

# THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOLUME 11, NUMBER 126

JUNE, 1957

Price 1s.6d.

REPRODUCED FROM "THE SURPRISE", No. 23, AUGUST 6th, 1932



With Gloria clutched tightly in his arms, Martin Holt leaped sheer from the window into mid-air! A bullet screamed past his head as he dropped, but the fraction of a second later he had landed safely on the girder which was swinging at the end of the long crane-cable! He was whirled upwards into safety, while the baffled pair at the window gazed after him in amazement.

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# —THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST—

Vol. 11 No. 126

Price 1s. 6d.

JUNE, 1957

Editor: HERBERT LECKENBY,  
12 Herbert Street,  
Hull Road, York.

or

c/o YORK DUPLICATING SERVICES,  
12A The Shambles, York.

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

ON TOUR. On May 11th I attended the Northern Section Meeting. The next morning saw me setting off bright and early to Liverpool, picking up Harry Dowler at Manchester. Friday the 17th found me at 1 p.m. at King's Cross looking out for Len Packman's familiar figure, with the London Club's Meeting on the Sunday. The three L's! I had a heavenly time at each. It was a unique experience to attend three Club Meetings in eight days, all packed with the spirit of good-will. At Wood Green I was particularly pleased to meet Bill Hubbard from far off Kenya.

The day before there was also quite a lively gathering at Derek Adley's home at Harrow.

Owing to a missed connection, Harry Dowler and I arrived at Liverpool an hour and a half late. Nevertheless, there were Frank Case and Norman Pragnell on the look-out like a couple of members of the Liverpool C.I.D., despite the fact that we arrived at a different station to the one originally intended.

Happy days! It was all well worth the 650 miles or so I had to travel.

\* \* \*

ANOTHER TRAVELLER. Bill Hubbard tells me that Bernard Thorne leaves Toronto by air on August 1st for seventeen days stay in England. You will receive a warm welcome Bernard, I assure you.

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GRAND GIFT. Charlie Baker of Caernarvon has presented me with an album containing scores of splendid photographs of covers and front pages of popular boys' weeklies reduced to a size suitable for the cover of our mag.

A fine gesture which is greatly appreciated by

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY

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WANTED URGENTLY - Pink covered Union Jacks as follows:- No. 206 "Sexton Blake-Whaler"; No. 404 "The Flying Column"; No. 504 "The Long Trail"; No. 752 "The Golden Reef"; No. 878 "The Island of Death". Your Price Paid.

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CHANGE OF ADDRESS - James W. Cook's address is now 32, PILGRIMS WAY, WEMBLEY, MIDDLESEX.

# Blakiana . . . .

conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

27, Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London S.E.22.

Several more lists of 'those 12 favourite "U.J."' stories have now reached me and will shortly appear in Blakiana.

Herbert Leckenby's little article in this issue was originally intended for April - following Frank Lay's "Sexton Blake and Lais Dowson" in March. The delay is regrettable but, for lack of space, unavoidable.

I also have much pleasure this month in presenting an article by Miss Bette Pate of Australia. Bette and myself have been corresponding for some little while, and I may say she is a very keen Blake supporter. I am hoping Bette will send further contributions for this section of the "C.D." and I am certain that when you have read the article you will all say the same.

JOSIE PACKMAN

\* \* \*

## THE OTHER SEXTON BLAKE'S FIRST CASE

By Herbert Leckenby

Frank Lay, in his interesting article in March, stated that in the early days there was no attempt at a Sexton Blake Saga and that the stories had very little in common. Frank was quite right, for I remember another story which told of Sexton Blake's first case. It appeared about eight years earlier in the  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. 'Union Jack' No. 125, and was entitled "How Sexton Blake Won His Spurs". The author was W. Shaw Rae, and for his background he went back quite a while.

It's a long time since I read the story and I have forgotten the details, but I do recall that Blake had an exciting time on the "Princess Alice" when it sank off Gravesend with a great loss of life. I believe I am right when I say that tragic event took place way back in 1878! At the time he was supposed to have just finished his career at Cambridge. Thus it would appear that if Blake had birthdays like most of us do he would by this time have passed the century mark and due for an honourable retirement. And in those far off days when the longest lived character in all fiction took up his first

'first case' the glamour girls would wear corinelines and show no more than an ankle; and instead of a Bentley he would perchance, set off in chase of a master criminal on a penny-farthing.

Yes, verily, there were changes in the Sexton Blake Saga before the move to Berkeley Square.

\* \* \*

### THE MAGIC OF SEXTON BLAKE

By E. J. (Bette) Pate

(With grateful acknowledgement to Victor Colby for his helpful suggestions and encouragement which made this article possible.)

"Sexton Blake did everything except live, yet it may be that he is more alive than many living persons."

— Reginald Cox (Saturday Book No. 6)

Doubtless you, who read this article, knew Sexton Blake well, as an old friend, long before I was born. And just as certainly you have asked yourself on many occasions the same question as I am posing now... "What is the magic of Sexton Blake?" Why do these stories of his exploits exercise such a fascination over so many readers..... just what holds their interest in the beginning and makes their enthusiasm increase in direct ratio as their acquaintance with fiction's greatest detective lengthens? Have you found the answer? I think I have!

When first one discovers Sexton Blake and the inimitable Tinker there is the fascination of the name itself; unusual, almost bizarre, the name of Sexton Blake, once seen it not easily forgotten. Distinctive in itself, it is redolent of mystery and adventure - his Christian name breathes an aura of the graveyard conjuring up visions of dark nights, creeper-covered churches and dank tombstones, behind which lurk ghouls and ghosts. And Blake! A typically British surname, it is clear and concise with a decisive ring. What a wonderful combination the two make! The reader thus runs through the gamut of all possible emotions of high adventure and racking suspense conjured up by the name itself.

