

STORY
PAPER

COLLECTORS DIGEST

DECEMBER
1986

VOL 40
NO 480



SINCERE GREETINGS to all my Customers/Friends over the years. May the New Year bring forth all that we would like!

TOM MERRY BOOKS. Have a few hundred of these £4.00 with dust wrappers. Most of these are first editions. Without wrappers £2.00 each. Only a few Bunter Books.

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Lots of stock in 6 storerooms; probably have something for you. The keennest prices anywhere! Good postal service. Visitors very welcome by appointment. Give yourself a treat!

Lots of LEES - all series, some bound. S.B.L's: good for 1st and 3rd series, rather low on 2nd series now.

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STORY PAPER

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Round The Yule - Log With The Skipper

IT'S CHRISTMAS AGAIN

And this is actually the 41st Christmas issue of C.D. which has come through the letter-boxes of the faithful. So there can be but little that we can say about Christmas which we have not said before.

Apart from the lovely Christmas story of the birth of Christ, and, of course, the traditional Christmas dinner of turkey and plum pudding, Christmas time is very different from what it was when we old hands were young.

Today, Christmas seems to be centred on the Television set on Christmas Day and Boxing Day, with, possibly a visit on the third day to a dance of some sort where pop "music" delights the young

and shatters the elderly. When I was young - and, possibly, when you were young, too - the two Christmas evenings were devoted to a family party, with popular games like Consequences, Happy Families, and the like, winding up with a sing-song round the piano, with tuneful songs like "The Mistletoe Bough", "If Those Lips Could Only Speak", "Three O'Clock in the Morning", "Love's Old Sweet Song", "In a Little Spanish Town", "Red Sails in the Sunset", and "I'm Dancing with Tears in my Eyes".

And then, on the third day, a visit to the pantomime at the local Empire, where a full orchestra occupied the orchestra pit.

Yes, Christmas has changed a lot as our hair has grown whiter and thinner. Yet, thank Heaven, the real Spirit of Christmas remains the same.

Going off at a tangent, our memories warm up as we think of our favourite Christmas Numbers of our favourite papers of the old days. My favourite St. Jim's story was "The Mystery of the Painted Room". I fancy there was no other very memorable Christmas story in the Gem.

The Magnet had plenty, even though giant Christmas parties seemed a little unreal. It was unlikely that big crowds from the Hamilton schools would get together at Christmas time at Wharton Lodge or Mauleverer Towers - surely the majority of boys and girls would want to spend Christmas with their own families in real life. A contributor writing in this month's C.D. plumps for the "Bunter in the Attic" as the Magnet's most heart-warming Christmas, and I very much agree with him. I have said the same before.

I can recall no very outstanding Christmas series of the Rookwood chums. Danny, 50 years ago in 1936, was reading "Jimmy Silver's Christmas Party" in the S.O.L., as is mentioned elsewhere in this issue of C.D. That was a jolly Christmas romp, with a "ghost" at the priory, Jimmy Silver's home. It is memorable owing to evidence that, though it was published in the Boys' Friend of 1916, it was actually written for publication in 1915, and for some unknown reason it was delayed for a year.

Our St. Frank's and Sexton Blake fans will have their own memories of Christmases with their favourite characters.

And speaking of "favourites", I have a giant - and beautiful - Christmas Double Number of the "Favourite Comic", dated about 1916, in my collection. When I look over it at Christmas time, it brings me out in a glow, with a yearning for the dear, dead days beyond recall. Ah me!

WILLIAM

In this year's C.D. Annual, Mrs. Mary Cadogan has a gorgeous article in which she looks again at the lovable scamp, William, and at his creator, Richmal Crompton. It is one of the big treats in your coming Annual, and makes fascinating reading. One point intrigued me. Mary mentions that the first William story was entitled "Rice Mould".

