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—IN THIS NUMBER—

A Question---

Just Where IS Greyfriars?

Henry St. John Cooper

The Thompson House  
Boys' Papers

# Henry St. John Cooper

By HARRY DOWLER

HENRY St. John! His real or full name was Henry St. John Cooper, and he was one of the greatest writers, if not the greatest, the "Boys' Friend" and the other Amalgamated Press boys' journals ever had as a contributor. During his comparatively short life of 57 years he wrote scores of serials under the name of Henry St. John and Mabel St. John, and occasionally other names.

Henry St. John Cooper was born in London on the 3rd of November, 1869, and died at Sunbury-on-Thames in November, 1926. He was the grandson of Henry Russell, the composer of "Cheer, Boys, Cheer," a nephew of William Clark Russell, the famous sea novelist, and a half-brother of Gladys Cooper, the actress. His photograph in the October, 1920, number of "The Bookman" shows Mr. Cooper to be a handsome, broad-shouldered, healthy man, with a pleasant smile—in fact just such a man as boys love.

An early literary effort was a biography of his grandfather, Henry Russell, which was published by McQueen's about 1890.

When he was about sixteen years of age Mr. Cooper had an engagement as sub-editor on a new boys' paper called "Pleasure." This paper had a short and not particularly glorious existence, for the simple reason that the proprietor's capital gave out. Mr. Cooper wrote practically all the paper himself, even including Answers to Correspondents, who frequently existed only in his strong imagination!

Mr. Cooper was educated in England and France, and originally studied for an artistic career, but later found that he had greater ability for literature. To which change of career all readers of the "Boys' Friend" and similar periodicals will say "Thank goodness!" The subject of our sketch contributed to the "Boys' Friend" practically from its commencement, and later wrote for the "Boys' Realm," "Boys' Herald," and the other periodicals under the directing brain of the Napoleon of the Press, the late Lord Northcliffe.

Mr. Cooper was one of the most prolific writers Great Britain has ever known. He must have written anything from three

to four hundred serial stories, and several short, complete stories. His output was so great that it positively staggers the imagination! He must have written his stories directly on to the typewriter at white heat, never pausing for an instant to think. How he got through so much work in so short a lifetime will for ever remain a mystery. His half-sister, Gladys Cooper, says in her Memoirs that he was the world's worst typist, but lovers of the "Boys' Friend" and the other periodicals conducted by Hamilton Edwards know that he was the world's most popular writer of school, sea and adventure stories.

His school stories were simply grand, full of witty dialogue, abounding in bright, humorous situations, and packed with interesting and healthy excitement. There was nothing slow about his stories. The action started right from the very first sentence, and he either had you helpless with laughter, or gripping the arms of your chair with pent-up excitement. His stories of St. Basil's and his other school tales, and his sea stories, have never been equalled by any other boys' writer, and in my opinion, any writer. Emerson says "Every man is a unique," and there is no doubt that the stories of

Henry St. John are unique. His school stories were custard-pie, it is true; his sea stories had little or no elaborate descriptions or verbiage, but all his work was characterised by fun, swift movement, dramatic intensity, strong human emotion, and terrific excitement. Can one say more? When you read Henry St. John you are either plunged right away into a series of most interesting happenings and dramatic situations, or you are convulsed with hearty laughter at the mirth-provoking incidents in his humorous stories.

I am not quite sure which was the longest story to appear in the Amalgamated Press periodicals, but one story by Henry St. John is certainly in the running for the record. This story was "The School Against Him," which ran for fifty-one instalments in the "Boys' Friend"—and they were not by any means short instalments. According to my estimate the length of this story would be about 1200 pages of the average cloth-bound book!

Besides his work for boys, Mr. Cooper also wrote for the "Girls' Friend" and other feminine periodicals associated with the Amalgamated Press under the name of Mabel St. John. He also found time—how, heaven knows!—to write under his own and full

name several novels which are to be found in many public libraries in Great Britain. His popularity amongst older readers may be gauged from the fact that "Sunny Ducrow," published in 1919, sold over forty thousand copies in the first year of publication.