Now that we have been formally introduced we become aware of the dynamic personality of the man himself. So vital and alive does he become that one finds oneself speaking and thinking of him as though, in reality, he were living in Baker Street. Long acknowledged as a part of English folk lore, Sexton Blake's appeal lies partly in the fact that he is what was once proudly regarded as a typical

Englishman. His appeal today is universal; young and old, regardless of sex or race, across the length and breadth of Europe, "down-under" here in Australia and spanning the gulf of language or colour, all have fallen under the magic spell of this quiet Englishman.

A master of make-up who fascinates by his genius of disguise when the occasion demands, he is so essentially British in thought and action - his deep sense of patriotism, his calmness in the face of conflict always make his admirers glad that he is upholding the old traditions. Like a skilfully cut gem his personality has many facets which flash and sparkle as the pages are turned and the tale unfolds. Stern, yet withal so humane, the flash of an angry eye is balanced by an amused twinkle when the occasion demands. Here is a man whose qualities we can admire, whose virtues we can emulate and to us all, his exploits are reminders of the triumph of mind over matter, of perseverance over difficulty, of right over wrong.

And here I feel, lies one of the basic reasons for his universal appeal. To the young reader, in the throes of hero-worship, he is a man they would like to be when they grow up. The older reader looks back with a nostalgic sigh and sees him as the man they would have liked to have been. And the female readers? Well, to them he is the man they admire most for his sterling qualities, his chivalry, his tenderness - perhaps too, they fall a little in love with him ... and who can blame them!

Above all, however, once we have met Blake, we want to renew that acquaintance and know more of him, until, presently, we find that we are thinking of him as a friend. Each time we open a "Union Jack" or a "Sexton Blake Library" we meet that friend again, strengthen our friendship a little and then, when the story itself is finished we say merely "Au Revoir", happy and confident that in a little while we will be greeting our friend again. And this feeling of continuity is comforting in this ever changing world - reading any ordinary story, we come to the final sentence, the story and characters are finished as we close the book; but with Blake it is never goodbye, never the bleak final word, only a cheery and friendly closing of one door and the opening of the next, full of promise.

Over the years, I have had at the back of my mind a still small voice, which, on occasions, has nibbled at my equanimity with a rather terrifying query.... "Perhaps one day I will grow out of my fondness for Blake and his exploits - I will wake one day to find my intense interest has faded as a rainbow fades after the rain, leaving me with but a dim memory in place of the living kaleidoscope of colour." To date

this awful fate hasn't overtaken me, and I hope most sincerely that it never will, because then I will have lost an old and valued friend. Many of you will have read reprints of Blake stories in other magazines, written perhaps by such favourite authors as G. H. Teed and Gwyn Evans identical in every feature except one - they lack that subtle magic because the detective now does not bear the name of Sexton Blake and so we feel cheated because we are not meeting our friend again.

During the years that the Blake Saga has been chronicled by so many writers we cannot claim that all the stories have been of the same high standard, or even that the acknowledged favourites have always written a good story. As an admirer of G. H. Teed I prefer his treatment of Blake to all others, yet, in all honesty I must admit that even here there have been stories I have not enjoyed or admired. So Blake's long-lived fame cannot be based simply on well-written stories although a high standard has been maintained. These authors, however, despite their own varied style of writing have based their stories on the same basic character and each one has presented to us, the reader, the facet of the detective's personality which exercised the most attraction for him. Thus we have G. H. Teed who presents Blake as a traveller, a soldier, a man who fits naturally into the background wherever the tale is set - Robert Murray shows us a Blake of quiet understanding and sympathy, yet imbued with a deep sense of justice for which he is quite prepared to fight. As seen through Gwyn Evans' eyes the detective is subordinate to the man who is very human, not ashamed to show his emotions on his mobile features - on the other hand Anthony Skene presents his interpretation showing an opposite mood of Blake's; a rather silent man, not given to idle speeches, yet blessed with a sense of humour and an abiding love of humanity which leavens the apparent hardness of the grim-faced man-hunter. All this may sound a contradiction even in the complex character we know Blake to be and yet, aren't most humans rather contradictory when one knows them?

When Herbert Maxwell conceived the brilliant idea of providing Blake with an assistant and thus created Tinker, he put the finishing touches to the masterpiece which was Sexton Blake, for the gay, irrepressible Tinker is a perfect foil for the somewhat stern genius of the great detective. To the world, Blake is the relentless man-hunter, fearless for his own safety in the course of justice, but when Tinker is in danger we see a very human Blake. Then he is full of fatherly concern for his beloved Tinker.....a Tinker who is vastly different to the character who first appeared fifty years ago. From a



cockney waif of quaint speech, he has evolved into a polished young man of the world, renowned for his quick wittedness, cheery sense of humour and courage but still with the deep devotion and abiding loyalty to his "guv'nor" which we have come to know as an integral part of their relationship. More like an elder brother than a father, Blake has always been Tinker's ideal, and their relationship, a very wonderful thing, has played no small part in creating the magical appeal of Sexton Blake. Those who have followed Blake's adventures through the years have seen Tinker growing up under Blake's guidance, have watched fondly his first romance with Nirvana (handled with such warm understanding by G. H. Teed) - seen him modelling his thoughts and actions on the pattern of his master and friend; lacking the detective's brilliant mind, but with an innate shrewdness which makes such an invaluable assistant as well as friend, Tinker has made for himself a niche which no one else can ever hope to occupy.

