

The COLLECTOR'S DIGEST

(Vol. 4) No. 39. : Price 1/1: March 1950.

50 PRIZES! 50 PRIZES!! 50 PRIZES!!!
GUNS, SKATES, STAMPS, FORTY-FOUR, OUTRIGER, STAMP ALBUMS, PENCILS, &c. SEE PAGE 100.

NO. 1, 1698.

ONE HALFPENNY. **BRITISH** EVERY WEDNESDAY **BOYS** ONE HALFPENNY.

THE BEST AND CHEAPEST PAPER BOYS READ IN THE WORLD.

Vol. 4, No. 39. Published on Wednesdays. Published by GOSWOLD.

SCOTLAND THIRD
SCOTLAND THIRD
SCOTLAND THIRD



Small text and advertisements are visible in the background of the page, including a large 'SCOTLAND THIRD' stamp advertisement.

Schoolboy Magazines Behind Popular British Organizations

BY NORMAN CRIEBENS

LONDON, Jan. 25—(CP)—A group of middle-aged men meets regularly in London to talk over the adventures of fat boy Billy Bunter, handsome Harry Wharton and other English public school characters that were popular in Britain and Canada for 50 years before the Second World War.

They are members of an organization known as the Old Boys' Book Club and they have an exciting coat-of-arms incorporating revolvers, pipes, masks, school caps, cricket bats and detectives' magnifying glasses.

Authors, doctors, lawyers and schoolmasters, as well as men in ordinary walks of life, make up the club's membership. It also has corresponding members in Canada, South Africa, New Zealand and Brazil.

Reason for this far-flung membership is that "The Magnet," "The Gem," and other schoolboy magazines need not be. Bunter and his contemporaries first appeared in 1899 were exported to many different countries of the world.

They ceased publication in 1940, due to wartime paper restrictions, yet pre-war copies are still read and exchanged by members of the Old Boys' Book Club.

"Our club is living proof that men never really lose the enthusiasm of their boyhood," said Francis Peckham, the club's first man and founder.

Appropriately the president of the Old Boys' Book Club is 74-year-old Charles Hamilton, who created Bunter, Wharton, Merry and a host of other schoolboy characters and wrote no less than 70,000,000 words about them.

Hamilton, now living at Broadstairs, Kent, wrote about the boys of Greyfriars School in "The Magnet" under the pen name of Frank Richards.

In "The Gem," as Martin Clifford, he wrote of Tom Merry and Co. of St. Jim's. In "The Popular" he was Owen Conquest, creator of a Canadian backwoods school called Cedar Creek. As Hud Richards in "The Girls' Own Weekly," he wrote of Bessie Hunter and the girls of Highcliffe.

These papers have not been revised since the war, but Hamilton is still turning out stories about Greyfriars and St. Jim's, which are occasionally published in book form.

Some years ago, one of the present LEADER staff wrote an article about Frank Richards, grand old author of the Greyfriars school stories, creator of the immortal Billy Bunter. The feature brought a correspondence that showed the extent of the interest and affection spreading to exiled Britons all over the world. Such a feeling, we felt, must in the end find expression in some sort of organization. And that we heard of *The Old Boys' Book Club*, which Alan Jenkins wrote on p. 23.

ABOVE: From
The Moncton
Transcript,
Ontario, ..
Canada. of
the 24.1.50

R. Hand Side:
From: "The
Leader", of
18.2.50. ..



(Vol.4) No.39

Price 1s.1d.

Post Free

MARCH 1950

Next Issue April

Editor, Miscellaneous Section
Herbert Leckenby, Telephone Exchange,
C/o Central Registry, Northern Command, York

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

Place in the Sun: We had to wait a while for the "Leader Magazine" article, but, my word, it was worth it. Three pages in a magazine of real class is no mean achievement, and all who helped to bring it about are to be heartily congratulated, especially the ever present Len Packmen. The moment I gave him the tip he was on the job like a terrier.

The photo was a sheer delight, showing vividly as it does, the appeal our hobby has to fellows of all ages. There was, however, an unfortunate error in the caption. The two boys are Tony Blunden (14) on the left, and Ian Whitmore (15) nearest our "grand old man", Mr. A. W. Lewson (75).

I only wish we could reproduce the whole of the article for the benefit of those who didn't see it. We can't do that, of course, but on another page you will see what the editor had to say in his "Who and Why" feature. It speaks for itself, doesn't it? And to think that not so long ago a lot of us used to admit an interest in collecting in a shamefaced, furtive sort

of way. Anyway, we were pioneers in what has become the most publicised collecting hobby of all.

You'll also see from a press-cutting elsewhere that quite a lot of people in Canada will now know about the Old Boys' Book Club. And, possibly, before you read this, a number of you, thanks to the generosity of Jim Southway, will have seen a very interesting article in the South African "Outspan".

Verily, the sun never sets on the hobby of story paper collecting.

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Circle of Comrades: The way in which so many sprang to the rescue when they learned there was the likelihood of a substantial loss on the Annual has moved me deeply. It was grand, and I think I can say the loss will just about be cleared, even if we have to wipe off one or two "bad debts". Even in a clan like ours we are bound to find black sheep occasionally. It isn't often I "name" anyone (except those of the Poynter breed), but I feel I must mention Petrick T' Donohue, Serport House, New Docks, Galway. He did write a congratulatory letter when he got his first C.D., but as he hasn't paid for any copies, or for the Annual, or even for an advert, and ignored polite requests for a settlement, this led from the Emerald Isle doesn't seem to be a very satisfactory customer.

Sorry for that discordant note.

The ballot is in a very interesting position, but a large number of voting papers have yet to come in. Let's have them along, please.

+++++

A Thrill in Store. As my co-editor will, no doubt, be telling you, you will in all probability have the opportunity of hearing his voice on the wireless telling of his beloved Blake. One more score for the clan. You can bet one who will be all attention is

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LICKENBY.

Later News Flash: "Outspan" to hand. Terrific write-up on the hobby. Three huge pages. Fine photo A.J.Southway seated at table laden with Gems, Magnets, U.Js. Lengthy extracts from papers. Quotes from Annual and C.D's, including adverts. - Hearty congrats, Jim.