His recreations were painting, photography, making models of antique ships, inventing mechanical devices, and the breeding of bulldogs. When he indulged in these pastimes the reference books are discreetly silent—and I am not surprised!

I almost forgot to mention that either Mr. Cooper or Hamilton Edwards was so ashamed to own up to the fact that a single writer had written so much for one issue of the "Boys' Friend" that "Henry St. John" was sometimes discarded for "Lieut. Paul Lefevre," and in one serial story entitled "Kingswell College" the author's name was given as Gordon Holme!

Henry St. John Cooper died over fifteen years ago, but he will be remembered by the writer and many readers of this article as an author and gentleman who gave thousands of boys, young men, and young men who refused to grow up, countless hours of supreme merriment and intense interest.

**WANTED - FOR SALE**  
- EXCHANGE -

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**Science-Fiction Magazines—**  
"Railroad Magazines"—and most others—write us your Back-  
No.wants.The School Book Shop,  
530 Ellice Ave., Winnipeg, Man.

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**Wanted—**Volumes of "Beadles Weekly," "Boys of New York," "Young Men of America," "New York Weekly," "Family Story Paper." R. T. Welles, 259 South 17th Street, Philadelphia, Penna.

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**BRITISH BLOODS & JOURNALS FOR SALE—**Black Bess, Black Highwayman, Blue-skin, Charles Peace the Burglar, Nell Gwynne, Gentleman Jack, The Boy Detective, Tom Torment, Handsome Harry, Dashing Duval, Rook the Robber, Boys of England, Young Men of Great Britain, Boys' Comic Journal, and hundreds more. **Exchanges willingly considered.**

**Also—**Runs of the following post-1900 story papers: Aldine Dick Turpin Library, Invention Library (Frank Reade), Jack Sheppard Library, Claude Duval Library, Henderson's Wild West Library, Union Jack, Marvel, etc.

**John Medcraft,**

64 Woodlands Road, Ilford,  
Essex, England.

A Question---

# Just Where IS Greyfriars?

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By W. H. G.

MANY times in the years during which stories of Greyfriars School were featured each week in the "Magnet Library" readers must have asked themselves "I wonder just where Greyfriars is located?" Of course, they all realized that, being an imaginary school, it was not located anywhere. But the feeling persisted that the author must have, in his mind's eye, placed the school in some particular corner of England.

The constant reader soon learned that the favored county was Kent—unless he started with issue No. 1, for it was not made clear during the first few months.

During the long run of the Greyfriars stories in the "Magnet"—from 1908 until 1940—a considerable area of countryside was conjured up to surround the school and its grounds. There are the villages of Friardale and Pegg, the towns of Courtfield and Lantham, Popper's Island in the River Sark, Courtfield Common, Highcliffe and Cliff House Schools, Friardale Wood,

and many other places, including various roads, farms and railway lines. Without doubt many thousands who followed the adventures of Harry Wharton and his friends for any length of time would consider themselves quite capable, if suddenly transported to Greyfriars School, of finding their way to any one of these places.

But supposing they wanted to go to, say, Dover or Canterbury or London! In just what direction would they have to travel? That would be more difficult! To put it differently, just where in the county of Kent is Greyfriars located?

Delving into the earliest issues of the "Magnet," no suggestion is found for some time. Then, in issue No. 22, dated July 11th, 1908, there is a story, "Fun by the Sea," telling of the Chums of the Remove going to the seaside for a day's outing. This story gives the impression that the school is well inland, for the journey to the sea-shore seems to take several hours.

But some months later, in

No. 62, April 17th, 1909, there is a story, called "The Shipwrecked Schoolboys," in which an idea is given as to the actual, or rather the imagined, location of Greyfriars—near the coast, the near-by sea-shore village being Pegg, and the sea is the "German Ocean," or North Sea.

This narrows down our search a lot, for to be in Kent and close to the North Sea coast of that county, Greyfriars has of necessity to be north of Dover, between that town and the North Foreland—or else east of Margate along the estuary of the River Thames, if this could be correctly considered as the North Sea.