And so the tale is told, the page is turned, but as I said before we are merely bidding au revoir to our very good friends Sexton Blake and Tinker, knowing that we will meet them again - not in England perhaps, but wherever the stage is set there we will meet the same beloved characters and experience again the powerful attraction they exercise.

Yes, Blake lives! And to us who admire him so greatly he is ageless and eternal, our good friends whose adventures we share, with whom, in spirit, we identify ourselves and travel over many a danger trial together.

A toast then to Sexton Blake and Tinker....."Our friends, long may they live in our hearts!"

\* \* \*

(Author's note: When referring to Sexton Blake I mean the Blake of former happier days, not the new character whom much to my regret, I cannot get used to.  
E. J. P.)

\* \* \*

HOW'S YOUR MEMORY (NO.6) WILL APPEAR NEXT MONTH.

Answer to Teaser No. 5 (May, 1957 C.D.)

The quotation given last month came from Detective Weekly No. 51 dated 10th February, 1934, and the story was THE HOUSE OF THE HANGING SWORD which was written by star-writer Gwyn Evans.

This story was reprinted seven years later in the final

SEXTON BLAKE ANNUAL published at the end of 1941, this making it the final Gwyn Evans Blake story to have appeared in print.

\* \* \*

FORTHCOMING FEATURES

Sexton Blake - The Man .....	by F. Vernon Lay
The Greatest of Them All .....	by F. Vernon Lay
Picturesque Pars from S. Blake Papers .....	by Victor Colby
Wal I'm Darned .....	by Victor Colby
Waldo Lives Again .....	by Eric Copeman
I Remember These .....	by Eric Copeman
On Tour with Sexton Blake .....	A series by Walter Webb
Also Memory Teasers, problems, Union Jack Titles etc.	

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MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, E. DULWICH, S.E. 22

FROM INFORMATION RECEIVED. No. 2By W. O. G. LoftsGreyfriars Maps.

The first Map ever to be published showing Greyfriars and the surrounding districts was printed in a supplement included with the Xmas double number of the "Magnet" No. 409, 1915 "Harry Wharton & Co's Pantomime".

Although no initials were given on the Map; this was in fact drawn by Mr. H. W. Twyman (of Union Jack fame) when he was on the staff of the "Magnet". Mr. Twyman who was a very clever artist did draw many other bits and pieces for these papers; but in later years devoted himself entirely to the Editorial side of the A.P. Publication.

This Map of Greyfriars was later redrawn and reproduced in the first Holiday Annual 1920 by an illustrator named "Gran". This artist of whom very little is known at present was rather a mysterious person who did thumb-nail sketches, decorative tailpieces and such like for the "Magnet" and "Gem".

The second Greyfriars Map was published in the third Holiday Annual 1923 and was drawn by Edward C. Snow, who was on the office staff of the "Magnet" at a later period than Twyman. Edward Snow who I could write a lot about is now in Australia, and recently wrote a full length article on the administration of the "Magnet".

The third and last Map, considered to be the best and most accurate of them all was published in the last days of the "Magnet" 1672 dated 1940, and although this needs confirmation I have it on good authority that this Map was drawn by C. H. Chapman.

Editor of "Chips" and "Comic Cuts"

News has just reached me of the death of Richard (Dick) Newton Chance who was for many years Editor of those famous comics "Chips" "Comic Cuts", "The Joker" and "Golden Comic". "Dick" Chance was in fact the father of John Newton Chance the well known writer of detective stories; who to most of us was better known as "John Drummond" a very clever writer of the Sexton Blake Library in the present series.

"Dick" Chance retired from the A.P. several years ago in the position of a Director. He was a most jovial type of man; and it is easy to see how the comic papers under his command were so flourishing and popular for many years.

Ladbroke Black

Ladbroke Lionel Day Black to give him his full name, was a most prolific writer since the early 1900s, and he wrote for most of the popular papers serials etc., during the years up to 1940. Educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and a B.A. He lived for many years at Wendover, Buckinghamshire. He was also gifted with a great sense of humour, as this little story will show. In writing many stories for the Sexton Blake Library under his own name and that of Paul Urquart, he was rather irritated by the Editor (Mr. L. H. Pratt, now retired) continually changing the title as submitted by himself. To try and stop this practice, in his next story of Blake, he entitled his manuscript with the unusual title of "By the Waters of Babylon" which had of course, no bearing on the story at all. This was of course changed by the Editor.

Black's next few stories were also entitled the same, and at last the Editor called him to the office for an explanation of it. "Well", said Black, "whatever title I put to my stories, you change, so I might as well call them all by that title". Black in fact won the day, and in future stories he was allowed to choose his own title.

Ladbroke Black died on the 27th July, 1940 aged 63 years.

Death of more Blake Authors.

The death of two more old A.P. contributors has reached me from correspondents overseas. Firstly Maurice B. Dix (Maurice Buxton Dix) out in Canada. He was in his sixties. Dix wrote at least six yarns for the S.B.L., late second and early third series. He had at least twenty novels to his credit, and wrote a lot of stuff for newspapers and magazines, besides other work for the A.P.

It is very sad also to record the death of Crichton-Milne out in Bulowai, South Africa. Perhaps not so well known to many of us, he did write a lot of yarns for the A.P. in the very early days. Milne who was an old Etonian, was a very popular man at Fleetway House, and although I think I am correct in stating that he had only one S.B.L., known to us, to his credit, I understand that he wrote many more in the early days, when the Authors of the stories were not given.

H. Clarke Hook

H. Clarke Hook son of famous writer, S. Clarke Hook creator of Jack, Sam and Pete, is considered by many editors in the publishing world to be just as good as his father. Perhaps it was the similarity of the name to his father's which made him write under several pen-names for "Chums" in the 20s, and an endeavour to bring himself fame

under another name which would not be confused with his father.