Late Item. - Important. - Since writing my chat I have been informed that Patrick O'Donohue, mentioned therein, has not paid for a parcel of books sent him some weeks ago, which confirms what I have already said. All collectors please note. - H.L.)

I MEET HARRY HARTLEY

The Story of a Pleasant Afternoon

By Herbert Leckenby

When I said in the December C.D. how interesting it would be if we could find Harry Hartley, that Boys' Leader prize-winner of 45 years ago, I little thought that within a few weeks I should be sitting by his side at Evensong in York Minster, and piloting him through the Kirk Museum and other show places in this ancient city. But so it has happened; an astonishing story in real life.

As I told last month, thanks to Frank Case, Liverpool member of the clan, Harry Hartley was quickly found. Then came the remarkable circumstance that he was contemplating a visit to the O/C of a famous regiment whose office was a few yards away from my own. Part of my correspondence is collected from the post-room at the barracks, and in all probability some mornings about the time I was expressing that wish to find him, letters from Harry Hartley would be lying adjacent to some addressed to me in that very same post-room. Can you beat that?

However, just after the February C.D. caught the mail I received a letter from Major Hartley, (he is an officer in the Royal Artillery) saying he was coming over on February 11th, and bringing Frank Case with him. And, deed on the appointed time. they drove up to my office. A few minutes later Harry Hartley was turning the pages of the Boys' Leader giving the progress of that unique competition of long ago. In its early stages, he and his partner seemed quite out of it, then they began to creep up the table, reached the top for a week, fell a few places, then ran out winners in a close final. Their success was all the more notable seeing the partners were working so far apart, one in Liverpool, the other in Guernsey, whereas most of the others lived in the same town, sometimes in the same house. Harry Hartley generously gave his partner, Nicholas de la Mare, the credit for being the more active worker. He also said, with a smile, that towards the finish they were greatly helped by other

collectors, who realising they had no chance, handed their coupons over, on condition the lucky ones sent them picture post-cards during their tour, a condition which was faithfully kept.

That was a memorable week for Herry Hartley, for it also found him, a scholar at Merchant Taylors School, passing his final exams.

He also told Frank and myself that the arrangements for the tour were admirable. Everything went off without a hitch. There was just one disappointment. They had hoped to be presented to President Roosevelt - the first of that name, of course, but it fell through at the last moment.

Major Hartley added that the memories of that boyhood tour had grown rather dim, for he had seen service in all parts of the world in two wars since, but the sight of those old "Boys Leaders" had brought it all back. One event which had been a great shock to him was the death of his close friend, the boy from Guernsey, a few short years after their tour.

Well, I am sure all will agree that it was a real sporting action on the part of Herry Hartley to come all the way from Liverpool mainly to talk over those pages from the past. I was also grateful to him for bringing Frank Case with him so that I could thank him personally, for if it hadn't been for Frank this very interesting story with its remarkable coincidence would never have been told. And I am happy to think that Frank told me as we said good-bye that he had greatly enjoyed his trip to York, and wouldn't have missed it for anything.

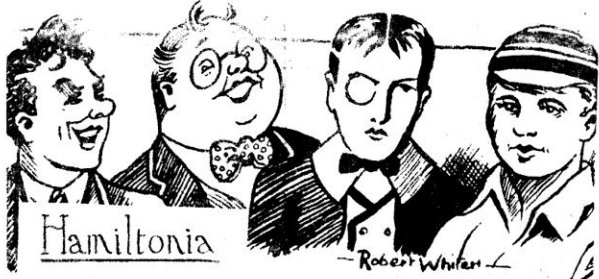
May we all three soon meet again.

A RARITY FOR SALE: Boys Friend 3d Library, 383. "After Lights Out" or "Expelled from St. Jims" by Martin Clifford. Bill Martin, 93 Hillside, London, N.W.10.

WANTED: Magnets 1928 and previous, 1/6 each offered. Magnets 1908 to 1913, 5/- each offered. William Jamison, Lisnacree, Co. Down, Northern Ireland.

CAN ANYONE SUPPLY TITLES OF UNION JACKS (1d series) No's 218, 219, 300, 301, 302, 306, 321, 328, 329, 338, 341, 406, 408, 462, 463, 464, 465, 469, 478, 483, 495, 496, 499, 504, 508, 509, 512, 513, 581, 586, 587? If so, please send any to Leonard Parkmen, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

WANTED: Chums Annuals, all from 1900-1940. Also Union Jacks and Sexton Blake Libraries Previous 1946. Bill Martin, 93 Hillside, London, N.W.10.



Conducted by Herbert Leckenby

Josephine Packman, having successfully made her entry in the Blakiana section, now makes a debut in Hamiltonia. "The Toff" was one of the most prominent characters in St. Jims saga, and our lady contributor has made a fine job of his biography. It will run to about three instalments, so without further ado I will gracefully hand the column over to her, leaving room for a continuation of some of husband Len's "Magnet" titles. A busy pair, those two.

REGINALD TALBOT (THE "TOFF")

By Josephine Packman

Part One

It is now quite a long time since I began to be a regular reader of the C.D. and I have noted that from time to time there have been contributions by other members of our circle, in the form of articles on their favourite characters. Well, a few weeks ago I thought it was time I did the same. Now, I, in common with quite a few other people, have two loves, the "Gem" and the "Union Jack", so I could not at first make up my mind about which to write first.

However, that was done for me as Mr. Packman had already promised Mr. Bond that I would write an article for his Blakiana, so I set to work on that.

Before getting down to the real subject of this (shall we say) story, I should like to tell you how I first came to read the "Gem". When I was about thirteen a friend at school was

given for a Christmas present a copy of the "Holiday Annual" for 1922 and, being a very kind-hearted girl who liked to share her joys with others, lent me this wonderful book - in fact, we pored over it together for many a pleasant hour.

Now, as all our "Gem" fans know, the 1922 "Annual" contained that excellent story called "To Save his Honour", a reprint of three of the finest of the many stories about Reginald Telbot, the "Toff" of old. Those three yarns were in "Gems" Nos. 361, 362 and 363, under the titles "The Call of the Past", "Cast Out from the School" and "Loyal to the Last".

