventure, he offers to pay a sum of money to anyone who can tell him a true story which will engross him.

Each instalment describes a visit to the gloomy house by a stranger (usually late at night) and the relating of an absorbing story, followed by the handing over of the cash.

As I first read these stories sixty years ago and as their atmosphere remains vividly in my mind after all these years I can testify to their extraordinary graphic quality. There remains a powerful impression of a cobwebby mansion, the sudden knock on the door, the candelabra held aloft by the taciturn host, and the unfolding of an exciting narrative.

"The House of Thrills", though published anonymously, was the work of a writer named Alfred Edgar. He first made a name for himself as a writer of mystery stories and later became a successful playwright and scriptwriter under the name Barre Lyndon. (Confusingly, Edgar's full name was Alfred Edgar Lyndon.)

Alfred Edgar was born in London in 1896 and originally worked as a clerk in an engineering office. He contributed his first Sexton Blake story, 'The Saracen's Ring' to the *Union Jack* in 1921 and later wrote many others under the pen name 'Hylton Gregory'. During the 1920s he was a member of the editorial staff of *The Champion* and wrote detective stories under the pseudonym 'Howard Steel'. He later became the editor of *Pluck* and a regular contributor to *Bullseye*, for which he wrote numerous stories and serials. Amongst his serials, in addition to The House of Thrills', were The Phantom of Cursitor Fields' and 'Octavius Kay'. In the late 1920s Edgar became for a period the editor of the Nelson Lee Library.

Edgar had an exceptionally large output and - under a variety of pseudonyms – contributed adventure stories to *Champion, Boys Favourite, Modern Boy, Boys Realm, Chums* and numerous other publications. He was also the author of several books including *Knights of the Wheel, Abbeygate Cricket Cup, Nine O'Clock Mail* and *The Schoolboy Airmen.*

On moving to Hollywood in 1941 he adopted the pseudonym Barre Lyndon and under that name was responsible for some memorable screenplays including *Sundown* (1941) starring Gene Tierney and George Sanders, *The Lodger* (1944) starring Laird Cregar, George Sanders and Merle Oberon (a fictionalised version of the Jack the Ripper case) and *Night has a Thousand Eyes* (1948) starring Edward G. Robinson. In 1953 he wrote the screenplay for the classic film version of H.G. Wells's *The War of the*

Worlds, starring Gene Barry. Though the action of the story is transplanted from Surrey to California, the Paramount movie version does succeed in conveying the essence of Wells's narrative and contains some impressive special effects.

Already a successful playwright with such popular stage productions as *The Amazing Doctor Clitterhouse* and *The Man in Half Moon Street* he adapted both of these plays for the screen. The first of these starred Edward G. Robinson (playing the role played on stage by Cedric Hardwicke) and Humphrey Bogart. *The Amazing Doctor Clitterhouse* (1938) tells the story of a researcher who joins a group of gangsters and becomes himself addicted to a life of crime. In his *Film Guide* Leslie Halliwell describes the movie as an "amusing, suspenseful, well acted comedy - melodrama". *The Man in Half Moon Street* (1944) starred Nils Asther and tells the story of a scientist who has discovered a method of preserving his youth.

The scene in which he suddenly changes from a handsome young man to his real age of ninety is truly horrifying and recalls the transformation scenes in *Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. The film was later remade as a straight horror movie under the title *The Man Who Could Cheat Death,* starring Christopher Lee.

Alfred Edgar died in 1972 after an extraordinarily prolific career ranging from the writing of adventure stories for boys, editing comic papers, writing successful stage plays, and creating scripts and screenplays for a number of outstanding films. Perhaps when all is said and done he will be remembered not only for his plays *The Amazing Dr Clitterhouse* and *The Man in Half Moon Street,* and such memorable films as *The Lodger* but for creating first rate tales of mystery such as "The House of Thrills". He was indeed a fine storyteller and a master of the macabre.

* *

RANDOM HARVEST AND THE REVEREND BLAMPIED

by Laurence Price

In Part Five of James Hilton's wartime novel, Random Harvest, Harrison, the private secretary to Charles Rainier, reads to Rainier the following obituary from the *Daily Gazette* of January 17, 1920:-

> We regret to announce the death at the age of seventy-four of the Reverend John Sylvester Blampied, for many years Rector of St. Clement's Church, Vale Street, North London. Pneumonia following a chill ended a career that had often attracted public attention - particularly in connection with the preservation of ancient footpaths, a cause of which Mr Blampied had been a valiant if sometimes tempestuous champion. His death took place in Liverpool, and funeral services will be held at St. Clement's on Friday.

What is the significance of this obituary to Charles Rainier? Who was the late Reverend Blampied? Was St. Clement's Church itself of any importance in Rainier's life? What was a North London Rector doing in Liverpool?