Two of the names used were "HAL RAVENGLASS" and "ROSS HARVEY" and he also wrote many stories of Greyfriars for the "Magnet" during the 1920s. He wrote mainly for the girls and womens papers; to which he still contributes today. Many stories under the last pen-name mentioned will be found in the "Champion" and "Boys Friend Weekly".

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AN OPEN LETTER TO READERS OF C.D.

by Jack Murtagh, New Zealand

For quite some time I have been turning over in my mind an idea which I feel many of you will be interested in.

It concerns our friend Bill Gander in Canada, who for many years now has produced that splendid little paper "The Story Paper Collector" which saw the first light of day with the Jan - March 1941 issue, over 16 years old now and still going strong, with the January 1957 issue No. 61 recently to hand, and the price? it's printed there on page 1 "Priceless". Yes, he has supplied it free for all these years to all who cared to ask for it to be sent.

As many may or may not know our C.D. was born back in 1946 only because Bill Gander was taken ill and could not continue the S.P.C. (see Editorial in C.D. No. 1) so the C.D. was born and happily Bill Gander recovered and has continued producing the S.P.C. at intervals.

I Think everyone will agree that we are all very much indebted to Bill Gander for this generous and unselfish work for us and our hobby over all the years. I've thought of a way we can repay him in some small measure.

In his little magazine issue No. 60 he listed the few Magnets he still requires to complete his collection and fellows, he only wants 15 copies plus 12 replacements for poor copies. So near yet so far! but I feel if we all rallied round we could help him - dozens of us have several hundred Magnets and need many hundreds to complete if ever, so what say we look through our collections and see if we can help, surely we won't miss one or two copies. I myself have only 400 or so Magnets and find I can supply from my collection 1 Magnet Bill wants, and it's on the way to Canada right now, let's all do something about this and help Bill realize his ambition. He needs so few that every collector with 4 or 500 Magnets must have at least one of his wanted numbers. Come on chaps lets show Bill how much we appreciate

his efforts. Do it now.

Magnets Bill Gender wants:- 1x to 6x, 90, 100x, 110x, 163, 207, 217, 263, 283x, 288x, 308x, 312, 334, 664, 668x, 880, 942, 948, 973, 992.  
(x denotes copy in better condition required)

(Needless to say I cordially agree with every word of this.

H. L.)

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S.B.L. REVIEWS

JUNE 1957

Shoot When Ready (No. 383)

W. Howard Baker

Film Stars, their careers and the experiences, indiscretions and oft sensational events, which form part of them are always front page news, and an author is generally treading on pretty safe ground when he uses such as the theme of his story, always providing he has the ability to put it over in a sufficiently interesting way, of course. This novel - which is recommended - centres around the arrival from Hollywood of Ilona, the blonde and beautiful film star wife of Marcus Mellish, famous American film director, whom, rumour had it, is being cited in the States for contempt of court. Ilona is in England to make a picture at Pinedale Studios, called "The Wicked Streets", to be directed by her husband. George Crawley, Executive Producer at Pinedale has strong financial interests in the production. It's imperative that some arrangement be made with Mellish before a start is made on the film. So Crawley has Mellish and Ilona abducted and taken to an old Elizabethan Manor House near Wendover in Buckinghamshire. Ilona's fans believe she has gone into the country to escape publicity; Blake quickly discovers otherwise. Frustrating an attempt to slowly cause the stars' death by the use of drugs, Blake unmaskes Crawley in a thrilling climax. Minor roles played by Tinker, Paula Dane and Splash Kirby.

Rating

Very good

Victim Unknown (No. 384)

Desmond Reid

Desmond Reid, who achieved the unusual distinction of pleasing many of the old guard - amongst whom there are no more exacting critics anywhere! - with his story of Huxton Rymer's comeback, will almost

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certainly consolidate the good impression he then made with this, his latest story. The narrative, apart from one chapter told by Tinker, is in Blake's own words, so obviously he holds the stage practically the whole time - quite a satisfactory state of affairs.

Visiting the Sussex home of the Prosper sisters, daughters of old and departed friends of his, Blake is immediately precipitated into a murder case. A young man is found dead in the boot of a car, at the wheel of which lies the younger Prosper sister drugged and under the influence of alcohol. The suspects are many, and those who could divulge important information die mysteriously before Blake can interview them. The last victim tells the detective the name of the murderer; but it's not quite so simple as that....there's a twist in the tail. There's light relief and some amusing dialogue, especially on page 39, when Blake interrogates a scatter-brained red-haired registrar's assistant. You will be thrilled - and amused - by this one.

Rating

Excellent.

WALTER WEBB.

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## OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

### LONDON SECTION

Once again we met at "Cherry Place" and there was the usual fine average gathering in the 'Rag there. Our Herbert had made the journey from York and duly obliged with his grand talk on his 'Purple' Period' of collecting and reading which started way back in 1899. He had a fine selection of the 'old timers' and the talk was greatly appreciated. Bill Hubbard gave us a very fine talk and analysis on the "Magnet" Kenya series, first time we have ever had one like this from a member who knows the country and terrain mentioned in the aforementioned series. This was greatly enjoyed by the company present and many thanks to Bill for such a painstaking effort. Our other colleague who also knew Kenya, Roger Stacey, sent along a very fine quiz which he called "Odd-Man-Out". Laurie Sutton had the most correct answers and thus was placed first. Josie Packman won Hylton Flatman's very fine quiz whilst Bill Hubbard won Bob Blythe's compilation. Chairmen, Frank Vernon-Lay then shewed around an original drawing of

Sexton Blake by Eric Parker. This is thought to be the only surviving portrait and it was reproduced in 'Union Jack' number 1236 on June 25th, 1927. Following this Frank read one of the last entries in the song competition, this being by Laurie Sutton. A very fine and amusing effort this, but it did not win a prize as Len Packman's entry was adjudged the best. Miss Lyle and Charlie Wright received second prizes and Les Rowley, Roger Jenkins and Ben Whiter will have fourth prizes.