No doubt I was very young at the time but the struggles of the "Toff" to retain his honour in the face of great adversity seemed to me to be most enthralling, and he consequently became my favourite character.

I was greatly intrigued by this boy who appeared to have had such a dreadful past, and I wanted to know more about him. Well, of course the first thing I did was to change over from my weekly paper "The School Friend" to the "Gem". At that time I could not afford both. As far as I can remember my weekly pocket money averaged 3d or maybe 4d if I was lucky. Well, I did my best at that time to obtain information about those earlier stories of the "Toff", not even knowing the dates when they appeared. I even went to the trouble of writing to the Editor of the "Gem" soliciting information, but very little was forthcoming.

However, I continued to read the "Gem" and eventually came to know quite a fair amount about the most prominent characters, but the "Toff" was still my first love.

During the years that followed, my interest in these school stories was necessarily overshadowed by other matters, such as learning shorthand and typing in order to earn my living, then the natural excitement of getting married and so on, but still the interest in the old paper was there, if buried rather deeply.

But strangely enough my husband had also been a keen reader of the "Gem" and "Magnet" and various other papers, so we found we had much in common. From then on he did his best to obtain those old "Gems" for me and eventually was successful, so that after a considerable number of years I was at last able to read the whole "Story of the Toff".

Unfortunately these "Gems" were lost during the war, but when the Old Boys' Book Club was started it re-awakened my interest, and after many efforts on the part of Mr. Packman and some of his very kind friends, I now possess once again a complete collection of the "Toff" stories.

Now I must get down to the real object of this literary effort, which is to tell in my own words the story of what I think to be the best of Charles Hamilton's many fine characters.

"Gem" No.334 first introduced the "Toff", as a very charming and handsome boy who arrived at the old school in those dim distant days of early summer in the year 1914.

He did not enter the school in the usual manner of new boys but in a most unconventional way. He rescued both Gussy and the Herd from attack by footpads in the Rylcombe Lane, and on discovering that his young rescuer has no home the kindly Dr.Holmes takes him back to the school, and there this boy, who gives his name as Reginald Talbot, tells the herd he has been left stranded by an uncle who had recently brought him from Australia.

The boy did not appear to be destitute, he was well-dressed, had plenty of money on him and stated that he had quite a number of valuable possessions which could be sold, but apparently his one aim was to be able to enter the school and complete his education.

Well, the good Dr.Holmes at last decided to accept this strange boy as a scholar and he became a member of the Shell form, and, being clever at both lessons and games, quickly became a general favourite.

Now, not long after Talbot had settled down a series of amazing burglaries commenced and, in the two following "Gems", Nos.335 and 336, entitled "Hero and Rescuer" and "The Hidden Hand", the full perfidy of the "Toff" known as R. Talbot was revealed.

But this boy, who was in reality a most accomplished cracksmen, had another side to his character, the good side, which, under the influence of the clean wholesome life at St.Jim's, had begun to stir, and he felt his position keenly. He no longer had any desire to live a double life and found it increasingly difficult to continue to lie to fellows of whom he thought so much and dreaded what Tom Merry especially would think if he knew the truth.

There were only two ways out, either to give up the profession of a cracksmen or leave St.Jim's, and the latter course was the one he did not want to take. The final decision was made after the "Toff" discovered he had made an enemy of Levison who had been spying on him and felt sure that Talbot was in reality a thief and, in his spiteful way was determined to "show him up".

This part was related in a very fine story in "Gem" No.337, "The Parting of the Ways". The repentance of the "Toff" was final and complete, but owing to the trouble caused by Levison he was still compelled to lie his way out, due to the fact that he had to meet members of the old gang late one night.

Hookey Walker and his pals were not at all pleased when the "Toff" told them he was finished with the gang and had decided to run straight, and they certainly had no intention of giving up their first idea of robbing the school. However, they were content to wait, but the "Toff" thought he had stopped them.

Some few days later, on a scouting expedition, the Shell fellows were led to the place where the plunder from several robberies had been hidden, and by discovering this plunder, they were, unknown to themselves, able to assist the "Toff" to restore all that had been stolen since he had been at the school. The "Toff" now thought he would be able to settle down and, in time, win a scholarship to maintain himself at St. Jim's, but the unfortunate boy little realised then that the wrongdoing of the past had still to be paid for. The old gang were only waiting an opportunity to break into the school with or without the aid of the "Toff", and one night the attempt was made.

Now, although the "Toff" had hoped he was now free of the old gang he still had some misgivings that they would try to enter the school and, during the previous night he had listened for them. Thus, on the night Hookey Walker and his pals did attempt to burgle the school, the "Toff" heard them and crept down to try and prevent this happening.

The men were at work on the Head's safe when the "Toff" interrupted them, but they would not be persuaded to leave the school without their plunder.

Telbot threatened to rouse the school if they did not go and, in the end, this was what he had to do. But out of spite towards the boy he thought was now his enemy Hookey Walker denounced him to the Head.

The unfortunate boy who had had such a struggle with his conscience had come to the "Parting of the Ways" with a vengeance. In order to save the school from being robbed he had chosen the hard way of repentance and denouncement.

The kindly Dr. Holmes, after hearing the whole story, thought the Toff had been more sinned against than sinning, but before the police arrived to arrest Hookey Walker the Toff had vanished and was seen no more at the school.

This ends the first part of the Toff's sojourn at St. Jim's. As to whether this was really at that time meant to be the end of the whole series I cannot say, but no doubt due to the fact that the war of 1914-1918 commenced, and that the very interesting characters created by "Mr. Clifford" appealed to the readers of the Gem, he apparently saw an opportunity of making the "Toff" have

the very dramatic "come-back" as related in Gem No.351, "The King's Pardon".

In this story it was shown how Talbot had gone to Germany after leaving St.Jim's, but owing to the war had been compelled to return with the crowds of refugees then flocking to this country.

The first intimation that the St.Jim's juniors had of his return was when Inspector Foxe of Scotland Yard called at the school to make enquiries concerning the "Toff". On hearing what Foxe had to say, Tom Merry and his pals who had remained staunch friends of the Toff despite the black past, determined to find Talbot and warn him that the Inspector was searching for him. They knew it was against the law but were fully determined to help the unfortunate boy in any way they could.