To those only familiar with the 1943 Hollywood film starring Ronald Colman and Greer Garson there would seem no significance whatsoever; the character of Blampied was entirely 'written out' in true Hollywood fashion. In the 1941 novel, however, he is a very important element indeed, although he does not make his appearance in the 352 page book until Part Four and page 287!

Rather like the Reverend Howat Freemantle of Hilton's first successful novel *And Now Good-Bye* (1931) Blampied is a sympathetic churchman and one with whom the reader can empathise. Hilton also made clear his views on another type of clergyman with which he had less patience - on pp. 203-4 of *Random Harvest*, Harrison and Rainier pass 'an old fashioned church with a new- fashioned sign outside it, proclaiming the subject of next Sunday's sermon - "Why Does God Permit War?" - and that set Rainier improvising on the kind of sermon it would be - "very cheerful and chummy, proving that God isn't such a bad sort when you get to know Him"; and then abruptly (Rainier)...talked again of his favourite uncle the archdeacon. "*He* never preached a sermon on 'Why Does God Permit War?'...All this craze for bringing Him down to earth and appealing to Him at every turn would have struck my uncle as weak-kneed as well as appalling bad taste..."

Blampied, then, makes his appearance in the most touching, and perhaps most important part of the novel - Part Four - in which is played out the love affair of 'Smithy' and Paula. Part Four begins with Paula meeting Smithy in a shop after he walks out of Melbury Asylum on Armistice Day, 1918 - and which was the opening sequence of the film - and after various adventures with her, including travelling with

a theatre company, Smithy flees from what he considers a disastrous performance as a stand-in in *Salute the Flag*, 'assaulting' an officious railway policeman in his flight. Paula traces his rather obvious tracks to the little Cotswold village of Beachings Over where, at last. Smithy professes his love for her.

Paula reads a newspaper report of Smithy's assault and they decide to take a train to London until the heat dies down. Here it is they find themselves 'in a compartment occupied by an uncountable number of shouting children, all in nominal charge of an elderly, shabby, but bright- eyed clergyman who gestured his apologies for his own inability to subdue the din.' It is quite evident he cannot subdue the pandemonium and it is to Smithy's surprise that it is he who is able to exert the necessary control over the children with a polite but firm command to the children, to which they respond. Order is restored, to the evident relief of the clergyman.

When the children alight noisily at the terminus, Smithy once again exercises control over all two hundred of them! Smithy and Paula help the parson escort the children from the busy station precincts to a quiet side street where they are safely dismissed to their homes. Smithy and Paula have nowhere to go and the grateful parson invites them to dine at his home – a 'large ugly soot-black three-storey house' approached 'through a passage running by the side of the Mission building into the unkempt garden.' As he unlocks the front door the parson says "I don't think names are at all important but mine is Blampied."

"Smith," said Paula.

An elderly housekeeper presents the three of them with big bowls of soup. In the course of conversation it becomes clear that the couple have nowhere to stay. Blampied offers them a room - there are fifteen in the house - for the night. Paula hesitates.

"He's not my husband - yet."

The parson smiled. "To be sure—but after all - fifteen rooms? Enough - one would think."

Then suddenly she said: "Maybe, as you've got a sense of humour, you can help us....We want to get married, but it has to be quiet - we don't want any one to know -"

"Runaway?"

"Yes, that's it... maybe you know of a registry office somewhere near?"

"There's an office nearly across the street, but for sheer quietness, why don't you allow me to marry you in my own church? Hardly anyone ever comes to any of the services - it would be the most unnoticed marriage I could possibly imagine...."

So they were married at St. Clement's, Vale Street, London, N.W., and as they left the church after the ceremony newsboys were racing down the street offering extra editions - "Peace Treaty Signed at Versailles." It was June 28, 1919.' Armistice Day, the Treaty of Versailles, an earlier mention of the Alcock and Brown non-stop flight across the Atlantic of 14-15 June 1919, Smithy's encounter with the railway policeman on the night of Saturday, 21 June - Midsummer's Day - and next day, on Sunday, lodging overnight with Paula in Mrs Deventer's cottage in Beachings Over - "Longest

night of the year, round about..." as she reminds them. Hilton makes clever use of such significant dates and events throughout the novel, many of course of direct significance to the love story of Smithy and Paula. And the full import of that obituary plays its part - readers of the novel will appreciate its particular significance and particular poignancy – for Rainier will connect the parson and the church with his earlier marriage as Smithy to Paula. But why was the clergyman in Liverpool when he died? We return to the novel.

No conventional parson, this. No requirements to call the banns three times; no questions asked about the relationship of Smithy and Paula. The sort of open-minded Christian man who, in a different time and in different circumstances - and clearly one of Hilton's favoured men of moderation - might have become the Lama of a hidden Tibetan monastery.