A very fine gathering indeed, one more for the book of happy memories.

#### UNCLE BENJAMIN

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#### NORTHERN SECTION MEETING, MAY 11th, 1957

In opening the meeting, Chairman Stanley Smith on behalf of all members present congratulated Eric Whitehead on his coming marriage and wished him many years of happiness.

It happened to be Ernie's evening and doubtless it was thoughts of the happy prospect before him which put him in such sparkling form. He had prepared one of those subtle quizzes and on occasions the beaming smile on his face when he thought he had us completely foxed was a sight to see. He also had had the good idea of handicapping some of the experts. This however, did not prevent one of the said experts, Stanley Smith coming out the winner.

During business it was announced that the Club Room would not be available on July 13th and the meeting would have to be postponed until the 20th. At first this caused a gasp of dismay as it meant six weeks between meetings. Gerry Allison then played a trump card, however, for he proposed that the proposed meeting with Midland Members in Chesterfield should take place on Sunday, July 14th if convenient to Midland. This was heartily agreed to, so how about it Harry Broster and Co.?

Next Meeting, June 8th, when Jack Wood is top o' the bill.

HERBERT LECKENBY

North Section Correspondent.

\* \* \*

MERSEYSIDE BRANCH O.B.B.C. Sunday, 12th May.

A record number of members and guests turned up to the special



meeting which started early at 6.30 p.m. The three guests were, Herbert Leckenby, Sir Frederick Bowman and Harry Dowler, from Manchester. It was also good to see Frank Case again, who unfortunately is not always able to be with us. A cordial welcome was also given to Mr. Ralph Keeling, a new member, who is a St. Frank's and Greyfriars enthusiast.

The evening was opened by Herbert giving us a talk on the very early Old Boys Books, covering in the main the years before the first world war. Herbert's talk was well illustrated by the great variety of books he had brought with him. The reply was given by Sir Frederick Bowman, who amused and interested us by his personal knowledge of the editor of some of those early papers. Tea, biscuits and library business followed, and the room was soon full with the buzz of friendly conversation.

The last item on the programme was another version of Frank Unwin's "Down You Go". This had a complete O.B.B.C. flavour, and some knotty questions were asked. There were three teams for this game. The result was Jim Walsh's team first with nine points, Don Webster's team second with seven points and the writers team third with four points. The next meeting will be on Whit Sunday, June 9th. It is important that everyone should turn up, as the question of the future dates of the club's meetings has to be discussed.

NORMAN FRAGNELL

Secretary, Merseyside Branch O.B.B.C.

\* \* \*

REPORT OF MEETING HELD APRIL 29th, 1957  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, NEW STREET, BIRMINGHAM.

From HARRY BROSTER, Secretary.

MIDLAND O.B.B.C.

The now usually good programme was maintained and at this meeting was very much varied as Ray Burnett in his talk on "His Favourite Christmas Stories" covered Hamiltonia, St. Frank's and Sexton Blake. He gave us four examples in each case from the Magnet, Gem, Boys Friend, Nelson Lee Library and the Union Jack. Everyone a real good yarn and a point he stressed and we all agreed with this, some saying that the authors themselves would be advised to make a note of it, was that the best stories were those which brought together for holidays and at Christmas time, the characters from more than one

school. A notable example being "The Mystery of the Priory", a Jimmy Silver yarn, which introduced the "Famous Five" and the popular seven from St. Jim's in addition to the "Fistical Four". As will be remembered, Tom Porter gave us this for our December meeting and we know how well we enjoyed it. The debate which followed this item also provided much discussion in which all members present were able to join in with great keenness and enjoyment. I led off with the question "did Edwy Searles Brooks copy the plots and characters of Charles Hamilton?" My views were that he had the time and the opportunity and the similarity of the characters gave that indication. I allowed for the fact that Brooks tried to go one better by stretching his imagination beyond Charles Hamilton. The reminder that Brooks had orders to copy Hamilton stories did not prevent a lively debate which compared the work of the two authors. The last item of the programme was a fine reading by Tom Porter from No. 3A of the C.D. No more need be said except that, as in the case of Tom's other readings and talks, everyone was delighted. Next month is the A.G.M. and we expect all the old brigade and the "new" boys in full force.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Hotspur Annual" 1927. "Everyland" "My Adventure Book" 20/- three.  
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\* \* \*

# HAMILTONIANA

compiled by Herbert Leckenby

We start off this month with an interesting letter from Frank Richards himself. No weeds down Rose Lawn way!

May 10th, 1957.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Many thanks for the C.D. The reprint from the Australian paper is very interesting. Never mind the little errors: to my mind it is remarkable that there are so few, and that old readers recollect the old papers so vividly. The London incident is extremely weird, and I rather think that the writer must have got a little mixed: but the remainder of the article is quite good reading.

Our fat old friend's Annual will be out quite early this year: and from what I hear, it is already going great guns. That is very agreeable, after its recent miss in baulk. By the way, Bunter is booked for another run on T.V. in June and July: and the next Bunter Book will also be an early bird, out in August. Very appropriate, as it deals with a holiday on the river in that month.