Even after this apparent settling of the question, the author seems to have moments of doubt—as, for instance, in "Magnet" No. 323, April 18th, 1914 ("The Runaway!"), when it becomes necessary for the boys to ride on their bicycles to Dover. Quote:

"We'll bike from Greyfriars to Dover."

"It's a big order. I don't know how many miles it is, but I should say a hundred or so." Unquote.

Now if Greyfriars were located in the furthestmost corner of Kent from Dover it could not be more than 70 or 75 miles from that town. And if it is on

the North Sea coast of the county it couldn't be more than twenty miles or so distant, even if it were somewhere on the Thames estuary!

It may be that the author just made a little slip, perhaps intentionally to suit that particular story, and Greyfriars is really located on the North Sea coast of Kent—in imagination only, of course! For just a few weeks later, in "Magnet" No. 336, July 18th, 1914, reference to the German Ocean is again found.

Further research brought to light a story, "The Greyfriars Spy Hunters" ("Magnet" No. 348, October 14th, 1914). This was the first Greyfriars story in which the war was mentioned, and in it one finds that Greyfriars is located on the south coast! But in another story a few weeks later it was back by the North Sea.

A map of Greyfriars and district that was included in "The Greyfriars School Reference Supplement" in the Christmas, 1915, issue of the "Magnet," and which was printed again in the 1920 "Holiday Annual," also indicates that the school is on the North Sea coast.

By this time I had come to the conclusion that practically all the evidence was in favor of the North Sea coast location, and,

congratulating myself on a little job of sleuthing well done, I was ready to turn my attention to other things when I remembered a map of Greyfriars and vicinity that appeared on page 2 of "Magnet" No. 1672, dated March 2nd, 1940. Imagine my chagrin when, on studying it, I found that, according to it, Greyfriars is without doubt close to the English Channel and west of Dover!

And then, as final proof, in "Magnet" No. 1662, issued ten weeks earlier and dated Decem-

ber 23rd, 1939, there is the following reply to a reader's query: "Greyfriars is situated near the south coast of Kent."

What has happened? Was the author in error when he referred to the North Sea in those early stories? Or was the old school removed "syruptiously" (as the one and only Billy Bunter would put it), lock, stock and barrel—to say nothing of the entire countryside—from its former location?

If ever I'm in Kent again I'll have to make a few inquiries!

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## Twenty-Five Years Ago

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Under the above heading the item here reprinted appeared in the issue of the "Croydon Advertiser," Croydon, England, for January 23rd last:

### JANUARY, 1917.

23rd. — Second-Lieut. Arnold Clement Panting (26), of Melrose Avenue, editor of the "Boys' Friend," killed in a flying accident.

The name of Lieutenant Panting is included in a list of members of the editorial staff serving their Country that was printed in No. 764 of the "Boys' Friend,"

January 29th, 1916—the Twenty-first Birthday Number.

In the same issue, among the names of authors who had contributed to the paper through the years is found that of J. Harwood Panting, who, I am told, wrote under the name of Claud Heathcote. One of the three serials that commenced in the very first issue of the "B.F." in 1895 was "The Scapegrace of Swishall School," by Claud Heathcote.

The editorial page in the 21st Birthday Number is signed "H. A. Hinton." —W. H. G.

# The Thompson House Boys' Papers

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(Contributed)

THE first boys' paper to be published by D. C. Thompson & Co. Ltd., who previously had been very successful with women's magazines, was "Adventure." No. 1 was dated September 17th, 1921. An immediate success, "Adventure" was quickly followed by "The Rover," March 4th, 1922, "The Wizard," September 23rd, 1922, and "The Vanguard," October 10th, 1923.

"The Wizard" consisted of 28 pages, size about 12x9 inches. The others had the same number of pages, but each page was two inches or so narrower and the column width was 2 inches instead of 2 3/8. "Vanguard" ceased publication on May 22nd, 1926, during the General Strike. The others are still being issued, but once a fortnight only and reduced to sixteen pages.