For a time Smithy and Paula live elsewhere in rented accommodation but they continue to develop a 'friendly intimacy' with the parson and even open up about the assault case. It is Blampied who is able to tell them some months later that the case is effectively closed. The assault by Smithy had related to the attempted enforcement of a temporary footpath closure and it is evident this is a cause close to Blampied's heart. He carries out personal "crusades" to maintain rights of way across 'the commons and pastures and the paths across the fields that the landlords have stolen and will go on stealing' which 'had sometimes led to rough-and-tumble fights on village greens and once at least to his own imprisonment.' Smithy and Paula even accompany him towards the end of September on an expedition to rural Oxfordshire, which leads to one memorable confrontation with a certain General Sir Richard Hawkesley Wych-Furlough, backed by a menacing array of servants and gamekeepers. A wordy argument takes place between the General and the parson, culminating in retirement by both sides and a final shout from the General: "What the hell's it got to do with you, anyway? You don't live here!"

"And that," as Blampied said afterwards," from a man who used to be a Governor of so many islands he could only visit a few of them once a year - so that any islander might have met his administrative decisions with the same retort - 'What's it got to do with *you*? You don't live here!"

The notion continued to please him as he added:" I was a missionary on one of those islands - till I quarrelled with the bosses. I always quarrel with the bosses...."

What an interesting character Blampied is. And Hilton gradually gives us more information. 'Born of a wealthy family whom he had long ago given up...he had originally entered the Church as a respectable and sanctioned form of eccentricity for younger sons. Later (he had served as a missionary in the South Seas until his employers discovered him to be not only heretical, but a bad compiler of reports) he had come home to edit a religious magazine, resigning only when plunging circulation led to its bankruptcy' and so on.

In due course, Smithy and Paula move back in to Blampied's house where they choose to live in 'two large attic rooms with a view northward as far as Hampstead and Highgate.' Blampied is a keen correspondent with many friends living abroad

but, due to failing eyesight, he enlists Smithy in typing or rewriting his letters to them in full - amongst these friends is an editor in Liverpool. And gradually, Smithy begins to write - 'countless articles and sketches that gave him pleasure only because they contained a germ of what was in his mind...Presently, by sheer accident, he wrote something that fitted a formula; it was promptly accepted and - even more important for him at the time - paid for.' One day, in conversation with Smithy, and having encouraged his writing, Blampied says: "This is a good moment to say how much I hope you'll stay with me here - both of you. That is, if you're happy."

"We're very happy. But I have to think of how to make a living."

"Life's more important than a living. So many people who make a living are making death, not life. Don't ever join them. They're the grave-diggers of our civilization - the safe men, the compromisers, the money-makers, the muddlers-through. Politics is full of them, so is the Church...They set us down as cranks, oddities, social outsiders, harmless freaks who can't be lured by riches or placated by compliments. But a time shall come when we, the dangerous men, shall either be killed or made kings - because a time may also come when it won't be enough to love England as a tired businessman loves a nap after lunch. We may be called upon to love her as the Irish love Ireland - darkly, bitterly, and with a hatred for some who have loved her less and themselves more."

Then Blampied tells Smithy he has sent some of his work to the editor in Liverpool; and the editor wants not only to see more of Smithy's work, but the writer of it. A date is arranged for just after Christmas. Paula has news for Smithy too. She is pregnant. They have a wonderful Christmas together.

Later, together on the platform at Euston, waiting for Smithy's train to depart for Liverpool, their conversation turns to Blampied.

"He's devoted to you."

"I should be proud to think so, because I'm equally devoted to him." He kissed her laughingly. "Must we spend these last few seconds talking of someone else?"

"But he isn't altogether someone else. He's part of us - part of our happiness - don't you feel that?"

"Darling, I do - and I also love you!"

"I love you too. Always."

He reached Liverpool in the early morning. It was raining, and in hurrying across a slippery street he stumbled and fell.

It is Rainier's own report of his life as Smithy that Harrison has recorded (though in the third person) in Part Four of *Random Harvest* - and in the opening pages of Part Five more information about Blampied is unveiled, culminating in the revelation of the obituary. Rainier understands the Liverpool connection - he knows that Blampied, faithful to the end, had gone to Liverpool searching for Smithy and that there in Liverpool Blampied had caught pneumonia and died, barely a month after their last meeting together.

Often referred to as a sentimental writer, Hilton does not take a sentimental journey with Blampied. There is no 'happy ending' in the conventional, or Hollywood

sense, for the old parson. The circumstances that face Blampied, to this writer, mirror real life - realistically, not sentimentally, Life - and death and loss, in this case in the form of pneumonia - is really like that. Hilton always understood this and Blampied remains one of his most memorable and well-drawn characters, and makes the novel an enjoyable alternative to the much-loved 1943 film adaptation.