They met the Toff, who told them that through the detective he had been compelled to be on the run again. He had no money and night time found him wandering over Wayland Heath seeking some kind of shelter.

Now, during his stay in Germany Talbot had come up against a spy - Karl Elberfeld and, much to his surprise and consternation, whilst tramping over the darkening heath he came upon the German skulking near the railway line.

On reaching the railway bridge spanning the valley, Elberfeld appeared to act suspiciously and the Toff, knowing that many troop trains passed on that line, suddenly realised that the spy intended to blow up the bridge with a bomb.

The only thing the "Toff" could do was to find the detective who he knew was somewhere on the heath and enlist his help, although he knew it meant his own arrest. This he did and, whilst the detective handled the German, Talbot searched and found the bomb which he dropped over the side of the bridge a few seconds before it exploded.* (see footnote).

The German was finally overpowered but not before he had wounded the "Toff" in his attempt to escape. In the words of Mr.Hamilton, "truly the Toff had atoned for all his past sins".

When these happenings became known at St.Jim's and that through his brave action the "Toff" had been granted a "free pardon", his friends' one thought was as to how they could possibly arrange for Talbot to return to the school.

In the following story, No.352 entitled "Working His Way", Talbot does return to St.Jim's, at first as a servant; but later the school Governors and Dr.Holmes decide to grant him a scholarship in recognition of his bravery.

Thus Talbot re-enters the school as a scholarship boy with an opportunity to work hard, live down the past and lead a new clean life.

* Footnote. For the benefit of any sceptical younger readers it must be remembered that such a thing as aerial bombing was still unknown in those early war days of 1914 and such an action as is described would have been quite feasible. - J.P.

End of Part One

Magnet Titles

1d Series

106, The Greyfriars Plot. 107, The Cad of the Sixth.
 108, Wingate's Secret. 109, The Remove to the Rescue,
 110, Linley's Luck. 111, The Greyfriars Flight. 112, The "First"
 at Greyfriars. 113, Friends or Foes. 114, Billy Bunter's
 Trials. 115, The Juniors' Enemy. 116, Billy Bunter's Vote.
 117, Wun Lung Minor. 118, The Remove's Challenge. 119, The
 Bounder of Greyfriars. 120, The Cad's Trial. 121, The First
 Eleven. 122, The Remove Eight. 123, Study 1 on Tour.
 124, The Thief! 125, The Duffer of Greyfriars. 126, Harry
 Wharton's Peril. 127, Bob Cherry's Benefit. 128, Wun Lung's
 Loss. 129, Alonzo the Great. 130, Billy Bunter, Limited!
 131, Harry Wharton's Century. 132, Alonzo's Plot. 133, The
 Postal Order Conspiracy. 134, Todd the Terrible. 135, Captain
 Bob Cherry. 136, Billy Bunter's Kick-Off. 137, Only Alonzo.
 138, Harry Wharton's "Pro". 139, Alonzo's Little Game.
 140, The Cliff House Guest. 141, The "New Firm". 142, The
 Duffer's Downfall. 143, The Heed of Study 14. 144, Billy
 Bunter's Minor. 145, Coker's Catch. 146, The Leader of the
 New School. 147, The Schoolboy Traitor. 148, Bunter's Bust-up.
 149, The Haunted Island. 150, The Yankee Schoolboy. 151, The
 Girls' School Challenge. 152, John Bull Junior. 153, Forward
 Fish! 154, Rolling in Money. 155, Spoofing Alonzo. 156, The
 Tempter. 157, The Greyfriars Hypnotist. 158, John Bull Jr's
 Weekly. 159, The Rival Weekly. 160, Poor Old Bunter!
 161, Alonzo the Footballer. 162, Wingate's Chum. 163, The
 Artful Dodger. 164, The Greyfriars Clown. 165, The New Page.
 166, The Greyfriars Wheelers. 167, The Prisoner of the Priory.
 168, Last Men In! 169, The Bully's Remorse. 170, Harry
 Wharton's Downfall. 171, The Greyfriars Tyrant. 172, The
 School on Strike. 173, Driven from School. 174, A Schoolboy's
 Honour. 175, The King's Guest. 176, Bulstrode on the Warpath.
 177, Banned by his People. 178, The Bully's Brother.

(To be continued)

Old Boys Book Club

Wood Green Meeting

February 19, 1950

With the coincidence of the "Leader" Magazine article and the latest meeting in Bob Cherry Whiter's ideal sanctum, members enjoyed a very good get together. To those members and friends who have not been able to visit, this rendezvous, it is the ideal place to hold a meeting. It is a typical genuine collector's study, complete with books and photographs, and it was here that the, now famous, Club crest was drawn and designed.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and signed, treasurer's report adopted, and a very lengthy correspondence read by both the secretary and the chairman. Most of the latter resulted from the Leader article which was agreed to be a fine one despite the mistakes.

That energetic "springbok" Jim Southway, has done a very fine piece of work by having a grand article by Eric Rosenthal printed in the South African periodical "Outspan". The secretary received a copy at a most opportune time and as Len Peckman had also brought a copy along, members were able to read same. The club's best thanks were afforded to Jim Southway for his fine publicity effort.

Also circulated round was a copy of last December's "Feathered Friends" in which was a story by Frank Richards and also a photograph of our worthy president.

A very great acquisition to the club is P. Podro and the club's best thanks are due to him for obtaining press cuttings from nearly all the newspapers and periodicals that have published items of interest as regards the hobby and the club.

Thanks to Anthony Blunden and Len Peckman, articles on the hobby are to appear in the "Hobby World", and all members can obtain this journal at reduced rates.

The Collectors' Quiz, drawn by Bob Whiter, was won by John Geal, with Ian Whitmore and Len Peckman dead-heat for second place. A short Pictorial Quiz was won by Ian Whitmore and C. Wright, with Len Peckman and Frank Keeling level in third place. The club was pleased to welcome R. Southwood from the Rookwood county of Hampshire.

The next meeting will be held on Sunday, March 19th at 12, Ashburnham Place, Greenwich, London, S.E.10.

