

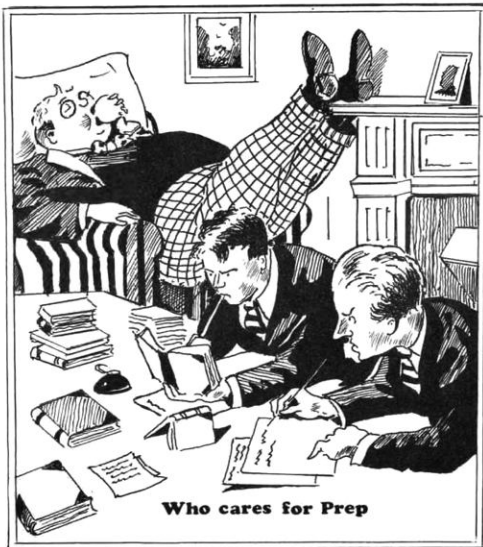
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**COLLECTORS
DIGEST**

MAY
1993

VOL. 47

No. 557



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Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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

COLLECTORS' DIGEST
Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

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

VOL. 47

No. 557

MAY 1993

Price £1

The Editor's Chat



MULTI-MEDIA GREYFRIARS

As we all know, Greyfriars has not only graced story-papers, books and comics but also radio, T.V. and the stage. Brian Doyle has recently described in the C.D. some of Bunter's musical moments, and I am happy now to draw readers' attention to two excellent new songs about the heroes of Frank Richards' immortal school.

Mr. Ken Humphreys, a retired teacher who has a great love 'for the old Magnet' has produced a musical treat in the shape of a cassette recording of his compositions **THE GREYFRIARS SONG** and **HENRY**

SAMUEL QUELCH. These are wonderfully catchy and vividly atmospheric. (Details about how to order them are shown in the announcement on page 2.) The first named song is sung by Southwell Minster Choir and the Bestwood Nottingham male voice choir, and the second by Robert Young.

Greyfriars continues to be known and loved all over the world. C.D. reader Ron Gardner tells me that **ERROL FLYNN, THE UNTOLD STORY** (a biography by Charles Higham) provides the following insight into the swashbuckling film hero's literary tastes: apparently on wet days during the filming of **THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE** 'Errol, his pal David Niven and (Patrick) Knowles would stay in, exchanging tales that were centred on Errol's favourite reading at the time: the English comic papers **Chums** and the **Magnet**.'

Of course we could not concur with these two illustrious publications being classified as 'comic papers', but it is intriguing to note that they might have been the inspiration for Errol Flynn's subsequent interest in heroic portrayals.

On the subject of heroes and role models it was satisfying to read an article by Professor Jeffrey Richards in the *Daily Mail* of 20th March. Called HOW TODAY'S HEROES ARE DESTROYING OUR NATIONAL CHARACTER this tellingly compared today's real-life and fictional cult-figures with many of those of the past. In the author's opinion there is no doubt that heroes such as The Scarlet Pimpernel, Biggles, Rudolph Rassendyll and others with similar values offered immensely more to young people than the savageries of 'Spitting Image' or the adult comic 'Viz'. Similarly he laments that sporting heroes 'are now rarely gentlemen' and that fans now 'tend to look up to brutal thugs like Vinny Jones or bad-tempered brats like John McEnroe' in place of 'those modest, gallant gentlemen' of the past such as Stanley Matthews, Tom Finney and Bobby Moore. Movie-star heroes have also changed for the worse in Jeffrey Richards' opinion; unfortunately 'today's young Britons no longer model themselves on 'graceful and stylish heroes like Ronal Colman and Leslie Howard' but 'plaster their walls with posters of Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone, inarticulate Neanderthal killing machines'.

However, it seems that there is now some hope that our society is so sickened by violence and cynicism that a moral and cultural 'revolution' might be beginning. We can at least be glad that if this comes about we have a fine and wonderful heritage of real and fictional heroes and heroines to provide continuing inspiration.

MARY CADOGAN

ANSWERS TO LAST MONTH'S CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS

7. Like the idle wind which they regarded not
10. Noting
12. Jude
14. Cert
15. It hurts
16. Biretta
19. Trot
21. Toff
22. Affray
23. Liberal

DOWN

1. King Bunter of the Congo
2. Bessie Bunter
3. Wiggins
4. Alonzo
5. Ow!
6. An ungrateful son
8. Haircut
11. Ticket to ride
17. Ichabod
18. William Gosling
20. Waylet
25. Ya!

KEITH ATKINSON

CORRESPONDENCE WITH CHARLES HAMILTON

by Roger Jenkins

My correspondence with Charles Hamilton began in war-time, less than a year before I joined the R.A.F. It was in the London Evening Standard that it was first revealed who was the true identity behind the pen-names of Frank Richards, Martin Clifford, and Owen Conquest. Letters had to be written via the Evening Standard, and the long replies, one running into four quarto pages of purple type, were headed 'Mandeville', but of course his real address was then in London.

A very remarkable comment he made was "Billy Bunter is gone for ever, as I have completely severed my connection with the Amalgamated Press; and these people claim - by what right I cannot say - to prohibit me from writing Greyfriars stories for any other publisher. I am getting too old to enter into a legal wrangle." The legal position was in fact quite clear. Charles Hamilton had long ago sold the copyright of all his schools and characters to the A.P., though he retained the copyright of Bunter. For that reason the A.P. was currently paying him two guineas a week for the use of the Bunter comic strip in the Knock-Out.

Whatever the strict legal position, the A.P. relented by December 1946, when Charles Hamilton gleefully wrote to the C.D. to announce the forthcoming publication of "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School". It was a success before publication, with paper rationing allowing 20,000 copies with the possibility of a further 10,000 later. It may be that the A.P. considered that hard-back books were not in competition with their weekly papers. At all events, the Bunter books were such a resounding success that Charles Skilton found it beyond the capabilities of his firm, and arranged for Cassells to take over.

Even in those far-off days, I had firm views about the Golden Age of the Magnet, and Charles Hamilton wrote "Yes, I agree with you that the Magnet was at its best from about 1930 or '31 on." He later added "This is rather odd, too, for about this time, I had to give up my travels, owing to an accident to my eyesight, which barred me off from many things." Probably, his inability to travel may not be unconnected with the improvement in the standard of writing. He connected it with the end of the substitute stories in the Magnet: "That was about the time when Frank Richards put his foot down firmly on the cheeky fatheads butting into it, as they did into the Gem on a large scale." On the same point, but referring to a much earlier period, he wrote "Actually, it made me lose my temper at times - I remember an occasion when I went so far as to damn and blast Hinton, in his office at the Fleetway House, which I was sorry for afterwards."