On one of a number of occasions when I lunched with Richmal Crompton, I said to her: "Tell me, Miss Crompton. What was the very first William story you ever wrote?" And she replied immediately, "The very first William story I ever wrote was 'William Goes to the Pictures'. And she smiled happily, and repeated softly: "William Goes to the Pictures".

I don't doubt that Mary is right, and that "Rice Mould" was the first story published - in "Home Magazine". But I also have no doubt at all that "William Goes to the Pictures" was the one in which William was created. Probably Richmal Crompton sent a number of them to the publishers and they happened to start with "Rice Mould".

Actually, "William Goes to the Pictures" is the first story in the first William Book. "Rice Mould" appeared in the second book.

THE ANNUAL

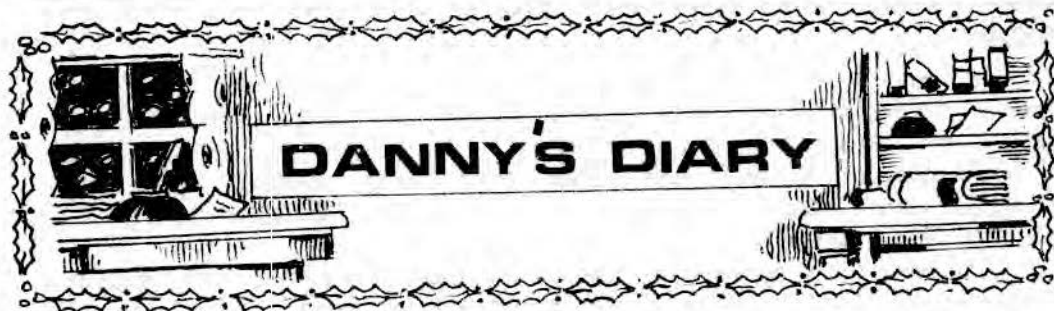
The C.D. Annual is nearing completion as I write this Christmas editorial. I have tried hard to make it the best one yet. Your favourite hobby writers are there at the top to their form. Have you ordered your copy?

STILL CHRISTMAS

To all my dear readers and friends, a very, very Happy Christmas.

"Whatever else is lost among the years
 Let us keep Christmas -
 its meaning never ends....
 Whatever doubts assail us, or what fears -
 Let us hold close this day -
 remembering friends."

THE EDITOR



DECEMBER 1936

It has been an amazing month. I never knew anything like it. The King has abdicated, and his brother, the Duke of York, is now King in his place.

It seems that there had been rumour going around during November, owing to foreign newspapers making a big splash of a report that the King wanted to marry an American lady, a Mrs. Wallis Simpson. But our newspapers over here kept silent, so hardly anybody knew anything about it.

It wasn't until Bishop Blunt of Bradford delivered an address on December 1st, tactfully worded but clear in meaning, that the silence was broken. That address was reported, quite unsensationally, in British papers.

The next day the King left London and went to Fort Belvedere, his country home which is, I think, somewhere near Ascot. On the 4th December, Mrs. Simpson, who was divorcing Mr. Simpson, left England for France. On the 10th December, Mr. Baldwin, the Prime Minister, announced that the government could not agree to the King's marriage to Mrs. Simpson. Then, on the 11th, King Edward the Eighth abdicated, and the Duke of York became King George the Sixth. It has all been a sad affair, and a bit exciting, too. That night The Duke of Windsor broadcast his farewell to the nation, for that is the new title bestowed on the late King.

It has been a topping month in the monthlies. St. Frank's has been unusually well to the fore. First, the St. Frank's story in the Schoolboys' Own Library is "The Tyrant Head". There is a new Head - Mr. Martin - and he is a martinet. He orders a ban on study feeds - longer lessons - and more floggings. So Mr. Martin is asking for trouble - and he gets it, from Nipper & Co.

The second long St. Frank's story this month is in the Boys' Friend Library. It is called "Peril Camp". The St. Frank's school

The TYRANT! HEAD!