Attendance. John Geel, C. Wallis, Ian Whitmore, A. Blunden, H. Homer, F. and W. Keeling, R. Southwood, W. Lawson, P. Podro, Len, Josie and Eleanor Peckman, Mr. Merrylees, E. Reynolds, H. and M.A. Dabb, R. Mortimer, Olive and C. Wright, F. Dungsingson, B. and R. Whiter.

Apologies for unavoidable non-attendance were received from H. Flatmen, W. Willett, Sidney Godfrey, and Bob Blythe, the latter being in hospital, and members were asked to write or visit him.

BENJAMIN G. WHITER.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

Leeds Branch

Some progress has been made towards the formation of a branch at Leeds, so would anyone interested please get in touch as soon as possible with W. F. Sawyer, 172 Tarnside Drive, Seacroft, Leeds? Bill is very keen, and is prepared to put any amount of work into it, and as will be seen from the following letter, the project has Frank Richards' blessing.

Look Out, London!

Dear Mr. Sawyer,

Thank you for your letter. I am very interested to hear that you think of forming an Old Boys' Book Club in your locality, and hope that it will be a great success. Best of wishes, my dear boy, and best of luck to all Old Boys concerned.

It is now a considerable time since the National Institute proposed putting a Bunter Book into Braille: a proposition in which the publisher and I cordially concurred. But I think there are probably difficulties in the way, as the amount of material required would be very large. Still, I shall hope that the project will come to something sooner or later. So far two Bunter stories have been published in Braille: I think I sent you copies of them.

Just now I am in the middle of a Rookwood book which will be published in the summer. Owen Conquest thinks it is high time he had a turn on the typewriter.

I should like you to let me know how the O.B.B.C. of Leeds goes on.

With kind regards,

Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

POPULAR PAPERS OF THE PAST4 - "British Boys" (Newnes)By Herbert Leckenby

It is perhaps a misnomer to call "British Boys" a once popular paper, for I guess very few collectors, even the older ones, have heard of it. I never had until three of the four volumes came my way a year or two ago. It is true it died shortly before my "purple period" really started, but there are very few papers published in the 'nineties I hadn't heard of at some time or other, yet as I say I knew not "British Boys".

It is a curious fact that the House of Newnes, famous publishers of "Tit-Bits" and the "Strand Magazine" never managed to run a boys' weekly successfully. "The Captain" yes, but not a weekly. They made several attempts, but all had short careers. Nevertheless, "British Boys" deserves a place in this series, for there were several interesting features about it.

The first number appeared December 12th, 1896, and it ran just two years, for the last, December 3rd, 1898, was No.104.

Quite obviously, it was an attempt to cash in on the success of the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Boys' Friend which had then been running just on two years. It was printed on the same sort of green paper, though the page size was slightly smaller. This was more than balanced by the fact that "British Boys" gave, for a time at least, twelve pages, against the Boys' Friend's eight, and the price was the same humble halfpenny.

Here are the contents of No.1:- Three serials - "The Smugglers' Terror" or "The Mystery of the Old Abbey" by Robert Justyn Lamb; "The Adventures of Frank Fearnought" or "The Boys of Daneleigh College" by "Hawksley Brett", and "The Boy Hero of the White North" by Captain Horace Kingsley.

It is interesting to note that "Hawksley Brett" was actually none other than R. S. Warren Bell, and later in "British Boys" he wrote another story, "The Boy in Black" under his real name.

In addition, in No.1 there appeared a message from that famous sea dog Lord Charles Beresford, a prize competition, several articles, a short detective story, and the editor's chat; quite good value for a halfpenny.

In No.2 the editor gloated over the success of No.1, declaring people could be seen reading it all over London, and that over ten tons of paper was used in its production. He also advised his readers to carefully preserve the first number as it might be worth quite a good sum some day. Um! No.1 of the Boys' Friend or the Magnet maybe, but not, I'm afraid, British Boys. But of course you can forgive an editor for drawing the long bow.

Starting with No.10 the editor's chat was adorned with his picture, seated at his desk, a depper; moustached young man. At first glance it might have been Hamilton Edwards. Evidently British Boys watched the Boys' Friend closely.

In No.14 there started "Jack Harkaway in the Lifeguards" by Bracebridge Hemyng. So far as I know this story never appeared in book form, like most of the other Harkaways. Anyway, it hadn't a very long run, for it finished in No.23.

No.15 saw the commencement of "Frank Footlights" by Leslie Lawton. There was a suspicion of Henry T. Johnson about this one.

Still another new serial in No.17 was "Robin Hood and His Merry Men" by Alfred Armitage, pen-name of W. Murray Graydon.

Bracebridge Hemyng came again in No.24 with "Cecil Chumleigh's Schooldays" or "Life at Eton". There was a sequel later on, "Cecil Chumleigh, Scotland Yard Detective".

Other serials were "Dashing Dick Dareall" by Skipp Borlase; "The Young Diamond Seekers" by E. Harcourt Burrage; "Harry Flexmore among the Brigands" by Robert Justyn Lamb; "Afloat with Nelson" by C. H. Eden; "The Fighting Lads of Devon" (Alfred Armitage); "When Shall Their Glory Fade?" (John C. Twist); "Shoulder to Shoulder" (Robert Justyn Lamb) and "The Cricket King" by Bracebridge Hemyng.

A feature which had a good run was "Stirring Stories of the British Regiments" by C. N. McCluer Stevens, the well-known war correspondent.

Well, quite a number of the most popular authors of the day wrote for "British Boys"; the artists were up to standard for a paper of its class; it ran competitions with quite useful prizes; the articles were interesting, and altogether there was quite a lot for the money. Yet it died when two years old.

One can imagine Hamilton Edwards wearing a cynical smile, as he was so often to do when a rival died, as the Boys' Friend ran on and on.

Next month, No. 5. "The Captain". A fine article by Harold Dubb.

INVITATION TO DEALERS AND COLLECTORS: Wanted, parcels of Magnets, old and new on approval. Deposit forwarded in advance if required (to C.D. subscribers). Unretained copies, remittance and postage returned promptly. J. Walsh, 345 Stanley Road, Kirkdale, Liverpool, 20.