He was most revealing about the origins of some of his main characters. Hinton had just taken over the weekly Boys' Friend, and wanted a school story from Hamilton to buck it up. Rookwood was sketched out during a long pow-wow in the editorial office. The name of the hero caused difficulty. "Hinton's first suggestion for his name was Jack Fisher, but this was soon dropped. Such a lot depends on a name, and that name did not seem to me to

fit the character I had in mind" - and so Jimmy Silver was decided upon. Maurice Down took over as editor of the Companion Papers, but when the paper went to another editor "I thought I ought to stick to my chief." So the Rookwood saga ended, and "The BF died a year or two later - though whether the loss of Rookwood had anything to do with that, I am too modest to affirm."



"Harry Wharton's character was drawn from life, and to tell the truth I was a little dubious about it at first, but finally decided to depict him just as he was: for after all, there were plenty of faultless heroes about, and real human nature has an appeal." Perhaps the secret of the Magnet's success lay in this bold presentation of character. He went on to say that "Everyone, I suppose, has known a fellow who has a slight disposition to sulk and mistake it for righteousness." Charles Hamilton made it clear in this letter that he detested sermonising but liked to "merge some moral hints imperceptibly into his story." In an analysis of the Stacey series, he contrasted the protagonists thus: a gifted person "must come to grief if he cannot

keep straight. Harry Wharton in the same series has many faults of temper which often place him at a disadvantage, but he is always decent at heart and that pulls him through all his troubles at the end."

As Charles Hamilton's professional writing increased, his letters grew shorter and less frequent, but the early ones in particular remain a treasure trove of fact, theory, and opinion that continue to provide a fascinating insight into an author's mind.

WANTED: Howard Baker Greyfriars Holiday Annuals for 1985 and 1986; Collectors Pie nos. 3,4 and 5; also Greyfriars Press GEM volumes nos. 8,11,18 and 19. Must be in very good condition. State your price please. W.L. BAWDEN, 14 HIGHLAND PARK, REDRUTH, CORNWALL, TR15 2EX.

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AND ALL FOR TUPPENCE!

by Alan Pratt

Gwyn Evans is sometimes described as a sort of errant genius.

His stories were often richly atmospheric and imaginative but with a tendency to peter out after a strong beginning. An artist rather than a craftsman, it might be assumed that he found it harder than some other Blake authors to write to a deadline - the inspiration was either there or it wasn't!

Sometimes, of course, everything worked out perfectly. His Christmas stories are a case in point and they have long been admired. Another excellent example of a "near perfect" Blake yarn is "The Coffee Stall Mystery" (Union Jack No. 1272 of March 3rd 1928).

From the opening chapters telling of Tinker's introduction to the Bohemian Chelsea set, through the mysterious murder of an apparently harmless coffee vendor to Blake's final reconstruction of the crime the pace never flags. Not only is the yarn exciting but there is a wealth of atmosphere (a deliciously foggy London town!), plenty of good humour - Evans was, I believe, largely instrumental in making Mrs. Bardell a fully rounded comedy character - and even a smattering of social comment. Evans' evocative depiction of London's Latin Quarter which he describes as a "hotch potch of good-



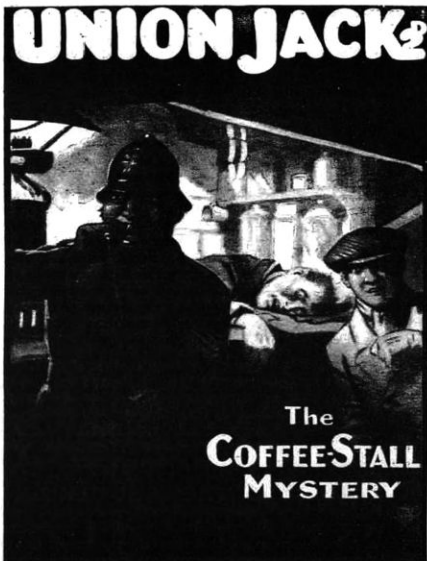
Tinker and Splash Page restrained the young man forcibly. "Let me smash the sneering hound's face in!" cried Fernandez frantically. "By Heaven, Loam, I'll kill you for this!"

fellowship, inebriation, thriftlessness and talent" is particularly interesting.

And, as if all that were not enough for one yarn, there is a particularly unusual murder device, an almost unbreakable clue to the murderer which is explained away plausibly in the last chapter in a way that suggests to the reader that he should have seen through it because the clues were laid out for inspection.

After reading "The Coffee Stall Mystery" I could not help reflecting on how lesser authors than Evans would have written at much greater length with far less material.

This was truly great value for money!



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No. 1,275

EVERY THURSDAY.

March 3rd, 1936.



PASSING ON THE GENES AND ST. FRANK'S

by Edward Allatt

Reading the excellent article by Mark Caldicott in the March issue of *C.D.* served to remind me of my own modest contribution to the perpetuation of the *N.L.L.*, and the exploits of the St. Frank's crowd. In a previous article in this magazine (No. 544) I recounted how my collection of *N.L.L.* was disposed of while I was away dealing with a little contretemps that was going on between 1939 and 1945 so I was unable to pass on my knowledge of the paper to my daughter. Although I told her of my reading preferences as a young boy I was unable to show her the books. In the fullness of time my daughter presented me with three lovely grand-daughters and it was the middle one of them who turned out to be the most bookish. When she was about eleven years old the opportunity came to tell her, and her sisters, about the *N.L.L.*, and it was the middle one, Anna, who showed the most enthusiasm. At that time the only books I had were the Howard Baker facsimiles so I gave her "The Barring Out at St. Frank's" to read, with strict instructions to take great care of it. A few days later she was back clamouring for more stories of Edward Oswald Handforth et al to read so I handed over the other Howard Baker books, plus a bound copy of The Moat Hollow series (O.S. 501-512) that I had. Over the following several years Anna came back many times asking me to lend her the same books, and, although she is now in her twenties, a few months ago she borrowed them yet again. At this present time I have a two year old great-grandson; if I am spared it is my intention in about ten years time to introduce him to Nipper and Co. thus ensuring, as far as I am concerned, that the St. Frank's adventures will be read in the twenty-first century.

WHITE FEATHERS FOR LORD DORRIMORE?