* *

Bill Bradford

by Norman Wright

The hobby of Old Boys Book Collecting lost one of its most enthusiastic and long-standing advocates on Boxing Day, 2006 with the death of Bill Bradford.

Bill was a lifelong enthusiast and collector of story papers and monthly libraries. He frequently recounted how, as a schoolboy, his first port of call after lessons was the local newsagents shop where he would be ready and waiting to buy the latest issues of *Boys Friend Library, Modern Boy, Schoolboys Own Library* and a whole host of other papers as they went on display. His tastes, even in his youth, were broad and he devoured adventure, detective and historical stories with almost equal relish. His all-time favourite publication was *Chums* and in particular the swashbuckling pirate yarns of S. Walkey found therein. He loved the Paul Hardy illustrations that accompanied these stories almost as much as the action and descriptive prose of the writer. In later years he built up a complete set of *Chums* and they occupied pride of place in his collection.

Another publication Bill avidly collected was *Boys Friend Library.* This monthly appealed to his wide tastes and gave him the chance to read in complete form serials he had missed in the weeklies. He was particularly keen on issues by George E. Rochester and those written by Charles Hamilton under his various pen-names. Rochester was one of Bill's favourite writers and he was delighted when, on a visit to the UK, one of George Rochester's daughters visited him and viewed his collection. The one Rochester title that eluded Bill for decades was "Traitor's Rock" and the present writer was delighted when he managed to track down a copy for Bill's eightieth birthday.

After serving in the forces during the Second World War Bill came back to Ealing where he married Thelma. They had a very happy and fulfilling marriage. Thelma encouraged Bill in his collecting and soon their house in Ealing began to fill with books. Bill was always keen to build up complete runs of publications and over the years of diligent searching he built up sets of many of his boyhood favourites including: *The Thriller, Modern Boy, Schoolboys Own Library, Chums* and *Detective Weekly.* As well as papers he collected hard-backed books by such authors as Gerald Verner, John G. Brandon and Francis Durbridge. He was a great Hamilton fan and had

all the Bunter books as well as every Howard Baker reprint and a complete set of original "Greyfriars Holiday Annuals".

Bill was not only a collector but also an avid reader. His philosophy was that books were to be read and he was always happy to lend books to friends. He got great pleasure in researching items in his collection: was a story reprinted from a weekly paper? Had it appeared under a different title elsewhere? etc. His knowledge was enormous and he was always more than happy to share his discoveries with fellow enthusiasts. He produced two small bibliographical booklets: "Gerald Verner A Bibliography" (2000), and "George E. Rochester An Index of His Work" (1994), co-written with the present writer. He was never happier than when using his collection to research for an article or for a talk.

In the mid 1970s Bill discovered the London Old Boys Book Club. He joined and offered his home as a venue for some of the monthly meetings. Thelma and Bill were excellent hosts, making everyone welcome. The Ealing meetings were popular and it became a tradition that the Christmas meeting was always held at there. Over the years the Xmas attendance grew until it became almost impossible to sit everyone who wanted to join in the fun!

As well as providing venues for monthly meetings Bill and Thelma also hosted a number of annual Club Luncheons at the Ealing Liberal Centre. This was no lightweight task but they tackled it with their accustomed enthusiasm. Bill was voted Chairman of the Club on several occasions. He was a very regular attender and until his final illness the number of meetings he missed in thirty years could be counted on the fingers of one hand. It is no exaggeration to say that without Bill and Thelma Bradford the London Old Boys Book Club would not have thrived as well as it has done over the last thirty years.

In 1987, at a relatively young age, Thelma Bradford died of cancer. Bill was devastated and never fully recovered from her death. He was helped through the dark days that followed Thelma's death by his hobby and his large circle of hobby friends. Bill was a gregarious man and had friends in many walks of life. In his younger days he had been an active member of the Liberal Party and made many friends in this area of his life. His book collecting friends formed yet another group. Bill did not suffer fools gladly but once a friendship was made he was the truest and most reliable of friends.

In later years Bill did not always enjoy the best of health. He had both hips replaced, underwent a triple bypass heart operation and endured several other, often painful, conditions. Throughout all of this he remained remarkably positive in his attitudes. During the last four or five years of his life walking became very difficult and he had to cut down on some of his book-collecting activities. He still relished the thrill of the chase when it came to searching out books but on our booking trips we had to find parking spaces very close to the shops we were visiting. He still enjoyed bookfairs but found steps hard to manage and bottom shelves impossible to look at!

He became unwell in the late summer of 2006 and was taken into hospital where it was discovered he had a ruptured bowel. Despite a successful operation

complications seem to have arisen and his condition worsened. He died on Boxing Day 2006 aged 83.