WANTED: All back numbers of Collectors' Digest. Also Annuals. Bill Martin, 93 Hillside, Stonebridge Park, London, N.W.10.

WANTED: Schoolboys' Own Libraries featuring Greyfriars, 1/6 to 3/- each offered according to age. Bill Martin, 93 Hillside, Stonebridge Park, London, N.W.10.

20 Bunter and Tom Merry Books for sale half original price. Bill Martin, 93 Hillside, Stonebridge Park, London, N.W.10.

WANTED: Boys of England, Vols. 26, 31, 32, 37, 59, 61. Boys Comic, Vols. 9, 11, 28, all after 30. Young Men of Great Britain, Vols. 30, 39, 41 and Nos. 52 to end new series. A. W. Lewson, 13 Charles Square, Hoxton, London, N.1.

FOR DISPOSAL. Nelson Lees (Old Series), Nos. 356, 364, 367, 369, 401, 415, 416, 420, 421, 431, 438, 439, 474, 475, 478, 483, 484, 485, 491, 501, 505, 507. - The dates from April 1st 1922 to February 21st 1925.

WANTED: Schoolboys Own Libraries. Nos. 39, 90, 161, 162, 392, 393, 394. - Some of these are very old and I realise may be difficult to obtain. B. D. Holtz, Vesturgata, 11, Reykjavik, Iceland.

"CAPTAINS" WANTED, for sale, or exchange. Other O. B. Books sometimes available. Large, 42 Blendford Road, Reading, Berks.

WANTED to exchange large number of Sexton Blake Libraries. What have you? Henry J. H. Bartlett, Peas Hill, Shipton Gorge, Bridport, Dorset.

WANTED URGENTLY: Your price paid. Gems, 819, 878, 879, 946. Can any fellow collector oblige? Leonard Packman, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

LETTER



BOX

Our Hobby and Others

27, Archdale Road, S.E.22.

I recently had my attention drawn to an excellent publication entitled "The Hobby World" in which an article on Old Boys' Books appeared. I therefore wrote to the publisher for a specimen copy which I promptly received. Having perused this thoroughly, I have come to the conclusion that it is excellent value for money.

Whilst it is true that it caters for all sorts of hobbies, the articles are all first-class and are of great interest. The fact that articles on our hobby will be a regular feature is something that should not be overlooked by our clan.

This monthly magazine, somewhat about the size and type of the Collector's Miscellany, has some 20 to 24 pages at the low cost of 7d per issue, i.e. 7/- for a year's subscription (post free). Members of the O.B.B. Club will be interested to know that they receive 25% discount, a year's subscription being 5/3. I have already sent my year's subscription and I strongly advise all collectors to do the same.

The name and address of the publisher is as follows:

Mr. E. Norman, 54, Elliott Road, London, W.4.

LEONARD PACKMAN.

He begs to Differ!

The Novocastrian Story
Paper Collectors' Club,
178 Maria Street,
Benwell,

Dear Editor,

Newcastle-on-Tyne 4.

In his Blake Monograph in the "Annual" Mr. Homer regards the "Hotspur" as so much muck. I can assure him that the stories are written with a higher degree of technical skill than many of our former favourites. Please don't misunderstand. I can enjoy the old tales because of their undoubted leisurely flavour plus their strong characterisation. I think both Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Brooks will support the claim that modern stories have to conform to a very high standard. The modern editor buys stuff like "The Iron Teacher" because modern boys want such stories.

Yours sincerely,
JACK COOK.

(Well. there's subject for controversy here anyway. - H.L.)

Do You Remember Andrew Home?

37 Mary Vale Road,
Bournville,

Dear Editor,

Birmingham 30.

Surely I am not the only person who has read the school stories of Andrew Home and who places them high in the genre? They were published towards the end of last and in the early part of this century by Nelson, W. & R. Chambers, and A. & C. Black, and included "The Fellow Who Won" - my favourite and the only one I actually possess. The others, including "Well Played!", "Bravo, Bob!", "The Story of a School Conspiracy" and many others I borrowed and borrowed again in boyhood and adolescence from the local Public Library. But twenty years has failed to introduce to me a single fellow-lover of Home, or even anyone who has ever heard of him.

Won't someone tell me they also cherish Andrew Home in a corner of their bookcase? That really they prefer him to Tom Brown, "The Fifth Form at St Dominic's", and "Eric". And that they will go on reading him with the deepest enjoyment as long as school-story nostalgia hangs heavy on them?

Yours sincerely,
ROGER THOMAS.

P.S. I would be willing to purchase any remaining copies of his works from anyone foolish enough to want to sell them.

The Nelson Lee Column

All queries and suggestions to Robert Blythe,
46, Carleton Road, Holloway, London, N.7.

(Note.— Not only Nelson Lee devotees, but all readers of the C.D. will be sorry to hear that Bob Blythe is at present in hospital, having undergone an operation. They will be pleased to hear that about the time he was undergoing his ordeal, his first-born was coming into the world. Mother and son are doing well. Congratulations to mother and father, and may you soon be home, Bob, to nurse your offspring.

Meanwhile, Jack Wood has helped to fill the breach with an interesting article. — H.L.)

NOT SO USELESS EUSTACE!

(With apologies to the Daily Mirror)

By Jack Wood

Eustace is a name which does not always suggest the brightest of characters. The reader instinctively regards the bearer of the name as someone who is likely to be somewhat "dim" at best, or at worst someone with the outlook on life of the villain of old-time melodrama.

Over the years Edwy Searles Brooks has given us four Eustaces, so far as I have been able to determine.

Earliest of them was Eustace Cavendish. Unfortunately, I possess no stories in which he figures, but "from information received", as the law would put it, I gather that he was a Union Jack character. He appears to have been a debonair men-about-town "type" of gentleman crook, owing some kinship to the notorious Raffles, or the equally famous Toff. He does not, however, seem to have possessed the more endearing qualities of Brooks's later creations, Rupert Waldo and Norman Conquest. Eustace made some appearances in the early Nelson Lees.