PART II

by Arthur F.G. Edwards

There was another idiosyncrasy which has to be highlighted. The lack of reference, at least while the voyage was being planned, and in its early stages, to the U boat menace. This in a work set in a war-time context and published in 1918. Even those parents who refused permission for their sons to go on the expedition gave other reasons for refusal. Some reference to those in the Adventure facing this danger might have made the series more acceptable. Without such a reference those living under deplorable conditions in the trenches, liable at any time to be sent over the top to near certain death, and their families at home would only have seen an upper class party going on a pleasure cruise to get as far away from the war as possible. A thought that a mutiny might be planned would not have entered their heads. It would not have been safe for Dorrimore to assume that any U boat captain who saw them would ignore them;

on the contrary one would be more likely to assume the Adventure was a Q boat. U boat captains did not sink small vessels by torpedos, but surfaced and sank them by gun fire. The Admiralty countered this by placing guns on small vessels, (e.g. trawlers, coasters and sea going yachts), hidden behind flimsy temporary superstructures, which as soon as a U boat surfaced with the intention of finishing them off, were demolished, and the U boat engaged. Such vessels were known as Q boats. The probability is that a U boat captain encountering the Adventure in the Bay of Biscay would neither ignore it, nor surface to sink it (as an alternative to using an expensive torpedo); he would assume it was a Q boat and torpedo it.

I have assumed that the series was written by Edwy Searles Brooks, but his name does not appear on any of the issues I have read so far, so it may be another was the culprit. Whoever it was has earned my strictures. I have sought possible excuses, i.e., the series was written before the war and put on the shelf, or written during the war but not intended to be published until after it or that some inexperienced editor took it off the shelf to fill a gap. However the last in the 'Hunter' series ended with the holiday voyage to an island in the Pacific being planned and the first in the 'Adventure' series referred back to the Kennedy Hunter regime at St. Frank's.

I have confessed that I am far from an expert on the Nelson Lee and have read comparatively few of them, and just a few of the 'Adventure' series. Is there something I have missed? Have I misjudged possible public reaction to the series and would it have been enjoyed as escapism with class differences overlooked, that the 'cannon fodder' and their families would have seen the Dorrimore party as just 'lucky so and sos'? If someone does not come up with a satisfactory answer I must award Lord Dorrimore a posthumous white feather.

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SGT./INSPECTOR ELK

by Ian Godden

The famous Elk was the nearest that Edgar Wallace came to creating a series policeman. What an up and down career the poor fellow had. In **THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE FROG** Elk is still a Sgt. after 30 years of service but is granted the temporary rank of Inspector to give him a bit more clout in the war against the Frogs. Elk started out in **THE NINE BEARS** as a Superintendent, went from Sgt. to Inspector, as above, and retained the rank of Inspector in **THE JOKER**, **THE TWISTER**, **THE TERROR** and **THE INDIA-RUBBER MEN**, but, for no apparent reason, is a Sgt. again in **WHITE FACE**.

Wallace created a marvellous character in Elk and gives us a good deal of information about him. He is tall, cadaverous and ill-dressed, wearing the same yellowish-brown suit, "... for as long as anybody could remember," and, "winter and summer he wore a soiled fawn topcoat."

In **THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE FROG** we are told that Elk had tried, without success, ten times to pass the written exam, for promotion. The trouble was that the exam required knowledge of historical dates and Elk simply could not remember them. Yet, in **THE TWISTER**, we are told that his memory was prodigious but this was for every sort of detail about criminals. "He collected facts about men and women with the assiduity and fanatical eagerness that others devote to the collection of stamps." Elk says, "I know almost everybody slightly. Good people and bad people. The gooder they are the slighter I know 'em".

In the **INDIA-RUBBER MEN** Wallace tells us that Elk seldom leaves Scotland Yard before 2 a.m. "What he did nobody knew. His detractors advanced the theory that he had no home but this was hardly true" Elk had a home all right, "He lived over a lock-up shop, a cigar store, and he was the sole occupant." This is a nice touch because Elk had a penchant for cigars which he was wont to cadge from others, especially in **THE TWISTER**, in much the same way as Flagg in the John Cassells books - Flagg is obviously modelled on Elk.

WHITE FACE is a gloomy story set in the slum area of London called Tidal Basin. Elk comments, "If I was sure this was hell I'd get religion. Not that I don't say my prayers at night - I do. I pray for the divisional Insp. The Area Insp. The big Five (of Scotland Yard) and the Chief Commissioner and

all other members of the criminal classes." So that's what the mordant Elk thinks of his superiors...

Wallace calls Elk, "...the shrewdest thief catcher in London", and he was too. A truly memorable policeman and all-round character.

BIGGLES MINDS HIS Ps AND Qs

by Norman Wright

It is common knowledge by now that W.E. Johns wrote the first Biggles story in April 1932 for the first issue of "Popular Flying". Six more Biggles adventures appeared in the magazine during 1932 and the first collection, "The Camels Are Coming", was published by John Hamilton in August. Though short in length each story conveyed an authentic feeling of what life may have been like for fighter pilots during the closing months of the Great War. They were written for an adult audience, many of whom may have had first hand experience of the situations encountered by Biggles and the other pilots of 266 squadron. They had a gritty reality and the airmen were not averse to using the odd expletive. But Johns was suddenly forced to re-assess his character. "Modern Boy" began reprinting the stories from "The Camels Are Coming" in January 1933. They were popular with young readers, but the editorial pen was swift to remove the excesses he found in the original stories. It is interesting to compare what the blue pencil changed in the various versions of the stories. In the "Popular Flying" version of "The White Fokker", Biggles, infuriated by the devastation caused by the German plane, attempts to follow it with the idea of shooting it down: his CO says... "Get out, you fool; where the hell do you think you are going..." In the "Modern Boy" version of the story the CO says... "Get out you idiot! Where do you think you are going..." and when the story was reprinted in issue 614 of the "Boys Friend Library" it became... "Get out you fool; where the blazes do you think you are going..."

Johns obviously saw that his future lay in the juvenile marketplace and was forced to make Biggles mind his Ps and Qs and even stories in the John Hamilton edition of "Biggles of the Camel Squadron" had some minor changes in them. In "The Bottle Party", for example - nothing to do with heavy drinking I hasten to add, published in "Popular Flying" in April 1933, Biggles is first encountered in the officers mess and when a character comes in and talks to him we are told, "...Captain Bigglesworth looked up from a well thumbed copy of La Vie Parisienne..." La Vie Parisienne being a sort of early French girlie magazine. When the story appeared in book form Biggles looked up from... "a well thumbed paper..." Indeed in 1934 a reviewer in "Popular Flying" stated that some changes had been made to make the stories suitable for younger readers.