The stories featured by these papers were of the school and adventure type, each story having usually an illustrated heading and a two or three-column picture.

"The Skipper" was the next paper to be published by this firm. It appeared on September 6th, 1930. There were three pages of photographic illustrations in the first issue, but these were later reduced to one page, and, I think, finally dropped altogether. "The Skipper" folded up on February 1st, 1941, a war casualty.

Another paper made a brief appearance from March 19th, 1932, until March 18th, 1933. This was "The Red Arrow," which appears to have consisted merely of reprints of serials from the other papers.

A school story paper, "The Hotspur," appeared on September 2nd, 1933—September is a favorite starting month, it will be noted. The "Red Circle" School was the main feature in this paper, and it has contained a Red Circle yarn every week since the beginning, although different authors appear to have written the stories. "Hotspur" is also being issued fortnightly now, reduced to sixteen pages.



On December 4th, 1937, there appeared an entirely new departure in children's papers. This was "The Dandy Comic." The four-colored cover carried a cartoon of "Korky the Cat." The centre spread was in two colors and consisted of six cartoon strips. There were two picture-stories and three ordinary stories. "The Dandy" was a sensation and became immediately probably the most popular children's paper on the market.

The success of this paper naturally called for more of the same type. "The Beano" followed on July 30th, 1938, and duplicated most of the features of "The Dandy," with different characters. On July 22nd, 1939, "The Magic Comic" appeared; this again was after a similar style but for a younger class of readers. "The Magic" faded out on January 25th, 1941, not, I am sure, through lack of support, but from shortage of paper.

From the very beginning this firm has published a very good type of boys' papers; adventure, school and mystery stories have been the regular type of yarn. There have been no heroines, although in some of the comic paper stories there have often been little sisters to the young heroes. These have usually been of the runaway-from-home type or castaways or

something with a heart throb.

The papers have always been well illustrated by staff artists. Printing has been extraordinarily good—the register in the color pages being usually perfect.

On December 28th, 1940, "Adventure" reached its 1000th number; "The Rover" on June 14th, 1941.

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**FOR SALE**—"Back Numbers" of "Champion Library"—dated from 1931 to 1938. Price 2 for 15c., plus postage.—Wm. H. Gander, Transcona, Manitoba, Canada.

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### WANTED

The Following Story Papers

"Magnet Library"—About 150 Nos. between 1 & 1222.

"Boys' Friend" (New Series)—Some 600 Nos. between 1 and 838, and between 1120 & 1378.

"Greyfriars Herald" (New Series, 1919-22) later "Boys' Herald"—Nos. 9, 15, 30, to end.

"Boys' Friend 3d. Library"—No. 288, Jan., 1915: "The Boy Without a Name," by Frank Richards.

Am also interested in the GEM Library, the POPULAR, and the EMPIRE Library

WM. H. GANDER

Transcona, Manitoba, Canada

## Other People's Hobbies—

## “Paddy Is A Hairpin Picker”

Writes Val Werier in “The Winnipeg Tribune.”

PADDY is Carl Daniel Redpath Falconer, and his hobby is retrieving from the sidewalks of Main Street and Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, such inconsidered trifles as bobbing pins and hairpins, with a few side-lines like safety pins, sewing needles, nails, staples, screws, washers and bolts. And dimes; though he claims to have found only one of these!

This is the way Paddy told it to Val Werier for the “Tribune” last December:

“A fellow I knew wanted a piece of chain or wire to hang a picture on the wall. He couldn’t find a piece of wire. He was put out about it and was in quite a bad humor.

“I told him before I would be stuck the way he was I would go out and pick up a few ladies’ hairpins and make a chain.”

Paddy’s friend bet him he couldn’t pick up two feet of hairpins in three weeks—but he found enough in a two-and-a-half-hour walk to make a chain eleven feet long.

“That was the best days’ pick-

ing I ever had,” he recalled. “When I went out walking that same afternoon I saw some more lying around so I just went on picking them. People got to ask me what I was doing. At first I couldn’t think up any satisfactory answer so I told them I was going to make a chain a mile long never thinking it could be done.”