No study feeds—longer lessons—more floggings! Such are a few of the drastic changes the new Head of St. Frank's thinks fit to impose on the school. It's asking for trouble—and Martin, the martinet, gets it from Nipper & Co., of the Remove! Look out for this all-thrilling, book-length story.

playing fields are taken over as the site of a large factory. To stop this dreadful thing happening, the St. Frank's boys' camp out on the grounds. And they find they have a sinister enemy who is all out to drive them off. An unusual story of thrills and mystery.

The Greyfriars story in the S.O.L. is "The Worst Form at Greyfriars". This is the conclusion of the Loder-Captain affair. It ends up with Christmas at Wharton Lodge - and a guest there is Loder - no longer Captain of Greyfriars.

The third S.O.L. is "Jimmy Silver's Christmas Party", set at Jimmy's home, the Priory. There is a ghostly secret over the Priory, and it is undiscovered until Jimmy entertains his chums of Rookwood, Greyfriars, and St. Jim's - not to mention the girls. Actually the ghost is Jimmy's uncle, Private Silver, who is an absentee from the army. This Christmas story only occupies about a third of the S.O.L. The rest is taken up with stories about Mornington and how he befriends and brings to Rookwood a waif named 'Erbert.

In the Sexton Blake Library I had "The Mystery of the Three Acrobats" by John G. Brandon. This is an excellent tale about the Music Halls, and introduces the character, the Hon. Ronald Purvale.

1936 has been a year which has been unusually short of sunshine A record, in fact. Perhaps this is why more and more people have

JIMMY SILVER'S CHRISTMAS PARTY!



Who's for an exciting Christmas holiday with Jimmy Silver & Co., the cheery chums of Rookwood? Join up with Jimmy's jolly party to-day and enjoy their Yuletide fun and adventure. It will only cost you fourpence—and you'll vote it as good as another Christmas holiday! Make sure of this book...

Ask for

NO. 284

of the
Schoolboys' Own
Library.

been buying wireless sets. The B.B.C. has announced that it has issued just on 8 million licences this year. Another record!

As usual, my brother Doug gave me the new Holiday Annual for Christmas. They are not as good as they used to be, but this one isn't too bad. It contains "Squiff of the Remove", a longish tale about the arrival at Greyfriars of Squiff of the Remove. It must be a very old Magnet tale. There is a gorgeous Rio Kid tale entitled "The Rio Kid's Ride."

A pretty good long St. Jim's tale is "Mr. Ratcliff Has a Busy Day", and a Rookwood story is "Carthew Goes Too Far!"

A splendid month in the local cinemas. One I greatly enjoyed was "Sutter's Gold", with Edward Arnold just great as John Sutter, the man on whose property the big 1848 gold rush started. Really magnificent was "The Story of Louis Pasteur" with Paul Muni as the famous French scientist of the last century who discovered cures for several diseases.

"Colleen" with Dick Powell was a nice little musical, and another pleasant little musical was "It's Love Again" with Jessie Matthews

and Robert Young. Topping story of adventures in an airline came from James Cagney and Pat O'Brien in "Ceiling Zero".

A delicious story of the Canadian mounties came in "Rose Marie" with Jeanette Macdonald and Nelson Eddy at their singing best. A very good drama was "These Three" - a story about a mischief-making girl in a school - starring Joel McCrea, Miriam Hopkins, and Merle Oberon. Another great picture was "Fury" in which a traveller arrives at a small town, is mistaken for a murderer, and almost lynched. Spencer Tracy and Sylvia Sidney were in this one.

"Lives of a Bengal Lancer" was a lovely story of the British army in India, starring Gary Cooper, Franchot Tone, and Richard Barthelmess. Quite a month to remember in the cinemas.

Tip-top month in Modern Boy. With the month's first issue "The Schoolboy Detective" ended and Len Lex, at long last, brought about the arrest of the criminal, the mysterious "Sussex Man".

The Captain Justice story this month was a rib-tickler. A lot of prehistoric monsters, brought to England by Captain Justice, escape and spread terror and destruction.