One story that suffered particularly badly from the editorial pen was "Affaire de Coeur", the touching story of Biggles' love for Marie Janis, a young woman who turns out to be a German spy. "Modern Boy" made no bones about the title calling it "Biggles Falls in Love", but they did cut out the

kissing. Our hero was allowed to pull Marie to him, but the kisses which followed were missing. Another odd change appears near the start of the story when Biggles first sees Marie. In the original we are told ... "For a moment he stared as if he had been raised in a monastery and had never seen a woman before..." This version was retained in the "Boys Friend Library" version. But in "Modern Boy" we find "For a moment he stared as if he had never seen a beautiful girl before..." I checked right through the original version of this particular story from the John Hamilton book version and compared it with the "Modern Boy" version. Dozens of small changes had been made to Johns' original text.

A change that is often mentioned occurs in the story entitled "The Balloonatics". Here Biggles has competition for a chance of pre-war whisky discovered by a fellow airman. Wilks, his great rival from 287 squadron, has also heard about the whisky and reaches the cafe at the same time as Biggles. While they argue Colonel Raymond arrives and tells them that he is in fact the owner of the whisky and that he has just come to settle the bill. He explains that he will use the booze as prizes to the squadron who can shoot down the most enemy observation balloons - a very dangerous job. They accept and go off ballooning in an attempt to win the whisky. When the story was reprinted in "Modern Boy" the whisky was retained, as it was in the "Boys Friend Library", but in the 1950s when the story was reprinted in "Biggles of the Special Air Police" the whisky has turned to lemonade. Which on reflection was quite ludicrous!!

The editors of boys papers took great liberties with the stories appearing in their weekly and monthly publications. Johns was not the only author to suffer. But anyone who is a WEJ enthusiast might spend a pleasant few hours comparing the texts of original stories with those presented to readers of "Modern Boy" and "BFL". If you own copies of "The Cruise of the Condor" in both Hamilton and Boys Friend Library versions you may find it interesting to compare them. I have not checked the entire story through, but I have noticed that about half an extra chapter has been tagged on to the end, and from the style it was the work of the editor and not W.E. Johns.

FOR SALE: Modern Boy, 6 vols., nos. 1 to 156. Museum Press: Boy Without a Name, Housemaster's Homecoming, Tom Merry & Co., Cliff House and Morcove, Morcove Companion, Collectors Digest no. 169 to present inc. 6 bound vols. Most items mint. No reasonable offer refused, all plus postage. BRIDGEWATER, 5A Saulfland Place, Highcliffe, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 4QP.

THE CHILDREN'S FRIEND

Several readers have shown interest in my article in the C.D. Annual on the late-Victorian magazine *The Children's Friend*, so I am including 3 'Scrapbook' pages of pictures from this publication which indicate its range and attractiveness. (Mary Cadogan)



Paula made her way up to the wall and leaned over the stone.





Scenes among the Samois.



No. 422. DECEMBER.]

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TWO RATHER SPLENDID GENTLEMEN

by Tommy Keen

It was with much regret that I read of the death of Eric Rosman (L.E. Ransome), as on the 12th August 1986, with Mary - our Editor - a meeting was arranged for my introduction to him. We met for lunch in a pub named, of all names, "The COURTFIELD". Immediately shades of Greyfriars and Cliff House materialised and, as at times he had written stories of Greyfriars and of Cliff House, we were on appropriate territory. He was charming, and after lunch Mary and I went with him to his flat, where conversation of course centred on our favourite schools. It seems incredible that so many of the stories appearing in the SCHOOL FRIEND and the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN were written by men, but learning that at one time he had been "Ida Melbourne", I remembered reading, when very young, a serial in my sister's SCHOOL FRIEND entitled "FRIENDSHIP FORBIDDEN". Actually I seldom paid much interest to the serials, but this one must have appealed to me, for even now I can remember that the heroine's Christian name was Dolores. Evidently a popular serial, for a follow up of the same characters began the week after "FRIENDSHIP FORBIDDEN" had finished. Mr. Rosman was a large, seemingly gentle man, and the time soon passed, reminiscing over the old stories. With three or four pictures safely in my camera, Mary and I bade him farewell.

Although only meeting Mr. Rosman on that one occasion, I had the privilege to meet Mr. George Samways several times, travelling to his home in Dursley, and as David Ball (Melksham) asks for information in the February C.D., maybe I can help a little.

Actually, my first meeting with Mr. Samways was quite remarkable. We had corresponded briefly, and on an impulse I decided to make the journey to Dursley, arriving at his house to find nobody at home. I walked into the town for a snack, then before returning again to his home, I decided to phone. Slipping into a telephone kiosk, I was about to dial the number but noticed a cat sitting nearby, washing itself. An elderly man stopped to stroke the cat, and to this day I have no idea why I stepped from the kiosk, and said "Excuse me, but are you Mr. Samways?" And he was!

Previously I had seen no pictures of him, and in fact had no idea of his appearance. I went back with him to his home, and a real friendship began.

We corresponded regularly (I still possess all of his letters), and I made at least three further visits. He was a deeply religious man, and some of his letters were most moving. Then, in 1988 his eyesight was fading badly, he could not write or type any more, and I was informed that he would have to go into a Home. Then... nothing more. His name and address have been erased from my Address Book for the past few years.



MR. G.R. SAMWAYS

He was, in every sense, a real gentleman, kind, softly spoken, but always very informative on MAGNET or GEM history. I have no collection of originals of these two favourite papers, but religiously cling to one very old MAGNET (No. 813) "The Heart of a Hero" and one old 'GEM' (No. 786) "The Pluck of Edgar Lawrence", both almost tear-jerkers, but long before I had heard of the substitute writers, these were two of my favourite tales, both by G.R. Samways. Mr. Samways gave me a few of his books, including one which I treasure greatly, "Ballads of the Flying Corps", published in 1917.

Once or twice he mentioned that he felt he ought to be in the "Summerland to join old friends". And as his 98th birthday was in January, I presumed, sadly, that he was. But no... I have just discovered that, though very frail and with failed eyesight and hearing, he is still one of the country's very oldest Senior Citizens.



BILL BRADFORD (Ealing): Regarding John Wardlaw's reference to Leslie Charteris stories in *The Thriller*, I can confirm that the cover of 'The Second Victim' is as he describes it, plus four other male figures in the background. This was issue no. 58.

