

Mandeville,
Kingsgate,
near Broadstairs,
Kent,
England.

Jan 28 1943

Dear Mr. Gander,

I recently had a letter from Mr. J. Corbett, of 49, Glyn Farm Road, Quinton, Birmingham, in which he mentioned that you would like to hear from me, and that in fact you had written me a letter which I do not seem to have received. I hope you did not think that the lack of a reply was due to any lack of courtesy on my part: these are uncertain days for correspondence, with Jerry continually at his antics. About a year ago, I think, I received a copy of "The Story Paper Collector" but it was unaccompanied by any letter, and I did not know whence it came, except of course that the stamp and postmark enlightened me to the extent that it had been posted in the Great Dominion. I was extremely interested in this little brochure, and have preserved it with care. Needless to say, I am very pleased and flattered by the agreeable things said about me, and my writings. And I was very much entertained by the article entitled "Just Where is Greyfriars", written by W.H.G., which initials I conclude are your own. The truth is that when the Greyfriars series started, nobody--least of all Frank Richards--anticipated that it would run for more than thirty years: and the exact location of the school was not very clearly defined in the early numbers. However, although ~~in the early numbers~~ there was a spot of uncertainty at first, Greyfriars settled down on the North Sea coast of Kent--and that is where Frank Richards left it stranded when the Magnet came to a sudden end in 1940. This was due to the activities of an unpleasant character of the name of Hitler, alias Schickelgruber, a German paper-hanger who, going into the business sort of wholesale, hung up the whole paper supply! You have probably heard that we are a little short of paper on this side of the Atlantic: which is the reason why I shall use both sides of this sheet.

Noticing in your little paper that many people seemed to want old numbers of the Gem and Magnet, I was rather sorry that I had handed over whole bundles of the same to the salvage collector for war purposes.

But I did not feel that I could keep bundles and bundles of old papers stacked up, while the material was in demand for the war. It was a bit of a wrench, but we get used in these days to giving up things we can do without. However, I retained a selection of sample numbers, and any friend in Canada who wants any particular number is more than welcome to the same, if it happens to be in my remaining pile. Of course my original collection was really enormous----about sixteen hundred Magnets and about a thousand Gems. My collection of Boys' Friends, in which I wrote under the pen-name of 'Owen Conquest', went entirely; I have not a single number left.

It may interest you to know----as you may very probably have guessed--- that "Martin Clifford" and "Frank Richards" were, and are, one and the same person. The happy trio, Frank and Martin and Owen, were very busy indeed for many years, though now it had all come to a sudden end. However, they are not under studying Rachel, mourning and refusing to be comforted: all three are looking forward to the time when the Berlin paperhanger gets hung in his turn: if they mourn at all, it is only because, getting on to the ripe age of seventy, they can do nothing to hasten the happy event, beyond a weekly turn of fire-watching.

I shall hope that you will receive this letter safely, though I did not receive yours. Better luck next time, if you care to write again. In that event, I trust that it will be on a type-writer. Please forgive me for saying so: but the fact is, that in the year 1925, my eyesight almost entirely failed me: since when I have had to see the world I live in "as in a glass darkly." This made no difference to my writing: after so many years on the Remington, I type by a kind of instinct, and seldom make mistakes--at least, I hope I don't! I can fire-watch--but I cannot read hand-writing without using a magnifying-glass, which is a spot of bother. However, if you have no machine handy, write in a big fist, and that will be O.K.

With kind regards,

Yours very sincerely,

Frank Richards

Frank Richards.