Then came the M.B. Christmas Number. A new series of Len Lex started, the opening one being "The Mystery of the Moat House". The story about the escaped prehistoric monsters continued in the Capt. Justice tale "Giants at Grips". The next month, a new Christmas series about Capt. Justice started with "Midge's Red-Hot Xmas", with fun and excitement on Justice Island. The Len Lex series carried on with "The Ghost Hunters". When the ghost of old Sir Lucian appears to Len Lex and his friends, Len decides to get to the bottom of the mystery.

Final Modern Boy of the month had Len Lex searching for "The Vanished Host", and Captain Justice and Midge come across the "Phantom of the Deep".

In the marvellous Magnet the new Valentine Compton series has carried on throughout the month. First came "The Boy With an Enemy". Compton has made a name for himself in the First Eleven. But he's made a bitter enemy of Carne, who was dropped from the team to make way for the new man. Next came "The Way of the Transgressor". The Spirit of Greyfriars has made the young smuggler want to go straight, but the influence of his uncle, Captain Compton, chief of the smuggling gang, pulls the other way.

Then came the Magnet's Christmas Number, with "Billy Bunter's Christmas Party". For years Bunter has been scrounging invitations, but this year he was able to issue invitations himself. He has done

a good turn for Compton, and is thereby able to invite his friends to spend Christmas on Uncle Compton's yacht, the Firefly.

Final of the month is "The Cruise of the Firefly". When Harry Wharton and his friends accepted the invitation to spend Christmas on the yacht, they didn't realise that the Firefly was bound for Spanish waters on an unlawful mission. It's all very good reading, though I really prefer an old-fashioned Christmas at Wharton Lodge. Still, it makes a change.

Just before Christmas, Doug took me to Holborn Empire, and we saw a lovely variety show, with top of the bill being Roy Fox and His Band, and another good act from Max Miller, the cheeky chappie, and Elsie and Doris Waters who gave a delicious act at the piano.

A gorgeous Christmassy month in the wonderful Gem. The month opened with the final story in the series where Cutts has become temporary Captain of St. Jim's. Now Kildare is due to return, and Cutts plots for some thugs to stop the skipper on his way back to the school. Luckily the scheming of Cutts is matched by the pluck and resource of Tom Merry & Co.

Then came the Gem Christmas Number. The story is "The Mystery of Eastwood House". Lord Eastwood and his son, Arthur Augustus, have mysteriously disappeared. What has become of them? The next week brought the sequel, "The Hidden Hand", and Kerr gets to the bottom of the mystery. The kidnapper is Pilkington, the butler, as we suspected all along. Simply great Christmas pair.

Final of the month brought "The Ghost of St. Jim's", with the chums back at school. A ghost is haunting St. Jim's, and suspicion falls on Levison, the cad. But surely Levison cannot be guilty of brutal violence and robbery. In the end, the brutal ghost turned out to be Prye of the Fifth, and he was expelled from St. Jim's.

Lovely month of stories.

On the very last day of the year, the trams at Dover were scrapped and replaced with motor-buses. A bit sad to see the way things change.

NOTES ON THIS MONTH'S "DANNY'S DIARY".

S.O.L. No. 283 "The Worst Form at Greyfriars" comprises the final 3 stories of the 9-story Loder-Captain series of the Magnet of 1925.

S.O.L. No. 284 "Jimmy Silver's Christmas Party" was the Christmas story in the Boys' Friend Christmas Number of 1916. As we pointed out long ago, there is strong evidence that this story was actually written and prepared for the

previous year's Christmas Number, 1915. It wound up a series about Private Silver, Jimmy's uncle, which had been running in late 1915. By December, 1916, it was a long time since anything had been heard of "Uncle John". Also, the story was illustrated by Macdonald, who had done all the Rookwood early illustrations. But by late 1916, Mac had long been away in the navy. The story itself was a bit far-fetched - one of those huge parties of boys from Rookwood, Greyfriars, St. Jim's and the girls of Cliff House. You don't ask everyone you meet to be a guest at your Christmas party.