Bill Bradford was one of the last great collectors. His interest and knowledge of the pre-war story papers was second to none. He was a major figure in the London Old Boys Book Club for thirty years and his death has left a gap in the collectors' circle that will never be filled. He was a devoted husband to Thelma.

Personally he was a great friend. He was totally reliable, utterly honest and deeply knowledgeable. If I needed advice I'd ask Bill and I always found his words wise and worth listening to. He was a true friend who is greatly missed.

* *

GEMS OF HAMILTONIA

from Pete Hanger

"Ow! Yow! Wow! My leg! Wow! Yow! Wow! My knee! Oh crickey! Oooch! I say, you fellows - yarooop!"

Billy Bunter danced, and yelled, and roared. And the Famous Five, apparently regarding this as the best part of the entertainment, howled with laughter as he danced, and yelled and roared. *MAGNET* 1591

But he was worried. It was seldom that his fat conscience troubled him; but it was troubling him now sorely. At prep in study No. 7 that evening Bunter was buried in thought, and he was not thinking of the lesson he was preparing. He really wished that he wasn't such an honourable manly, straightforward fellow. Then he wouldn't have worried so much. As it was, William George Bunter, worried very much indeed. *MAGNET* 1082

Billy Bunter gave the manager of Kalua, a concentrated glare through his spectacles.

For some reason - a mystery to Bunter - the manager of Kalua did not seem to like him very much. He did not speak to him with becoming respect.

Bunter was a guest of Lord Mauleverer, on Kalua, like the other fellows. The island belonged to Mauly; McTab was only his manager. He ought, therefore, to have treated Bunter with the deepest respect. Only he didn't. *MAGNET* 1591

It was quite a large and roomy whaleboat, but really there was not a lot of space for a fellow to sprawl about with fat legs extended. The biggest foot in the Greyfriars Remove landed on a fat leg as Bob Cherry lent a hand with the sail.

"Wow!" spluttered Bunter. "Ow! He sat up. "Beast! Wharrer you tramping on me for? You want an Atlantic liner, Bob Cherry, if you're going to take both your feet

about with you!" *MAGNET* 1591

Bunter was, at least, he had no doubt that he was - one of those fellows who are born to command.

He could have fancied himself in the role of a dictator. In girth, at least, he was the equal of Mussolini. *MAGNET* 1583

The juniors had heard, and read, of the "black-birders" of the old days, who kidnapped natives from the islands to be carried off to the plantations. They knew that small islands had sometimes been cleared of their population. Yo'o it seemed was one of them.

Probably so small an island had not supported a population of more than a hundred or so. One visit from a kidnapping ship had been enough to leave Yo'o in solitude - and it had remained so ever since. It was a paradise of Nature - but the serpent had crept into it! It was not a pleasant reflection that the serpent had come in the shape of a white man's ship! *MAGNET* 1591

...He had not room for one more banana - which was rather a pity, for the bananas were ripe and rich and tempting. Still, even Bunter had a limit, though it was a wide one. He had done his best; and no fellow could do more. *MAGNET* 1591

"Of course, I explained to him that Quelchy was prejudiced," went on Bunter, "and I explained that a fellow at a public school who was a whale at games couldn't really find the time for mugging up Form work. It's not to be expected."

"Oh, my hat!"

"A whale at games," repeated Bob Cherry dazedly. "You mean a whale at dinner!" *MAGNET* 900

"I don't think a hint would keep Bunter away from tuck!" chuckled Bob. "I rather fancy wild horses couldn't do that!" *MAGNET* 917

...There was cake for tea in Study No. 1, so there was Bunter for tea, also. *MAGNET* 1616

"Wharton!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

It was Mr. Prout who barked at him. Really, a Form-master had no right to bark at fellows who were not in his Form. His barks, as well as his bites, should have been reserved for his own boys.

But Prout, evidently was cross. Coming on the Famous Five in the quad he barked at the captain of the Remove- just barked! The juniors could almost have supposed that it was Gosling's dog that had got loose.

Still, Wharton answered politely. Beaks had to be treated with tact, even when

they exceeded the limit. *MAGNET* 1406

Really, it seemed that a peaceful life was impossible to a peaceable fellow like Coker. He seemed to get into as many quarrels as a quarrelsome fellow!
MAGNET 1406

"Whopped!" said Coker, for the third time, raising his bull-voice so that the wretched Price had to hear it. "Disgraceful, I call it! I'd like to see a Sixth Form man whop me!"