With kindest regards,  
Always yours sincerely,  
FRANK RICHARDS

\* \* \*

Do you remember?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 24 - Magnet No. 1328 "Bunter the Ventriloquist"

There were innumerable tales in the Magnet about Bunter's ventriloquism, but none of them was so well constructed as No. 1328. The story began in a familiar manner, with Bunter creating a diversion with an imaginary bumble bee in the French class, which ended in detention for Bob Cherry on the day of the cricket match at Rookwood. When this difficulty had been overcome the plot moved to Rookwood (which had mysteriously moved from Hampshire to Sussex for the purpose of this story).

The greater part of this Magnet story in fact, took place at Rookwood, which must be unique so far as the Magnets of the 'thirties are concerned. Jimmy Silver was detained by Dr. Chisholm, and it was

Bunter's ventriloquism which deceived Mr. Dalton and so set Jimmy Silver free to play in the match. (Vernon-Smith later assisted by turning a hose on Dr. Chisholm who was on his way to watch the cricket.)

Greyfriars won the thrilling match by a single run, and the story might well have been considered finished at this point, but there then came one of those little touches which so delighted Magnet readers: flushed with success, Bunter did not know where to stop, and he decided to imitate Mr. Quelch's voice and tell Monsieur Charpentier through his study door to cancel the morning's French lesson. Unfortunately, Mr. Quelch happened to be talking to the French master at that very moment (Bunter could really not be expected to think of a possibility like that) and the deception was useless. To quote: "The door flew open, and Mr. Quelch almost flew out. His grasp closed on Billy Bunter's collar, 'come' said Mr. Quelch, in a voice that was like the filing of a saw. And he marched Bunter away to his study". A perfect ending to a perfect little story.

\* \* \*

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL. No. 3

(In this series, Eric Payne discusses certain topics of interest to students of the Hamilton papers. He gives his own opinion superficially and invites you to write to him with your views on the subject. He will summarise readers' letters on the topic in a future C.D.)

No. 3. Dr. BIRCHEMALL

Were the Doctor Birchermall stories crude and unworthy of the part they played in the Magnet? Was the Magnet's tone lowered by publishing stories of this type?

It seems certain that these short tales must have been popular, for they appeared, off and on, from white cover days for something like sixteen years. Who wrote them, I have no idea, but the standard, such as it was, varied to some extent, and it is fairly certain that they did not all come from the same pen. They were, perhaps, reminiscent of the "Orfis Boy" columns which had been a feature of some comic papers in earlier days.

Often they were crude; sometimes they were vulgar. Viewed thus, they were unworthy of a paper of the class of the Magnet. Schoolmasters, generally, would have taken a dim view of them, and the more narrow might have condemned the paper on the strength of Dr.

Birchemall. For that reason alone, I should have regarded them as a doubtful proposition from the editorial point of view.

I must admit that I thoroughly enjoyed them. I found them delightful, whimsical little fantasies, often very clever indeed; at times, they were really witty; sometimes they even seemed to take a tilt at the style of the Greyfriars stories, which was very naughty of the mythical Master Nugent. Crude, witty, vulgar, whimsical.... utterly outrageous....they played their part in the old paper, and I loved them, and missed them when they were "rested".

It's just my point of view. What's yours?

\* \* \*

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

by Eric Payne

Concerning REGINALD TALBOT, The Toff.

George Sellars writes: "I heartily agree with you in everything you say in your Talbot article, except about the first two series being first class. My view is that all the Talbot stories, from the first one, "The Toff", up to and including "The Housemaster's Homecoming" were first class. As you say, the Homecoming story was a natural finish to the story of the Toff, and about a month ago I told our Editor that I thought "Housemaster's Homecoming" was the last great story about Talbot".

Roger Jenkins writes: "I agree with all you say about Talbot. He was a good character, quite apart from his continually invoked murky past. I particularly liked the series when he was expelled for something his cousin Croke had done, though it is some time since I read it, but I retain a recollection of a plot in which there was no spectre from his past at all, and a very refreshing change it was. Personally, I do not think that Mr. Hamilton would have written so much about Talbot's past had it not been for editorial pressure, presumably as a result of letters from readers".

Bill Hubbard says: "I thought Talbot a splendid character, but I fully agree that his past was heavily overplayed. I liked stories showing Talbot as a normal schoolboy".

\* \* \*

(Here's the first prize effort in the London Club's competition mentioned last month. A neat one you'll agree)

H.L.

THE LITTLE SMOKING - CONCERTBy Len Packman

Claude Hoskins, now a professional pianist of great repute, had kindly volunteered his services for this 'special' concert, and as soon as he took his seat at the piano and ran his fingers lightly over the keys all those present sat back in their chairs in readiness for the show to begin.

In deference to his seniority Mr. Quelch opened the programme with quite a spirited rendering of "HOLD YOUR HAND OUT, VAUGHTY BOY". The applause which greeted Mr. Quelch as he returned to his seat was terrific, and he was obviously pleased at the reception he had received.

Billy Bunter - seeking the limelight as always - waddled up to the piano and plonked his music in front of Claude Hoskins with a flourish. Then, in a squeaky voice and blinking at the company through his glasses, he sang "I DO LIKE A DOUGHNUT WITH JAM IN THE MIDDLE." The hilarious laughter which greeted his effort was just as one would expect, and even Mr. Quelch, naturally stern features relaxed into an acidy smile.

By general request Sexton Blake was the next, and making his way almost unseen to the dais he adopted a style reminiscent of The Great Vance and sang that great man's original number "WHAT'S THE VERDICT? IS HE GUILTY?". The cheers which greeted him at the conclusion would most certainly have pleased Vance had he been alive to hear them.