The story "Squiff of the Remove" in the Holiday Annual, told of the arrival of Squiff - always a bit of a dead wood character from the Magnet of mid-summer 1914, when it had been entitled "A Cool Card". The St. Jim's story in that Holiday Annual "Mr. Ratcliff has a Busy Day" was specially written, probably by one of the better subs, for the H.A.

The 1936 Gem story "Skipper and Schemer" had been "Desperate Measures" in the Gem of early 1914. The two tales "The Mystery of Eastwood House" and "The Hidden Hand" had been the splendid double-length "The Mystery of the Painted Room" in the Christmas Gem of 1913. It was on my suggestion to Mr. Down, way back in the summer of 1936, that the splitting of the story was done and carried out so successfully.

The 1936 story "The Ghost of St. Jim's" had been "The Ghost Hunters" at the very end of the year 1913.

WANTED: Bunter Hardbacks: B.B. & Blue Mauritius, B.B.'s Beanfeast, B.B.'s P.O., B.B. Butts In, B.B.'s Bodyguard, B.B. of Greyfriars School, with d.w.s. Crompton's "Williams" 1st Editions with d.w.s, especially "William the Lawless." SALE: Bound Volume Magnets, Nos. 1434 to 1451, £50.00. Six Greyfriars Holiday Annuals (originals).

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND. Tel. Aberdeen 0224 491716.

WANTED: S.G.O.L.'s by Renee Frazer (Ronald Fleming) Nos. 269 Sunny In The South Seas, 287 The Mystery of Marsden Manor, 418 Sunny in Authority, 445 What Sunny Did on Mystery Isle, 453 When Sunny Meant to Rule.

RAY HOPKINS, 18 FOXHUNTER DRIVE, OADBY, LEICS., LE2 5FE.

JUST RICHMAL

In last month's C.D., HAPPY HOURS UNLIMITED advertised a new book entitled "Just - Richmal", a charming biographical work on the famous Richmal Crompton, the creator of WILLIAM.

Through a printing error, the name of the authoress of the biography was omitted from the advertisement, and we apologise for the error. The writer is KAY WILLIAMS. So: "JUST RICHMAL", a biography of William's creator, by Kay Williams. Available from HAPPY HOURS UNLIMITED at £12.95. Postage extra. For further details, see last month's Happy Hours advertisement.



BLAKE - BUT NOT SEXTON

BY JOHN BRIDGWATER

When the true Blakeophile comes across the name Blake in any book there is a quickening of the interest. The matter must be investigated thoroughly. Perhaps some new information about the master has been discovered or some hitherto unknown treatise on the saga has been found. This is particularly so when the book is a film book as little seems to have been written about Sexton Blake's many films.

Leafing through "The Great Movie Serials - Their Sound and Fury" by Jim Harmon and Donald F. Glut (Published by Woburn Press) the discovery of the name Blake in the chapter entitled "The Detectives" together with "The Scorpion", "The Spider" and "The Shadow" raised hopes that here was something new about those Sexton Blake films. Further reading soon proved that whilst the films discussed did feature Blake he was not Sexton.

The first serial was "Blake of Scotland Yard" a 1927 silent film. The criminologist is Angus Blake who comes out of retirement to combat a villain called "The Spider" who is trying to steal a secret formula ".....that could change ordinary ore into gold". This was followed by another serial in 1929 called "Ace of Scotland Yard". This was made in both silent and talkie versions. In it Blake has a girlfriend ".....who becomes the target of villains who