'The Third Victim' was in issue 62, and the first story, in no. 52, was actually entitled 'Number 1'. During the life of *The Thriller*, Charteris contributed 26 full length stories, 6 short supporting stories and 2 serials. Regarding the Laurel and Hardy stories in *Boys' Magazine*, these ran from December 9th 1933 until 20th January 1934 (the last issue) No.'s 614-620 inclusive. They are all as described in the April C.D., about 4 pages long with 2 illustrations to each. The latter are all by Jack Greenall, of whom I know nothing. No author is indicated!

DARRELL SWIFT (Leeds): Re. "Blakian: stop press" in the March C.D. and reference to Jill Melford being the daughter of the supporting actor, Jack Melford, I am sure readers will recall that in the 1960 series of B.B.C. T.V.'s "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School", Jack Melford played the part of Mr. Quelch. Kynaston Reeves, Raf de la Torre and John Woodnutt played this role in previous series. I am sure Jack Melford only appeared in one series of six plays.

HENRY WEBB (Ipswich): The letter from Daphne Cooper in 'The Postman Called' concerning her search for a book of her childhood reminds me of my continuing search for a favourite volume of my own childhood, containing 26 SCHOOL STORIES FOR BOYS (the title) published by *The Boy's Own Paper*. In it was a story by Talbot Baines Reed, called 'Bubbles Ghost'. I would love to read it again. Perhaps one day it will turn up.

DENNIS L. BIRD (Shoreham): It is good news that the Red Fox subsidiary of the publishers Random Century produced four more Biggles reprints in time for the W.E. Johns centenary lunch at the Royal Air Force club on 6th February. As with their first six books last year, they have depicted recognisable aeroplanes in the cover paintings. They are:

"Biggles of the Fighter Squadron" (originally published as "Biggles of the Camel Squadron"): a Fokker Dr 1 triplane attacks the tail of a Sopwith Camel - on the lower port wing of which a British airman improbably stands waving a pistol!

"Biggles and the Rescue Flight" (originally just "The Rescue Flight"): A Sopwith Camel and a Bristol F2b Fighter.

"Biggles Defends the Desert" (originally "Biggles Sweeps the Desert"): Two early Spitfires (Mark I or II).

"Biggles Fails to Return": This is the only one I could not identify. It is a high-wing light aeroplane of the Stinson Reliant type, but with a fluted radial engine and spatted undercarriage. It may be French. The text refers to a "Berline Briguët." Breguet (not Briguët) is a well-known French manufacturer of aircraft, but I never regard W.E. Johns as very reliable in the matter of aeroplane names. The first Worralls book confuses a Reliant with a Defiant fighter!

KEITH ATKINSON (Bradford): When we have travelled about locally or on holiday, we have often amused ourselves by looking at the names of public houses, hoping to find names which Frank Richards used in his stories. The 'Cross Keys' is quite common, but we have never yet seen 'The Three Fishers'. I wonder if any C.D. readers know the whereabouts of a pub of this name? The nearest I can find in this area is 'The Fisherman' situated on the banks of the Leeds and Liverpool canal, three or four miles from here.

BETTY HOPTON (Burton on Trent): A lady mentioned to me a few days ago that she had a 1943 SCHOOLGIRLS OWN ANNUAL (I didn't know that one existed). She also said that the contents were identical to the 1927 Annual, but that the picture on the cover was different. She was quite baffled and so am I. It's certainly very odd. I wonder if any C.D. readers know anything about this?

STUART WHITEHEAD (Hythe): Re. EAGLE, there has been (and still is) a monthly EAGLE at £1 per issue with 'Dan Dare', 'Charley's War' (a story of the 1914-18 war - very well done) etc. etc. I think most of the stories are

re-prints from the old days. The mag is similar in size to WOMAN'S REALM.

EDWARD CHAMBERS (York): I wonder whether the C.D. could include more information of relevance to readers like myself who are still in the midst of assembling their collections? I'm referring to information about the best suppliers of Hamiltonia, the latest relevant publications and so forth.

(Editor's Note: Mr. Chambers mentions the confusing situation about some of the Howard Baker reprints, the prices and availability of which seem to vary a great deal in different parts of the country. He also wonders whether any further Bunter books might be issued by Hawk Books - in limited editions for collectors, perhaps? It think it would be helpful if from time to time the C.D. could include more 'Collectors' Notes'. Do readers generally agree, and, if so, will they provide information and suggestions? Another matter on which I'd like to have readers' opinions is whether the present NELSON LEE COLUMN should be widened in scope to include not only the Nelson Lee but the other works of E.S. Brooks. Comments, please.)

ELINOR M. BRENT-DYER - CENTENARY; 1994

The UK branch of The Friends of the Chalet School is organising various events to celebrate the centenary of Elinor Brent-Dyer's birth in 1994. These include:

A weekend in Hereford, timed as near as possible to her birthday on 6th April, which will encompass the opening of an exhibition on EBD, an illustrated talk, a commemorative plaque, a tour of the relevant places and a celebratory dinner at which Helen McClelland will speak.

An exhibition in Hereford, which will hopefully travel to other cities.

A visit to South Shields.

A Visit to Guernsey.

A plaque in Pertisau.

Christmas cards and a 1994 calendar featuring illustrations from the Chalet School series by Nina K. Brisley.

For further details, please send SAE (if writing from the UK) to either Clarissa Cridland (if your surname begins with A-L) or Polly Goerres (if your surname begins with M-Z), both members of the Elinor Brent-Dyer Centenary Committee.

Clarissa Cridland
4 Rock Terrace
Coleford
Bath
BA3 5NF

Polly Goerres
No. 7 Bushberry Lodge
48 Willes Road
Leamington Spa
Warwickshire CV31 1BV

"WHOEVER GUNBY HADATH MAY BE"

by John Buckle

In his historic essay on "Boys' Weeklies" George Orwell suggested that "the *Gem* and *Magnet* probably owe something to the school story writers who were flourishing when they began, Gunby Hadath, Desmond Coke and the rest..." In his reply, however, the creator of Tom Merry and Harry Wharton pointed out that "Frank Richards had never read Desmond Coke till the nineteen-twenties: he had never read Gunby Hadath - whoever Gunby Hadath may be - at all."

In the *Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Pritchard refer to Coke (1879-1931) who wrote *The Bending of a Twig* (1906), "a novel ... about the experiences of the boy Lycidas Marsh at Shrewsbury School... It sets out to parody the conventional school story and to show the falsity of the picture of school life given in such books, but soon deteriorates into a conventional example of the genre. It was extremely popular in its day." But evidently not popular enough for Charles Hamilton to have read it then for himself.