Next to appear in the pages of the Nelson Lee Library was Eustace Carey, cousin of Ralph Leslie Fullwood, the reformed Knut of the Remove. Carey was an Oxford undergraduate who fled from the police to avoid a manslaughter charge and, kidnapping Stanley Clevering, a new East House senior, came to St. Franks as

Clavering. A thorough rascal, Carey forced Fullwood to take all kinds of risks to help him keep his secret, but finally retribution overtook him and he left St. Franks in disgrace. He did, however, find that his fears of police action were totally unfounded. The full story is in Old Series 537 to 541.

Third Eustace to come on the scene achieved only passing notoriety. He was a River House junior, Eustace Grell. Because of his friendship with Merrell and Marriott, he was implicated in theft of certain articles during an ice carnival at St. Frank's. He was, however, under the domination of a Bannington bookmaker. Grell was expelled as a result of his part in the proceedings. Grell was a big, hulking youth of about sixteen, his eyes were shifty, his face was mottled and he possessed a receding chin. He appeared in 1st New Series, No. 95, which continued the story begun in the previous number.

The saga of Eustace comes to an end with Eustace Carroll, son of Mortimer Carroll. In 2nd New Series Nos. 61 to 63, Eustace, a dandy, newcomer to the Remove and pal of Forrest and company, tried with his father to establish rights to the title of Earl of Edgemore and Viscount Bellton. Fortunately right prevailed, as always, and the Canadian rancher and his son "Skeets" were confirmed in their claim to the title.

So that, taking it all round, our four Eustaces were not a particularly likeable lot. But the name had its uses, synonymous with rascality and cunning.

Mortimer, too, was a name favoured by Edwy Seerles Brooks. Apart from the Mortimer Carroll just referred to, I wonder how many readers recall that William Napoleon Browne's father was originally called Sir Mortimer Browne - later changed to Sir Rufus?

So far as I know no other Mortimers cropped up in the Nelson Lee yarns - as I have not a complete set I'm open to correction - but as Berkeley Grey Mr. Brooks enable the irrepressible Norman Conquest to give Mr. Mortimer the jitters.

When Whitelands and Westchester made their appearance in the Schoolboys' Pocket Library with reprints of St. Franks stories by Reginald Browne and Edward Thornton, a Mr. Mortimer was housemaster at each school.

No doubt other authors, too, have their favourite names. I seem to remember that Valentine turned up quite frequently as Christian name or surname in the Frank Richards stories of the chums of Greyfriars.

Here Comes Lynwood!

Just as we were going to press we received the following letter and copies of the two Lynwood stories. The first, "Chums of Lynwood", is about the size of the old "Thriller" and "Detective Weekly", and consists of 16 pages, front page printed in red and black, with large illustration. Price is 3d. "The Fourth Form at Lynwood" is handy pocket size, about 5" x 4", and carries 50 pages in addition to picture cover in orange and black. Both are very nicely printed in good clear type, and are really jolly fine value for the money. The publishers will be pleased to deal with orders direct if you can't find them in your local booksellers, so if you want to add to your Richards lore we strongly advise you to secure them without delay.

J.B. Publications Ltd.
1180a, Chester Rd., Stratford,
Nr. Manchester.

21st February 1950.

Herbert Leckenby, Esq.,

Dear Sir,

Mr. Frank Richards has recently sent me a copy of the "Collectors Digest", which I found most interesting.

Mr. Richards has written a number of stories for us and the first to be published is the enclosed "Chums of Lynwood", and we wonder if you would be good enough to mention this new work of Mr. Richards in the next issue of your "Digest".

Within the next few days I shall be sending you a copy of a booklet entitled "Fourth Form At Lynwood"; this is also by Mr. Richards and perhaps you would give this a mention also.

Yours faithfully,

p.p. J.B. Publications Ltd. D.J. ALLEN.

P.S. Fourth form at Lynwood just to hand.

Does Anyone Know

Was "The Socialist Girl" ever published, and if so, is there a copy still in existence?

It has been suggested by Mr. H. W. Fennell that we run a column asking for information like this, with, we hope, the answer from some expert the following month. This particular query is his. Can anyone oblige?

Charles Hamilton was writing serials in 1900! See April C.D.



All letters, manuscripts, etc to be addressed to the Editor of Blakiana Section:- H.M.Bond, 10, Erw wen, Rhiwbina, Cardiff.

THE ROUND TABLE - MARCH 1950.

I wonder if the latest issue of the Sexton Blake Library (No. 216 Third Series) heralds a new series of "character" stories? For the first time since 1945 when Stanton Hope reintroduced his two "raggies" Harmon and O'Flynn (No. 103 Third Series) we are treated to a new case in which Blake meets old friends. Regular readers of the Library will probably have applauded John Hunter for bringing Captain Dack to the fore again, and indeed it is good to meet him, together with Sam Tench and Abe Gunson. John Hunter has never written anything to come up to his Dack stories and I only hope that his future work will again bring the redoubtable Captain to the fore, and may his example inspire other Blake authors to reintroduce some of the old characters. Mr. Lewis Jackson - what about a new Leon Kestrel adventure? Mr. Rex Hardinge - how about giving us a glimpse of dear old Lobangu again. And the return of Warwick Jardine could easily be accompanied by the reappearance of Ted Flanagan. And once again may I ask Anthony Parsons to consider some of the late G.H. Toad's wonderful characters?

The Round Table (continued).

As usual at this time of the year I have been going through the stories that were published during the last 12 months. It is ~~un~~interesting to note that, for the first time since the beginning of the war our old friend Anthony Parsons has been beaten. Yes, his output of five stories for 1949 was exceeded by Rex Hardinge. Rex gave us Six. This brings a long absent friend right to the top of the Sexton Blake tree. But personally I feel that there is a gameness about Rex's work that leaves a lot to be desired. As I suggested on the previous page, he should give his yarns a stimulus by reintroducing some of the pre-war characters. The recent reissue and success of the Edgar Wallace "Sanders of the River" series prove that adventure and crime mixed is still very popular. Sir. Richard Losely and the formidable Lobangu could stir our hearts again. However, I am wandering from my point. Next to Parsons with five stories, comes Walter Tyrer and John Drummond with four apiece. Lewis Jackson gave us three, and Gilbert Chester and Warwick Jardine one each. I hope the lack of material from old friend Chester does not mean that he is giving up writing for the Blake field. 1949 was a year of "old friends" for not one new author came out of the hat. It is a pity really for I think too many from one or two writers rather makes for "staleness". What do YOU think?