want to use her to get an artifact known as the Love Ring. This "MacGuffin" was uncovered by her father during an expedition to Egypt". (The term "MacGuffin" comes from Alfred Hitchcock and refers to the object of "shtick" (a term not explained in the book) around which the plot revolves such as a treasure map, death ray device or secret formula etc.) In 1937 "Blake of Scotland Yard" was re-made. In this version Blake becomes Sir James Blake a former Scotland Yard C.I.D. inspector ".....now retired and involved with more enterprising pastimes", i.e. financing a death ray device. This time the villian is known as "The Scorpion", ".....who skulked about London with a slouch hat, mask, long black cloak and a glove shaped like the pincer of a great anthropod". "The Scorpion" wants, of course, to steal the death ray. The authors state that "The seventh episode, "Face to Face", provides an unusual climax. Blake has been masquerading as the Scorpion. When the real Scorpion confronted him in the presence of another villian, that was the cliff-hanger."

The whole book, which covers serials from the 1930's to the 1950's, quaintly calling them "Chapter Plays" and having a backward glance to "The Perils of Pauline" and other silents of that period, is written in that irritatingly mock jocular vein used in the commentaries which accompany those anthologies of silent films shown on television. The chapter headings "Girls - who is that girl in the buzz saw?" and "The Villians - all bad, all mad" are examples. In spite of the style of the writing this is a really fascinating book which all ex-members of the Saturday Morning Club will enjoy. It covers such old favourites as Charlie Chan, Fu Manchu, Nick Carter, Dick Tracey, super-heroes including those "long underwear boys" Batman and Robin and Captain America, the jungle heroes Tarzan & Co, Frank Buck and Clyde Beatty and the future heroes Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers. There is also much to interest the Western fans and if Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi are top of your horror hit parade then this book is too good to miss.

DEATH IN JERMYN STREET

RON GARDNER writes:

Came across a Wright & Brown novel at an Oxfam shop recently - J.G. Brandon's "Death in Jermyn Street", about the Hon. Arthur Stukeley Pennington (A.S.P.) and his servant George (Flash) Wibley. It's all about jewelled Eastern idols and mysterious orientals, and has that 1930's Sexton Blake flavour about it all. I wonder how many Sexton Blake authors found a comfortable niche in the Wright and Brown novels of the 40's and 50's? Quite a few, I shouldn't wonder. Anyway, I'm enjoying the book tremendously.



WELCOME BACK - TO CHRISTMAS!

By William Lister

Christmas is coming - the local schools and the upper crust schools like St. Frank's, Rookwood, and Greyfriars would feel the thrill of it in the air.

Edwy Searles Brooks and Charles Hamilton would be drafting their scripts for those long awaited Christmas series. They would be packing the trains with schoolboys bubbling with excitement and with one thought uppermost: "Home for the Christmas hols".

Those of us less fortunate would be awaiting our favourite authors to open the gates of baronial halls, haunted houses, ghosts, and skeletons; huge tables crammed with succulent foods, while outside are the frozen lakes for skating - and snow, snow unlimited.

"Christmas comes but once a year, and when it comes it brings good cheer".

"What good cheer"? the modern housewife may ask, surrounded by all the mod-cons, plus a micro-waves oven and a pre-packed Christmas dinner (ready in 3 minutes) with the pre-packed pudding to boot.

"Christmas! Let's get away from it all!" is the cry of thousands who struggle to get a plane or a place in a Blackpool hotel; and some housewives, living below the poverty line, wonder "How can I face Christmas morning with the small presents I can afford, when they've spent the last 8 weeks watching TV adverts of wonderful things with prices of £20 to £50, and so on?"

Let's face it, fellow readers of C.D. Christmas is dear! Christmas (as we knew it) is dead as a door-nail, to quote Dickens.

I hasten to explain that I am not against "mod-cons", useful and time-saving things as they are, but I am left wondering why we should get away from it all.

All what? Do they mean the family gatherings, the children

agog with excitement at the smallest of toys; the joy of Christmas cards from old friends, the games we played together in the family circles, the hard work of making the Christmas dinner, of boiling the pudding in the copper, of washing-up without a dishwasher. They are really rushing to get away from the Frankenstein of the modern Christmas, a Christmas of their own making.