Gunby (John Edward) Hadath (c 1880-1954) a "prolific writer of school stories was for many years," according to Carpenter and Pritchard, Senior Classics Master at Guildford Grammar School. His best known books were about the Stalky-like schoolboy 'Sparrow', e.g. *Sparrow in Search of Expulsion* (1939).

In his history of the *Boy's Own Paper* (entitled *Take a Cold Tub, Sir!*) its last editor, Jack Cox, mentions Gunby Hadath as "a contributor of authentic school stories laced with rich humour who was the only professional writer to work for every editor of B.O.P. His first story, *Buffle's Brolly*, was published by Hutchinson in ... 1909-10 and his last, *The Decent Old Bird*, was written for me in late 1953..."

GRIM and GAY



GUNBY HADATH'S
Great War-time Public School Story

There was Crammer smacking away at the flre.

(From *Boy's Own Paper*, March 1942)

"One serial of Gunby Hadath's written for me in 1948 made an immediate hit with B.O.P. readers. He called it *The Wizard Insurance Company*. A schoolboy formed a private insurance company to insure all his friends against the hazards of everyday school life such as impositions, detentions, canings and so on ... Gunby said that he based it on a real incident in his teaching career; it made a very good story indeed with extracts appearing in the august pages of real insurance-company house-journals 'by kind permission of the Editor and Author'."

One extract appears in Cox's own history: "this entertaining school story" opens concisely and effectively. The humour is essential, ironic and bathetic: the unrealistic pretension of third-form business-boys operating in the context of classroom delinquency is subtly emphasised and developed.

"To give credit where credit was due, it was Pettifer's notion. But Lipton Minor to whom he confided it first contributed with distinction to its success." Without a wasted word Hadath arouses the reader's curiosity and introduces the explanatory duologue. The stylistic antithesis between originator and improver of the implied scheme is well maintained.

"That's the best," said he, "of having a father who's an actuary in an insurance company. You couldn't have thought of anything brainier, old boy!"

"No," agreed Pettifer modestly.

"So I'll be Hon. Sec. if you like, and sling round the policies."

"You don't sling round policies. You 'issue' them, Lippy."

"Good! I'll issue them" beamed Lipton, ready to learn. "And how do we settle our prices?"

"Our 'tariff' you mean. That's what the companies call it."

The actuary's son educates his enthusiastic supporter in professional terminology and thus raises an imaginative schoolboy's prank into an apparently business-like scheme. The promoter's modesty in so readily accepting his partner's praise of the cerebral excellence of his proposal has a deft and subtle wit, which is well maintained by his authoritative correction of his companion's slang. Hadath's irony invests the mercenary venture with an element of the mock-heroic even before the nature of the business is duly revealed.

The mock-heroic note is raised more prominently in the author's explanation of the pretentious juvenile enterprise.

"It would seem that Pettifer's genius and Lipton's ardour were engaged upon the foundation of an unusual insurance company. Yet nothing could have been simpler in its conception and nothing more benevolent in its design. It was this, indeed, which caused them without hesitation to christen it *The Wizard Insurance Company*.

"Now let's get down to the tariffs," says Pettifer. "I was thinking of a penny for each fifty lines?"

"Yes, that sounds all right," says his companion.

"And tuppence for detention?"

"No. Say tuppence ha'p'ny. It looks better."

"Good enough. Tuppence ha'p'ny for any common or garden detention. But if it's a bit of a corker I'd vote for three-pence."

"We shall also cover detentions, impots and canings by an All-in-Policy," Pettifer suggests, "reducing our rates to sevenpence a week for the lot."

"That's fair," Lipton agrees.

The methodical precision of the two business boys over the exact number of pennies to be offered and charged implies a humorous contrast between the solemnity of the

proponents and the triviality of their proposition. Neither tariff nor rate proposed would of course even then have been the object of serious negotiation by any adult actuary or client. Few schoolchildren today would have wrangled over old or new pennies with such pedantic precision; and this duologue reveals the abject penury in which evidently even public or secondary schoolboys then languished. Pennies - even half-pennies - mattered then far more than they could have done today.

One fact is, however, overlooked by the young insurers: their premiums become not so much compensation for punishment inflicted as rewards for punishment sought.

"The premiums were low enough to attract a lot of good business," Cox explains, "and claims were dealt with speedily and honourably. But, alas, some cunning young miscreants realised that, when they were hard-up, it was possible to behave in such a disgraceful fashion that impots, even canings, came more readily, with the ensuing claim to ease the financial strain. Soon everybody was at it, with the school staff furious and puzzled, and the Wizard Insurance Company bankrupt!" The impoverished endure and even welcome punishment for a few pence at a time! Such stoical - not to say masochistic - opportunism the optimistic insurers can neither withstand nor survive! The very popularity of their scheme destroys it!

One wonders whether Frank Richards ever read Gunby Hadath's "very good story" or even any extracts from it that appeared in "the august pages of real insurance-company house-journals." It was perhaps about this time that Frank Richards wrote on *The Disappearance of Tom Merry* published (without date) by Spring Books. This book opens thus:

"Tom Mewwy!"

"Quiet!"

"Weally Tom Mewwy -"

"Dry up!"

"But I came heah -"

"Yes, yes ... now go away again."

"Bai Jove!"

"Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the fourth Form at St. Jim's frowned. He was looking in at No. 10 in the Shell. His reception in that study was really neither hospitable nor polite. Arthur Augustus's own manners were extremely polished. Tom Merry's, at the moment, seemed quite the reverse.

"But Tom was busy: too busy to want interruptions.

"He was sitting at the table, writing lines. Those lines were due - in fact over-due - to be delivered to his house-master, Railton... Tom's pen raced over the impot paper. Those lines had to be handed in before tea: and the bell might ring at any moment. Tom did not even look up at the elegant junior in the doorway. At any other time Arthur Augustus would have been a welcome visitor in No. 10 study. But not when a fellow had only a minute or two left to complete his impot on time."

Evidently there was no Winged Insurance Company at St. Jim's with a generous tariff to spur him on to greater efforts! The duologue between Merry and D'Arcy, striver and interrupter, differs very materially from that between Pettifer and Lipton, promoter and partner. There is a stronger antithesis in attitude between D'Arcy, who bears a message for Merry, and its intended recipient, who prevents him from delivering it - and then blames him for not doing so! When D'Arcy at last mentions that "Waiton wants Tom Mewwy in his study," the latter asks him, "Did Railton send you to tell me that!"

"Yaas, wathah."

"You prize ass, why couldn't you say so?" hooted Tom.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I have been trying to say so for several minutes -" exclaims Arthus August warmly. "If you fellows will not listen to a fellow when a fellow comes heah to deliver a message from the house-master -"

"Ass!"