Potter winked at Greene! As a matter of fact, they would like to see it, too!
MAGNET 1359

Bunter was by no means a dishonest fellow. He would not have touched a farthing that did not belong to him. But in matters of tuck, Bunter was a Bolshevik pure and simple. Tuck he simply could not resist. Somehow or other, he seemed to work it out in the depths of his fat and podgy brain that he had some sort of a right to tuck, wherever found. *MAGNET* 1359

"If we all stick to the same story, Quelch is bound to believe us!" argued Bunter. "Dash it all, he can't be ungentlemanly enough to doubt our word!
MAGNET 1502

Bunter was hungry. That was his usual state. He was also indignant. They were going to leave him out of that picnic. If any fellows deserved to have their cake scoffed, those fellows did. Deserved or undeserved, there was going to be no doubt about the scoffing, at any rate. Billy Bunter felt that he was justified in having that cake. But really, he was bothering less about the justification than the cake. *MAGNET* 1499

Harry Wharton called for the bill, and settled it, the carefully guarded sixpence being bestowed on the waiter, whose gratitude took the form of looking as if he had expected a shilling, at least. *MAGNET* 1414

Two shillings would not go far among six, but would provide quite a nice little extra for one. And so long as Bunter was that one, it was all right. *MAGNET* 1414

Billy Bunter sniffed. Smithy's description of his powers as a walker was fairly accurate. But the fat Owl was not disposed to admit it. He shuddered at the thought of a four-mile walk. At the same time had had a happy fancy that he could walk another fellow's legs off. That was the kind of brain Bunter was blessed with.
MAGNET 1414

"They can find their man themselves!" he told Potter and Greene bitterly. "I'm not helping them any more! Let him rip. Let him rob all the banks in the kingdom! I shan't interfere! I should refuse to help the police now, if they went down on their bended knees."

But they never did! *MAGNET* 1415

Bunter finally stopped at Tom Redwing's machine.

It was a good machine, though not so expensive as Smithy's. It had the advantage of belonging to one of the best-tempered men in the Lower Fourth. Redwing might say things - probably would - but he was not likely to kick a fellow - whereas the bounder might say little or nothing, but was absolutely certain to kick a fellow who bagged his bike without leave. Bunter was a reasonable fellow; he was prepared to let Redwing say what he liked - all he was particular about was not being kicked.

MAGNET 1056

And he scudded away, as fast as fat little legs could carry him. The postal-order was promptly changed, in Mrs. Mimble's tuckshop. It was changed for precisely twenty shillings' worth of tuck - which Bunter proceeded to consume on the sport. Bunter had many creditors in the Remove, and many claims were likely to be forthcoming now that a postal-order had actually materialised - and really, Mrs. Mimbles till was the safest place for it. *MAGNET* 873

Long ago it had been borne in Coker's mind that he was the only fellow at Greyfriars with anything like brains. He was a good natured fellow, in the main, so it was natural that he should do his best to bring up his friends in the way they should go.

Potter and Greene seldom, or never, expressed any gratitude. Sometimes they became quite restive. That, of course, made no difference to Coker. He was in the happy position of knowing best, and knowing that he knew best; and there was no doubt - not a shadow of doubt - about this, in Coker's mind at least. *MAGNET* 1204

He did not think of getting a boat out and pulling up the river himself; that was too much like work. Bunter would as soon have thought of pulling up an oak as pulling up a river. *MAGNET* 1112

"But what's a fellow to do?" asked Coker moodily. "I don't want to be sacked from the school. If I hit Prout, I shall be sacked."

"No doubt about that," agreed Potter. "You'd travel so fast it would make your head swim."

"My people wouldn't like it," said Coker, "and I've got to think of the school, too. And you fellows! What on earth would become of you? You've learned to depend on me, or advice, and so on; and I can't very well let you down. That's one

of the drawbacks of being a strong, sensible, capable character. You lead weak-minded people to depend on you, and it becomes a responsibility."

"Oh!" gasped Potter and Greene together.

"Look at the fags, too!" said Coker. "I keep order among them to a large extent. The prefects aren't equal to their job. I do a lot of their work for them. I don't complain - but there it is."

"There it is, is it?" stuttered Potter.

"Yes. I hardly know what Greyfriars would come to, if I left," said Coker. "Just a straight rush to the dogs, I fancy."

"Oh!"

"Besides," added Coker, with great frankness, "personally, I don't want to be sacked. Apart from Greyfriars needing me, I don't want to go." *MAGNET* 1129

Bunter, of course, had to butt in. Bunter was always where he was not wanted. Indeed, it would have been difficult for Bunter to have been anywhere else, for it had never been on record that he was wanted any where. *MAGNET* 1171

Bill Lodgey, at the Three Fishers, had taken extensive bets from Pon & Co. They had backed Bright Boy at four to one, which would have been glorious had Bright Boy come in first. Unluckily, he had come in ninth! Instead of "romping home" as Pon had confidently expected, he had rocked in almost like a rocking-horse, at the tail of the field. Badly as he had run, he had run off with all the available cash of the Highcliffe knuts. *MAGNET* 1532

But Bob Cherry was a fellow who simply could not live entirely in his own society. Had he been Robinson Crusoe on his island, probably he would have chummed with the cannibals rather than have enjoyed only his own company.
MAGNET 976