Adds Mr. Werier: “Today this is the inventory of his stock: a half-mile chain of hairpins, “less 185 feet the last time I measured it;” a 25-pound box of hairpins; six half-pound tobacco tins, eight snuff boxes filled with bobby pins; several chains of bobby pins.” Plus the needles, nails, etc.

Personally, though I have many times walked along Portage Avenue and Main Street, Winnipeg, I do not remember ever seeing a single bobby pin. Perhaps because Paddy had passed that way! Seems to me the City Fathers should grant him an honorarium or something, to show their appreciation of his efforts to keep the streets free from bobby pins!

—Contributed.

## : NOTES :

With mail from Great Britain having to run the risk of submarine attack it is more than likely that letters sent me may occasionally fail to arrive. Will correspondents please note that I make a practice of answering as promptly as possible all letters received? They can safely assume that any letters not answered have been lost—or else my replies have been. This statement is prompted by the recent announcement that letters for Canada mailed around the end of January had been lost.



The article on the weekly papers published by the D. C. Thompson Company came my way in response to the suggestion made some time ago that a start-stop list would be of interest. While I doubt whether the boys' papers of this company will be as much sought after as are some Amalgamated Press weeklies, it is only fair to devote a little space to them.—W. H. G.

**Wanted:** Aldine 1d. "Dick Turpins," early issues of "Magnets," "Gems," "Penny Populars." Alfred Horsey, 60 Salcombe Rd., Walthamstow, London, E. 17, England, would like to hear from anyone having these for disposal.

## BRITISH BOYS' BOOKS AND PAPERS WANTED

**Boys' Friend Library**—All stories by Martin Clifford, Prosper Howard, Frank Richards and Richard Randolph.

**Gem Library**—Nos. 3, 5, 6, 10, 11 of 1<sup>st</sup> d series. Nos. 1-300, 375, 407, 452, 620-777, 1221, 1224, 1588-1611, 1635-58 of new series.

**Magnet Library** — No. 357, Christmas 1914, with supplement; Nos. 451-777.

**Nelson Lee Library**—Nos. 24 and 25 of the final series.

**Penny Popular** or "Popular"—1st Series: Nos. 1-23, 222-286; 2nd Series: Nos. 1-511.

**Pluck Library**—Nos. 106-122.

**Schoolboys' Own Library**—All stories by Martin Clifford, Owen Conquest and Richard Randolph.

**Triumph**—Nos. 812 and 814.

**London and Windsor Magazines**—for year 1926.

**The Prince**—year 1893 on, 12 issues.

**Empire Library**—Nos. 8, 13, 14, 20, 21, 26 of first series.

**C. F. F. RICKARD**

1512 First Street West, Calgary,  
Alberta, Canada.

## The Magnet Library--

Weekly paper, published from 1908 to 1940 by The Amalgamated Press, Limited, London.

**WANTED:** The Following Numbers:—

1x to 6x, 65, 85, 87, 90, 100x, 106, 110, 163, 207, 217, 263, 264, 266x, 273, 283, 288, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 334, 343, 367, 369, 371, 376, 377, 382, 393, 398x, 399x, 402x, 411, 413x, 416, 417, 424x, 429, 431x, 432x, 433x, 434x, 438, 439, 442x, 443x, 446, 447x, 448x, 449x, 516x, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 621, 639, 640, 648, 664, 668, 671, 672x, 775, 880, 932, 933, 934, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 948, 949, 950, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 962, 964, 965, 969, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000, 1001x, 1003, 1007, 1016x, 1019x, 1029x, 1034x, 1036, 1047, 1048, 1049x, 1050, 1051, 1052, 1053, 1054, 1055, 1056, 1058, 1060, 1062, 1063, 1064, 1067, 1068, 1069, 1070, 1071, 1073, 1074, 1075, 1076, 1086, 1091, 1093x, 1147, 1153, 1555, 1161x, 1194, 1208, 1222.

("x" means that I need one in good condition.)

**WM. H. GANDER,** P.O. BOX 60, TRANSCONA, MANITOBA,  
CANADA