This summons is a prelude to the disappearance and holding to ransom of Tom Merry himself. He is, however, eventually rescued and his kidnapper imprisoned before the end of the book.

With Frank Richards both humour and characterisation are broader than with Gunby Hadath. Pettifer and Lipton are similar in character and interests. D'Arcy is of course an extreme caricature in both accent and attitude, and Tom Merry rather less so. D'Arcy's frustrated attempts to communicate arouse the reader's interest in the purpose of his visit - and that interest is maintained by the enforced concealment of that purpose.

Hadath develops the theme of a schoolboys' insurance company through naturalistic conversation. Richards envelopes the theme of a schoolboy's summons to his housemaster's study through recriminatory confrontation. An insurance scheme among schoolboys is of course a more novel theme than a housemaster's request to see a boy from his own house - and so common an occurrence baldly expressed could hardly constitute an interesting enough opening for a school story. So Richards dressed it up for both comic and dramatic effect. The drama lies in Tom Merry's race against time - to finish his lines on time. The humour lies in his repeated frustration of D'Arcy's attempts to deliver his message and D'Arcy's reactions to such frustration.

Hadath's opening is more straightforward and Richards' more oblique. It might have been interesting to see how Hadath would have handled the theme of a schoolboy's abduction and Richards that of a schoolboy's insurance scheme. Their methods might well have differed - perhaps as much as their style.

In referring to the tales published in the *Magnet* and the *Gem* Orwell suggests in his essay that "in general they are the clean-fun, knockabout type of story centring round horseplay, practical jokes, ragging masters, canings, football, cricket and food."

However, the quotations given in this essay from Richards' book and Hadath's serial show that both authors could extend beyond the range of mere knockabout juvenile humour and horseplay. The interest of both works centres on themes beyond those enumerated by Orwell: crime in Richards and commerce in Hadath. Neither, however, sets out to parody the conventional school story or to show the falsity of life given in such books. In fact neither seems to have been a more conventional school story - like those contemporary perhaps with Coke's Edwardian tale, *The Bending of a Twig*.

"The success of Gunby's stories depended in large measure on their humour," Cox says. "By the early fifties it seemed from their letters that readers of the *Boy's Own Paper*" "no longer took much pleasure in school stories unless they were both original and funny..."

However conventional they might have been, Frank Richards' "Billy Bunter" books seem to have sold well enough throughout the nineteen-fifties and beyond. For all his humour Gunby Hadath, however, does not seem to have survived. Cox does not mention whether *The Winged Insurance Company* was ever published in book form. Other stories by Hadath evidently were. It is doubtful whether any of them will ever come back into print.

Whoever he may have been then, Gunby Hadath stars at least as a name in a memorable journalistic controversy between a great polemical writer and a celebrated author of school tales.

(Editor's Note: I seem to recall that Frank Richards wrote some extremely amusing and perceptive stories about schoolboy insurance schemes several years before Gunby Hadath tackled this theme. Doubtless some C.D. readers can provide details of these tales.)

SOME HAMILTONIAN NOTES AND QUERIES by Peter Mahony

Geoff Lardner's article in C.D. 554 "Getting Their Own Back" set me investigating. The Boy's Friend carried 4 yarns about Herr Kinkel.

- No. 731 "A Stern Chase" dated 12.6.1915
- No. 739 "P.C. Jimmy Silver" dated 7.8.1915
- No. 740 "The Spy in the School" dated 14.8.1915
- No. 741 "Renounced by Rookwood" dated 21.8.1915

The first of these is fairly certainly the "Getting Their Own Back" story reprinted in the Holiday Annual of 1933. The other three yarns involved:

- a) Jimmy putting the wind up Herr Kinkel by posing as a Police Constable.
- b) Jimmy discovering a spy signalling from Rookwood's old tower.
- c) Kinkel unmasked as the spy and arrested. That ended Kinkel's involvement in the stories. He was probably shot at dawn!

One puzzle about Rookwood that I have never solved satisfactorily is how "Cecil Adolphus" became "Reginald" Muffin. A friend told me that Muffin, a swanker of the Bunter/Trimble ilk, adopted "Cecil Adolphus" when he went to Rookwood because it sounded "higher-toned" than plain "Reginald". He was eventually bowled out and reverted to his proper Christian name. We have never been able to trace the story when the reversion occurred. Can any reader throw light on this, please? Incidentally, one of Hamilton's funniest episodes is when "Putty" Grace puts Muffin up for the vacant School Captaincy - and gets him elected! A crowded hour of glorious life follows - with the 6th Form in rebellion against Captain Muffin - an absolute hoot!

Currently, I am researching the Gem, analysing the stories with a view to character studies of the leading lights and their specific "adventures". In the first 400 yarns, Tom Merry was the star of 86 and a prominent participant in 42 others. Gussy comes next, a long way behind, with 33 leading roles. When I've completed the analysis (I'm not including stories by sub-writers), the balance will probably be less in favour of Tom, but my guess is that he'll be top character by a distance. Talbot, Levison and Cardew may supplant Gussy.

Finally, we must solve the Jack Drake Mystery. Ferrers Locke appeared from time to time in Greyfriars stories. Drake returned there on several occasions as an undercover detective (remember the Randolph Crocker series?). There must have been a "Goodbye Greyfriars - Hello, Ferrers Locke" story to account for Drake's change of role. I've never come across it - surely someone has. A brief article explaining the problem would be most interesting. Could Eric Fayne oblige?



WILLIAM - THE IMMORTAL

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It is with particular pleasure that I can announce the publication, within its pages, of no less than six articles "by William" (by Richmal Crompton, of course) that have lain forgotten since the 1920s and 30s, including *Brighter and Better Pets*, *Picnics*, and *William Writes a Play*. Also included is the "missing" William story, *William on the Trail*, that never made it into the books.

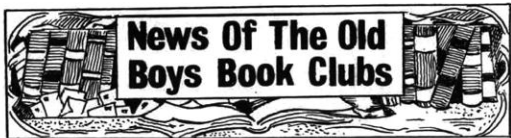
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LONDON OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

The March Meeting at Eltham was attended by 17 members.

Chris Harper talked about one of his favourite authors, Charles Gilson, who wrote adventure stories from 1908 to the end of the thirties. Phil Griffiths read a story from "William and the Pop Singers" by Richmal Crompton. Bill Bradford talked about his childhood heroes - Robin Hood, Dick Turpin and Buffalo Bill

SUZANNE HARPER

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

For our April meeting we gathered at the Willingham Village home of member Keith Hodkinson.