.....Bunter, it was true, was not particular about his head gear. He would borrow any fellow's hat. But it was the first time he had been seen wearing a waste-paper basket.
MAGNET 1224

Coker was fond of his Aunt Judy, as he had every reason to be. Aunt Judy almost worshipped Horace, which, as far as Horace could see, was very right and proper, and quite natural. Aunt Judy regarded him as the handsomest, cleverest, and finest fellow that had ever honoured the earth by walking on it. Coker regarded Aunt Judy as a lady of very good judgement indeed. *MAGNET* 1133

It was the bell for third lesson, William George Bunter had to roll disconsolately to the Form-room after the rest of the Remove - his inner Bunter uncomforted by tuck, and an aching void where at least a dozen jam tarts should have reposed.
MAGNET 1056

.....It was reserved for William George Bunter to elucidate the mystery, Bunter having his own peculiar methods of gaining information. A little later in the afternoon Bunter was bursting with news. Lingering near the study door of Mr. Paul Prout, by sheer chance Bunter had heard him at the telephone. Still by sheer chance, Bunter had heard all that Mr. Prout said on the telephone - quite a lot, and all by sheer chance. Bunter always heard things by sheer chance, and there was no doubt that chance favoured him to an extraordinary extent. *MAGNET* 1042

He had seen the inside of many prisons, but he did not like any of them. In prison, a bloke had to wash. There were other disadvantages, such as the absence of strong spirits. Altogether, Mr. Walker disliked what he called "chokey". He preferred to roam the open spaces looking for work. Work, after all, was scarce; and he was in no great danger of landing a job. *MAGNET* 1226

"Oh, really, Toddy! The fact is, Wharton, I'm really ill," said Bunter. "I've got a pain like burning daggers."

"Where?" asked Wharton.

"Eh? In - in - Bunter stammered. Apparently he had not decided where he had the pain, severe as it was. "In - in - in my - my tummy, you know."

"It can't be over-eating, I suppose!" said Johnny Bull gravely. "I noticed that you only ate enough for seven at dinner. Are you losing your appetite, Bunter!" *MAGNET* 976

.....Mr. Quelch remembered an occasion when he had detected a smoking party in that box-room, on which occasion, Skinner, and Snoop, and Stott, had reason to remember it also. *MAGNET* 978

Lord Mauleverer glanced at his watch.

"Oh gad! I'm late!" he ejaculated.

"I say - Mauly - "

"Sorry, I can't stop!"

Lord Mauleverer almost ran for it. He did not mention what he was late for; perhaps it was that he was late in escaping Bunter. *MAGNET* 873

.....The tuckshop was open in break, and when Bunter was in funds he was the very best customer at that establishment. He would have been the best customer there at all times had Mrs. Mimble understood the advantages of running a more extensive business on lines of unlimited credit. But Mrs. Mimble didn't. *MAGNET* 1057

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MORE GREYFRIARS VIGNETTES

by Ted Baldock

A Stroll by the River

The afternoon sun was getting low as the Rat sculled gently homewards in a dreamy mood, murmuring poetry-things over to himself, and not paying any attention to Mole. But the Mole was very full of lunch, and self satisfaction, and pride, and already quite at home in a boat (so he thought) and was getting a bit restless besides: and presently he said
"Ratty! Please, I want to row, now!"

K. Grahame, Wind in the Willows

"A quiet stroll along the towpath as far as Courtfield Bridge, does that sound agreeable to you, Prout?"

"A splendid idea, Quelch, a short stroll will be most agreeable on such a warm afternoon".

So it was agreed, and the two masters were observed shortly after moving off in leisurely fashion through the old gate of Greyfriars and passing into the shadowy coolness of Friardale lane.

It was a Wednesday 'half' and leisure was the order of the day for boys and masters alike. Mr. Prout, master of the fifth form, being a stout and somewhat pompous gentleman usually confined his exercise to a dignified peregrination back and forth along masters walk in the shadow of the elms but today was different.

It was a glorious July day and hosts of fellows were abroad enjoying freedom from the form rooms, happy to be 'outside'. The Sark on such a day was very busy with craft of all descriptions plying back and forth. Some being skilfully handled, some less so, but everyone was enjoying themselves.

The two masters proceeded along the towpath midst the laughter and shouts of fellows bent upon making the most of a perfect afternoon and giving no thought to the 'grind' which would recommence tomorrow.

"You know, Quelch, we have seen a great many changes have we not, you and I."

"Indeed we have", replied Mr. Quelch. But Prout continued "There is much which has remained unchanged for which we must be grateful. You know, Quelch, I don't care much for change, I prefer things to remain as they are, as they have always been".