Dear old Pete, who obviously missed his two faithful companions Jack and Sam, was the next to oblige, and in very melodious tones he sang "THE COAL-BLACK MAMMIE OF MINE". This brought a lump in the throats of all present, but the vociferous clapping which greeted him as he made his way back to his seat was eloquent of his popularity and fine effort.

Horace Coker - for once not looking for trouble - now lumbered forward and, contrary to expectations, gave a very good rendering of "LOVE FROM JUDY", and it was plain to see that he had selected this number in memory of his late Aunt Judith. The applause was equal to that of the others, and for once in his life the 'great Horace' was not being guyed.

Finally, the one and only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy - always the model of tact and judgement - made his way gracefully to the platform and sang one of the late Vesta Tilley's best numbers "THE PICCADILLY".

JOHNNY WITH THE LITTLE GLASS EYE", surely a most appropriate selection, as the applause indicated.

Then, to wind up the concert, all stood up and sang the chorus of that fine old song, so expressive of the sentiment we all feel: "FOR THEY ARE JOLLY GOOD FELLOWS!"

Finis

\* \* \*

SOLUTION OF C.D. CROSSWORD No. 5

Across: 1. Redfern. 4. Bull. 7. OO. 8. Granite Grant. 12. Ret. 13. Diet. 14. Exotic. 17. Just Richard. 19. Notables. 22. Ice. 23. Rented. 25. Tea. 26. Pine. 27. No manners. 31. Shyster. 32. Tail.

Down: 1. Roger Jenkins. 2. Dearest Tommy. 3. Editor. 4. Bird 5. Lone. 6. Lotto. 9. Next. 10. Eric. 11. Air raid. 15. Title. 16. Chester. 18. Serial. 20. Brunt. 21. Enter. 24. East. 28. Oh! 29. As.

The first correct solution was sent in by MR. J. K. MORGAN, LIVERPOOL, to whom a post order for 5/- has been sent.

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LETTER BOX

7 Summerfield Gardens,  
Bramley,  
Leeds 13.  
8-5-57

Dear Editor,

One hesitates in correcting an expert like Mr. W. O. G. Lofts, but as a matter of fact there were 57 issues of the A.P. Robin Hood Library - not 56 as he states in the May "C.D."

No. 57 which is before me now, contains the story "THE HAUNTED BELFRY". Also a short tale about Dick Turpin, "CAPTAIN SOMERSET'S DOUBLE" by Morton Pike.

Yours sincerely,

GERALD ALLISON.

\* \* \*

# NELSON LEE COLUMN

by JACK WOOD

Nostaw, 328 Stockton Lane, York.

Phone: 25795

\* \* \* \* \*

A welcome air letter from an old friend, Jack Murtagh of New Zealand, who confirms from his complete collection of Nugget Library my assumptions of last month. The story, "The Honour of St. Frank's" to which I referred, is, he writes, "the same story word for word". It ran as a serial in the first eight issues of the Nugget Weekly dated July 17th, 1920, to September 4th, 1920.

"It was then repeated the following month in the Nugget Library, No. 35, one of the two issues for October, 1920, surely a record for a reprint".

Thanks Jack. It certainly kept the record straight, and I hope we shall be hearing more from you before very long. Jack adds a "rider" which makes me very envious - he only wants 15 Old Series copies to complete his full set of N.L.L.'s. They are 4, 7, 16, 17, 31, 40, 64, 65, 73, 75, 76, 78, 82, 88 and 92.

I sincerely hope someone can help; I'm afraid my own collection before 143 Old Series is also seriously deficient, more's the pity.

And now, what to talk about this month? There is so much that could be written, so many avenues of interest to explore, yet not a suggestion from a growing list of Nelson Lee fans. Let me know your ideas please, then I can aim to satisfy the customers - and, may be, grab more editorial space!

Meanwhile, I thought you might like to hear something about Bellton that typical little Sussex village, a mile from St. Frank's





about which, and its inhabitants, Brooks drew such fascinating pictures in his stories.

A small, compact village, it is situated to the south of the College, in a hollow fashioned by the meanderings of the River Stowe, and nestling in the shadow of the extensive Bellton Wood, which stretches from the borders of the village to the Half Mile Meadow adjoining the school's East Paddock. Beyond the rolling meadows fade into the downland reaching to Shingle Head and to the seaside resort of Caistowe, or northward to the higher land on which Bannington stands. To the west lies the open wildness of Bannington Moor and the village of Edgemore.

Hear how Nipper, disguised as Richard Basil Herbert Bennett, set the scene when he became Nipper at St. Frank's in July, 1917 (No. 112 Old Series). "Bennett stepped out of the train onto the sun-scorched platform of Bellton Station. "Not bad," he remarked critically, eyeing the picturesque country station, and the green hedges and fields all around, "not bad at all. In fact, it's distinctly good."

"It was evening, and the sun was shining from a clear blue sky. Having deposited me upon the gravel-covered platform, the slow branch-line train proceeded upon its weary way. I passed out of the station. Right opposite lay the River Stowe, quite a decent stream.

"The village itself was a little further on, over the bridge nestling in a hollow. The sun was shining gloriously, and I decided to take the towing-path route. The roads were dusty, and I didn't want to arrive at St. Frank's looking like a miller."

From then onwards over the years, Brooke's picture of Bellton was to become painted on the broad canvas with increasing clarity. We were to become acquainted with its better class hostelries, the George Tavern and the Railway Inn, and with the White Harp Inn where Mr. Jonas Portlock kept open and uneasy house for the gay blades of St. Frank's.