Keith - an extremely knowledgeable film enthusiast - presented a third part of 'The Western'. In this segment Keith considered the John Ford/John Wayne/Clint Eastwood contribution to the genre, along with general themes that this cinematic form had adopted. We were entertained with excerpts from 'Geronimo', 'Oh My Darling Clementine', 'Rio Grande', 'How the West was Won', 'The Magnificent Seven' and 'High Plains Drifter'.

ADRIAN PERKINS

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

A copy of the souvenir menu for the Celebration Luncheon held at the R.A.F. Club in Piccadilly, London, in honour of the centenary of the birth of W.E. Johns, was displayed. The William Meeting would be held on April 24th at Warwick - the first not to have any direct association with the Northern Club.

We were delighted to have two new members since the last meeting, one of whom is the celebrated author Keith Waterhouse.

Alan Harris spoke on "Cricket, Lovely Cricket!" and gave us a detailed and interesting history of the publication of books relating to cricket. Generally, cricket books are expensive with a limited market but many cricket grounds have their own libraries. We had a short discussion on cricket as described in some of the old papers and books.

"Two American Detectives", from Keith Normington, provided extremely absorbing information. Rex Stout had probably been the author who had written the longest about one particular character (from the 1920s right up to his death in 1985). Nero Wolff lived in West 35th Street, Manhattan and his tales were different from run of the mill detective stories; Nero Wolff was a consultant detective, never leaving his house and having an assistant who did all the running about. There is a thriving Rex Stout Society in the U.S.A., and sub. stories are still written.

John D. McDonald wrote 17 books about Travis McGee who had retired early and set himself up as a "Recovery Agent", living in a house-boat in Florida.

An excellent meeting: those not with us missed a treat - including the delicious parkin provided by Margaret for our refreshments!

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

LESLIE CHARTERIS - A Tribute by Bill Lofts

The death of Leslie Charteris, creator of the world famous character The Saint, at the age of 85, was very sad for me. I had been in close contact with him as a friend for the last 30 years.

We first met in the early sixties, just after I had published the life-story of his character, in the Fleetway Record, the House Magazine of Fleetway Publications. His famous character had in fact been built up by his weekly stories in the old A.P. paper *The Thriller*. Leslie was always grateful to the Editor, the late Montague Haydon, regarding this. His own boyhood favourite was *Chums*, where the stories of pirates had greatly influenced him later to write about a swash-buckling hero - Simon Templar - alias The Saint.

I did quite a lot of personal research for Leslie Charteris, as well as myself and Derek Adley writing easily our best work *The Saint and Leslie Charteris*, published by Hutchinson. It was also published in America, plus later a soft cover edition. Later I was made a trustee of The Saint Club.

A great highlight of my (and Leslie's career) was being invited by Lord Denning to the House of Lords, where a special presentation was to be held for Leslie. The award of a Cartier Diamond Dagger for over 60 years of writing in the crime/mystery field. A photograph was taken of us both, which will always be in pride of place in my study.

In real life Leslie was very approachable. He took a deep interest in English folk-lore, and I wrote at his request articles on Witches, Pirates, Robin Hood etc., for his Saint Mystery Magazine.

His own stories of The Saint sold probably in billions throughout the world in many languages. Even more watched his films and T.V. episodes especially with Roger Moore in the leading role.

I shall miss our meetings very much indeed, but am still able to cherish the hundreds of personal letters in my files.

Charteris died on 15th April 1993, but The Saint will live on for many more generations to come.

JACK GREENALL

My request in last month's editorial for information about the artist Jack Greenall has rapidly borne fruit. As you will see from this month's C.D. (page 18) Bill Bradford quickly replied giving details of the run of the BOYS' MAGAZINE'S Laurel and Hardy stories.

I have since heard from Mrs. Irene Wakefield, widow of Terry Wakefield who, following his father George, drew the famous Laurel and Hardy FILM FUN strips. She comments: 'Terry and I first met Jack Greenall through a friend, Ronnie Brown, who brought him over to our place several times. He never gave details of his work though mentioned that he was an artist. I realized, however, that he was the illustrator of the sketch in our daily paper, and took it for granted that this was his only work then, so was surprised to see his Laurel and Hardy pictures in the C.D.'

Tony Glynn from Manchester writes:

'Jack Greenall was a Lancashire lad - born, if I remember aright, in Burnley. His earliest work appears to have been for the "Boys' Magazine", published, of course, in Manchester. I recall seeing story illustrations by him in issues for the very early thirties and, possibly, gag cartoons too.

I suspect the Laurel and Hardy tales replaced the long-running tales of Harold Lloyd which were in the "little red mag" of the twenties. By the early thirties, of course, Lloyd was old hat, belonging to the silent era and L. and H. were all the rage.

Greenall's greatest claim to fame, however, was as the artist of "Useless Eustace" in the "Daily Mirror". He started it in 1936 and drew it daily for over 30 years until it was taken over by Peter Maddocks, who altered the whole style and drew an entirely different Eustace.

I can remember Greenall drawing for one of those one-short comics of the war years - very early in the war - his front page characters were a couple of evacuees, a brother and sister.

He died only recently - maybe three or four years ago.

Eric Hammond of Upminster also mentions that "Useless Eustace" was used in a daily sweepstake: 'I cannot remember how much the prize money was, but remember my father



'Turn my money over?
Gorblimey, chum, you a
rookie?'

participating. Needless to say I do not think he ever won!

Donald Campbell of Apperley Bridge, West Yorkshire, has sent us a copy of a "Useless Eustace" cartoon (DAILY MIRROR 10th June 1944). I understand that Jack Greenall also contributed illustrations to the comics JOLLY, SPARKLER and EVERYDAY.

FOR SALE: The Lost World of Everest, Berkley Grey, Marvel No. 360, 17.12.10. The Best of Magnet & Gem. The B. Bunter Picture Book. Chatterbox Annual 1912. Schoolgirls Own Annual 1934. Offers for lot. Boys Own Annual 1924. Chums Annuals 1913, 1916, 1919, 1922, 1930. Offers please.

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SHOULD BOYS SCOUT ON SUNDAYS? (See page 430.)



Wiley rushed at Tom. The boy seized the whip lying at the bottom of the sleigh, and made one desperate slash at the miserable wretch. He put all his energy into that slash. Wiley gave vent to one piercing, craven yell, then he toppled headlong from the sleigh. (See our splendid new serial, "Strong-hand Saxon," on page 427.)

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Printed by Quacks Printers, 7 Grape Lane, Petergate, York, YO1 2HU. Tel. 635967