"Yes", Mr. Quelch, replied. "I share your views to a considerable degree, but you must realise, Prout, that changes are inevitable, although perhaps you and I have not altered so very much over the years."

"No, thanks be, and I have no intention, sir, of changing my way of life - or my opinions whatever a fickle world may decide to do". Prout was quite emphatic in his

rejection of change and his colour deepened just a shade.

Thus did these two old colleagues discuss and mildly dispute as they paced slowly along beneath the shade of the willows lining the bank, passing through broad patches of light and shade in their dignified progress. It was obvious that time and any resultant change would meet with quite a determined resistance from these two stalwart members of Dr. Locke's staff.

They were passing the unkempt gardens of the 'Three Fishers' which happily was partially concealed from the towpath by a wild tangle of hedge. Mr. Prout frowned portentously for apparently no other reason than that he was passing this house of ill repute. He had once encountered Joseph Banks, a permanent 'Hanger On' at this establishment, from which he ran a species of business in the betting line which chiefly consisted in relieving fellows - sadly including a small coterie of Greyfriars 'Men' - of money which many of them could ill afford. The meeting had occurred a long time ago and had been far from amicable. The fifth form master retained vivid and far from pleasant recollections of the incident. Hence his heightened colour as he recalled the occasion.

Mr. Quelch was watching with a frosty smile the antics of five fellows whom he recognised as members of his form disporting themselves in a roomy old punt amidst much laughter and cautionary shouts. Although a strict disciplinarian he liked to see the boys under his charge enjoying themselves so whole-heartedly.

Mr. Prout was less impressed when, when shortly afterwards he observed a member of his form, a senior boy, as he was always fond of pointing out, thrashing a pair of oars back and forth in such a manner as was likely to cause a degree of disruption to other craft on the river. Poor old Pompous, he did so like to see his 'men' creating a good impression and here was Horace Coker (could it have been any other than he?) creating a state of mayhem amongst the other craft whose owners were loud and far from complimentary in their critical remarks.

Mr. Quelch continued to smile. If truth be told he was rather enjoying his old friend's discomfort.

"Really, Prout", he murmured, "One of your boys, I believe, surely he should have some instruction in the handling..."

"Nonsense, Quelch, did you not see it was that other punt causing Coker to..." Prout broke off; justification, even he observed, would prove rather difficult.

"Quite so, Prout, quite so", said Mr. Quelch in his smoothest tones. "A mere incident, nothing more. Care should have been taken."

So they passed on along the towpath never far from crossing swords - yet staunch friends. The shade of the overhanging willows closed round them as they proceeded in the direction of Courtfield bridge.

In Masters common room that evening an unwonted quiet prevailed. Something was missing. Mr. Prout was comfortably ensconced in an armchair with his plump legs out-stretched and his feet encased in rather lurid coloured carpet slippers - he being the only master to appear in public sporting such footwear. His familiar boom was strangely mooted, it lacked its usual vibrancy and carrying power. The fact was he

was very tired. Noting his unusual silence Mr. Twigg ventured to enquire whether he was feeling unwell.

"No Twigg, no, I am perfectly well thank you. Quelch and I have had rather a long walk this afternoon, but I am quite well."

Mr. Quelch was standing at the window looking out at the lengthening shadows cast by the elms over the old quadrangle; at the westering sun; another Greyfriars day. Tomorrow the form rooms would be buzzing with activity, life would be on-going. Gosling would be moving slowly about his duties. Mimble would be active, as would the redoubtable Mr. Mimble, preparing for the morning 'rush' at break, and whatever rooks do on sunny mornings they would be active also!

At the close of such a day, now sinking slowly into a calm evening as he watched, Mr. Quelch felt, not for the first time, a strong inclination to say 'thank you' to a kindly providence which had seen fit to cast his life in such pleasant and peaceful surroundings.

His world, his boys, his colleagues. All were a part of the drama of life in which he was a part. Even the familiar boomings of Mr. Prout seemed to have a place, which, were they missing, would render this little enclosed world a degree less complete.

History is a continuous methodical record of past events, of places and people and foundations. Greyfriars has passed through many vicissitudes in the course of its long and varied existence as monastery and school. It has seen many changes and passed through many exciting times and strange interludes along the way. And still it stands in a world in which, at times, it seems to fit a little less than ideally. Time has somehow passed it by which, in many ways, is a kindly fate. It exudes the breath of another less hectic age, a more peaceful, less aggressive face.

The rippling Sark glides quietly on
Through meadows to the sea,
These ageless scenes we've looked upon
Through schooldays - glorious, free,
Relentlessly as time moves on
Such scenes unchanging stay
Great memories these to dwell upon
Through youth to age they stay.
The glinting sun on flashing blades,
The Greyfriars eight sweeps on
Through terms and years unending
Such visions are the norm
A discipline unending
Small need here for reform.


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