Cheerio for now.

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NEXT MONTH!

BLAKE'S FIRST CASE.

by
 Walter Webb.

Don't Miss this interesting new article which is soon to be followed by what we might call a sequel "Whining His Spurs".

WE ARE STILL IN NEED OF CONTRIBUTIONS. SEND YOURS ALONG!!

We are proud to present this brilliant new article in which you will meet some of the best loved Sexton Blake characters of all time, those whom we owe many hours of superb entertainment. The late John G. Brandon will long be remembered for his stories about:-



THE HONOURABLE MR. PURVALE & CO.

recalled by our star writer WILLIAM COLCOMBE with illustrations by WILFRED DARWIN.

The second series of the Sexton Blake Library was not very fertile in the introducing of new characters who formed a permanent niche in the memories of Blake readers. An exception was in the stories of John G. Brandon, who introduced a whole family of new characters.

The most prominent of these was The Honourable Ronald Sturges Verokor Purvale, better known to his friends and others as R.S.V.P. An aristocrat born and bred, member of one of the most prominent families in the country, both socially and politically. He had a love for a sailors life in it's rougher aspects, never so happy as when serving in the stoke-hole of some "flea bitten" old tramp steamer, or aloft on one of the remaining relics of the age of sail.

Purvale had the unhappy knack of getting involved in murder cases of a mere sensational kind, with himself as the principal suspect. It is in this aspect that he appeared in his first Blake story (S.B.L. 2nd series No. 365) called "The Survivors Secret". Never content to accept such a situation with resignation, his efforts at "beetling about" to use his own phrase, had a devastating effect on all concerned.

The Honourable Mr. Purvale & Co (continued).

In those cases in which he became involved none felt more concerned than that worthy pillar of the C.I.D. Now Scotland Yard, Detective Inspector Coutts. The appearance of Purvale on the scene of a crime Coutts was investigating, with his cheerful grin, broken nose and cauliflower ear, a glittering monocle stuck in the left eye of a pair of merry blue eyes, had the effect of a red rag to a bull on the stolid Inspector. Only the intervention of Sexton Blake and his good humour plus the equally good humour and lack of any sort of malice in Purvale's make up prevented Coutts from doing harm to his official career.

Assistance in his "beetling about" efforts came from his valet "Flash" George Wibley and taximan "Big" Bill Withers. Both these characters first appeared in the S.B.L. No. 411 (second series) "The Tragedy of the West End Actress".

George Wibley had been one of the finest cracksmen of his day and it had been said of him that he could make a safe do anything but sing hymns. He applied for the job of Purvale's valet with the finest set of forged references anyone could produce. Confronted with this fact, he candidly admitted having been a crook and that he had served more than one term of imprisonment. All that was done with, however, and if Mr. Purvale cared to keep him he would not want a more honest or hard working servant, if not he was quite prepared to depart at once. His frankness appealed to the hard bitten Purvale and he kept him, a decision he never regretted, for Wibley served him well, both as a valet and in assisting to recover jewellery stolen from R.S.V.P's relations at various times, notably those of his grandmother, the Dowager Duchess of Foulkside. Wibley was also a great help in the solving of a number of tricky cases.

Like Wibley, Withers had suffered the slings of outrageous fortune, being, at one time, an unsuccessful burglar doing a "stretch" for same. How he obtained his taxi was something of a mystery, a mystery Purvale and The Man From Baker Street could have solved, had they been so inclined. Never so happy as when involved in a fight, he would follow his number one patron into any adventure. Withers was of a size which made the big framed R.S.V.P. look of very ordinary proportions, and was also the proud possessor of a cauliflower

The Honourable Mr. Purvalo & Co (continued).

ear and broken nose. His favourite weapon was an outsize in spanners and with this weapon was prepared to take on all comers from Chinks and race-course "boys" to American gunmen.

Purvalo's best friend was Lord Montague Chanways, ex R.A.F. ace of the first world war, now an extremely wealthy young man with nothing to do and far too much time to do it in. His attempts to find an outlet for his energies managed to land both Purvalo and himself in the most hair raising adventures. He backed a West End play, only for the leading lady to be murdered on the opening night, and Purvalo to be hunted by the police for the crime. The full story is told in S.B.L. series, "Murder No. 433, 2nd To help an old colleague Chanway, an old established agency, only broken into night and a murdered in offices. This "Murder On the No. 521 Second



R.S.V.
PURVALO

Purvalo's father was Viscount Ebdale, a pillar of proOver Governments in his capacity of Foreign Minister, and several times made use of his son's love of adventure in service of the Government, usually in co-operation with Sexton Blake.

The last, but not the least, of this group of characters is that Great Victorian Lady, The Dowager Duchess of Ffoulk side, R.S.V.P.'s grandmother, whose affection and approval of his unorthodox manner of living amongst his more "respectable" and conservative relations.

John G. Brandon, the creator of these characters was an extremely prolific author, for in addition to his numerous Blake stories he wrote a lot for the "Thriller", for which he created the character of "Detective Inspector McGrthy.

The Honourable Mr. Purvalo & Co (continued).

None of his Blake stories were particularly outstanding the best possibly being "The Glass Dagger" an ingenious form of murder in this, "The Championship Crime" in which the Heavy Weight champion of England is found dead in the same ring as that in which he won his title.

Brandon had a fondness for making his crooks Chinks or Italians with a few Italian-Americans thrown in, and setting his crimes in high society. His plots were very loosely constructed, as he is said to have had the habit of falling asleep while dictating a story, perhaps this is not to be wondered at.

THE END.

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APOLOGY.

The promised U.J. titles for 1927 have had to be left out this month owing to the extra length of our feature article. They will, however, appear next month together with the 1926 titles.

SERVICE.

Detailed lists of third series titles for the years 1941 to 1949 are now available from Blakiana headquarters. Please let us know the years you are interested in to avoid the sending of complete lists. Enclose stamped addressed envelope please!

Owing to delay in delivery of envelopes, we regret that we have had to fall back on wrappers again in most cases.

H. L.