We heard, too, of the ruined Bellton Abbey where, in turn, Eustace Carey, Stanley Clavering and Stanley Waldo were to have noteworthy adventures. We enjoyed refreshments at Mr. Binks's cosy little tuckshop; we had our customary tiffs with the short-tempered ironmonger, Mr. Sharp; we helped the Rev. Ethelbert Goodchild to raise funds for the maintenance of the ancient village church of St. Peter.

We met other village worthies, good and bad; we met the local lads on the sports field; and we enjoyed fun and drama as required

when Moat Hollows, on the outskirts of Bellton, periodically changed hands and functions. We cut through the Wood or plodded up the long lane to the school in sunshine, in snow, in gale or in flood.

In short, the scene became part of our daily life, too. With Nipper and Co., we were there. I wonder if Friardale, Rylcombe and Coombe were as clearly defined and documented.

Maybe, maybe not; but give me quiet, unhurried Bellton in beautiful Sussex by the sea!



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#### CONQUEST MARCHES ON

Edwy Searles Brooks latest book, published under his now famous pen-name of Berkeley Gray, is entitled "Conquest After Midnight" Take one lioness prowling the lanes of rural Essex after dark, a devastating beautiful blonde, a villainous newspaper magnate politician, add a mysterious fatal accident which is really camouflaged murder, sundry kidnappings as before. All that is new is a breathless chase in Italy, centring round the chair-lift to the summit of the Black Crag, a picturesque mountain in the Italian Dolomites.

Written in his most up-to-date breezy style, Conquest fans will lap it up and to newcomers it will prove a worthy introduction to the pace and zest of one of the most popular authors of modern thrillers.

Berkeley Gray. "Conquest After Midnight". Collins. May 20th. 10/6d.

FRANK VERNON LAY

QUERY CORNER

Mr. F. Sturdy, 8 Watson Street, Middlesbrough, asks:-

Can anyone tell me the author of a serial called "Adventure Island" which appeared in "Chuckles" during the first world war? It had a character called "Toddy".

WANTED URGENTLY - to complete run for binding, Sexton Blake Library 3rd Series, 25, 26, 27, 30, 46, 47, 51, 52, 58, 71, 80, 85. Also the following S.B.L. 3rd Series in good condition as replacement copies: Nos. 23, 33, 39, 42, 43, 45, 48, 49, 50, 53, 54, 55, 57, 59, 60, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 68, 69, 70, 72, 73, 74, 76, 77, 78, 79, 84, 87, 88, 89, 90, 95, 97, 108, 111, 112, 130, 132, 133, 134, 140, 143, 149, 150, 151.

Also urgently needed Union Jack 1352. S.B.L. 2nd Series 243 and good copy of Sexton Blake Annual No. 4.

Can you please help? Highest prices given.

VICTOR COLBY, 8 BERESFORD AVENUE, BEVERLY HILLS N.S.W. AUSTRALIA.

EXCHANGES WANTED FOR THE FOLLOWING - Magnets B.F. 4d. Dixon Brett Lib. Aldine Adventure - Footer - Thriller Libs.

Football and Sports Lib. Buffalo Bills, Newnes etc.

I want:- S.O.L's, N.L.L's, Nuggets, containing St. Frank's, S.A.E. please. Two Magnets for each S.O.L. (Greyfriars and St. Jim's only).

J. R. COOK, 178 MARIA STREET, BENWELL, NEWCASTLE ON TYNE, 4.

HAMILTONIANA continued from page 167

ODD ITEMS OF INTEREST

by E. V. Copeman.

MYSTERY OF THE MIXED MSS

My good friend Syd Smyth phoned me at the office today (18/4/57) to offer congratulations on an article concerning Early Issues of The School Friend he had just read in his air-mailed copy of the April C.D.

"But" I protested, "I've never written any articles on the School Friend!"

Syd laughed. "Herbert reckons you have!" he declared. "This one's published in your name — though as a matter of fact it reads mighty familiar to me, something like a little effort I typed out and

sent off to him some months ago."

"You mean your first C.D. article".

"Yes". He tried to sound glum but glumness and Syd Smyth don't go well together. "Now you've pinched my thunder! Could I change my name by deed-poll?"

"Don't do that, Syd" I told him hastily. "One Copeman in the C.D. is quite enough. I'll write and tell Herbert it's either a case for Blake — the Mystery of the Mixed MSS — or else that you've taken a new job as a 'ghost writer' for me."

And, believe me, Syd is pretty substantial ghost — an energetic one, too. Apart from his activities connected with our local O.B.B.C. gatherings, right now he has a part in "Oklahoma" which is being presented on the stage by an amateur group.

He doesn't have time to play at "ghosts". The School Friend article was his, not mine.

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#### BUNTER OVER THE YEARS - INTERESTING COMPARISONS

The work of C. H. Chapman over the years, the gradual changes in the style of his drawings, and the metamorphosis of Billy Bunter have occasioned comment and interest in these pages.

With this in mind it is of particular interest to compare side by side these three examples of Chapman's work — three large portraits of Bunter, as follows:-

1. Cover of Blue and White Magnet No. 673 dated 1/1/1921.
2. Cover of Red and Blue Popular NS No. 442 dated 16/7/1927.
3. First inside illustration in Billy Bunter's Own No. 1 (1953).

Styles may change, but Bunter remains.....Bunter!

(More next month)

\* \* \*

TIME ROLLS ON. We are nearly half way through the year, which means "Down to the C.D. Annual in earnest". Next month the familiar forms will be going out. It seems evident that the "Who's Who" was missed last year so we shall have to find room for it again. I'll just appeal to you to make your details as brief as possible.

Anyway, we'll have a good chat about it all next month.

H. L.