Those of us who remember the Christmases of the 1920 - 30 era stand amazed at the over-bloated, greedy, get away from it all Christmas presented to us to-day.

Of course, the real Christmas will never die - the Christmas of Dickens, Hamilton, Brooks. Turn back the pages of your life; open the pages of authors who could enter into Christmas, pay a visit to a Church and hear of the Christ in Christmas and --- Christmas will live again.

Open Dickens' "Christmas Carol" or the tales of Hamilton and share a Christmas with the boys of Greyfriars.

Above all, turn to the pages of the Nelson Lee for a resurrection of the Christmas you used to know.

You can join Lord Dorrimore's Christmas Party and "A Yuletide Mystery" in 1919; "The Haunted House" and "A Christmas Plot" in 1920; "The Christmas Plotters" in 1921; "The Ghost of Somerton Abbey" and "Archie's Pantomime Party" in 1922.

The years 1923 to 1933 bring us "The Schoolboy Santa Claus", "The Ghost of St. Frank's", "The Ghost of Glenthorne Manor", "The Secret of the Panel", "The Spectre of Handforth Towers", "The Phantom of Modern House", "The Mystery of Raithmere Castle", "St. Frank's Revels", "Archie's Christmas Party", "The Haunted House", and "Christmas at Travis Dene".

Glance again at the above title and I am sure you'll say "Now that sounds like Christmas".

Read, if you can, any of the above, throw in for good measure Charles Dickens and Charles Hamilton in Christmas mood, and I can assure you you will say "Welcome Back to Christmas".

To those St. Frank's fans who will be reading any of the Nelson Lee tales quoted, I invite you to raise your glasses along with me, the toast being Edwy Searles Brooks, the founder of the feast.

WANTED: C.D.'s: 1 - 45, w.p. 50p each; 98, 116, 198, 210, 212, 213, 214, 215: w.p. 40p each. C.D. Annual 1959, w.p. £4.50 Modern Boys, W.E. Johns books.

MR. P. GALVIN, 2 THE LINDALES, POGMOOR, BARNSELEY, S. YORKS., SY5 2DT.

In October C.D. our respected Editor raised the question of how well were the St. Frank's stories dealt with in the S.O.L. Danny, also, in his Diary spoke of these stories.

On the whole, I would say fairly well. Of course, condensing four or five Lee stories into one S.O.L. meant that sections of the original story had to be omitted. I must say, however, that how it was done was not always to the detriment of the plots.

As in the cases of Magnet and Gem stories in the S.O.L. queer things occurred. To start with, the first story mentioned by Danny, "The Great Fire at St. Frank's" was first published in the Lee in the autumn of 1919. If it was intended to have a St. Frank's tale each month from then on why start with 1919 stories? St. Frank's had been appearing in the Lee then for two years so why ignore all the earlier tales, especially as many of them were really excellent, such as Hunter the Hun and the Colonel Clinton series? There were also the two holiday series.

Then there were strange omissions in the sequence of the series. The Christmas stories of 1919 were left out also the series about the servants' strike in early 1920. Another series omitted was the Reggie Pitt stories of his footballing adventures in the autumn of 1921 and the stories of early 1923 about the arrival of Alf Brent in the guise of Alf Huggins. There seems no logical reason why these should have been left out.

In the autumn of 1922 Mr. Brooks gave us 17 stories not in a connected series but all separate events. Most of these were omitted from the S.O.L. apart from a few.

Danny, in his Diary, says from October 1936 onwards there would be a St. Frank's story each month, as there was to be three issues in future instead of two. No doubt unwittingly, his words rather gave one the impression that no St. Frank's stories had previously been issued in the S.O.L. Actually, eight St. Frank's stories had already appeared. Three of these were original stories but No. 54 contained three stories of the 17 mentioned above from 1922 Lees and No. 56 had some more which, incidentally, included one about the arrival of Willy Handforth.

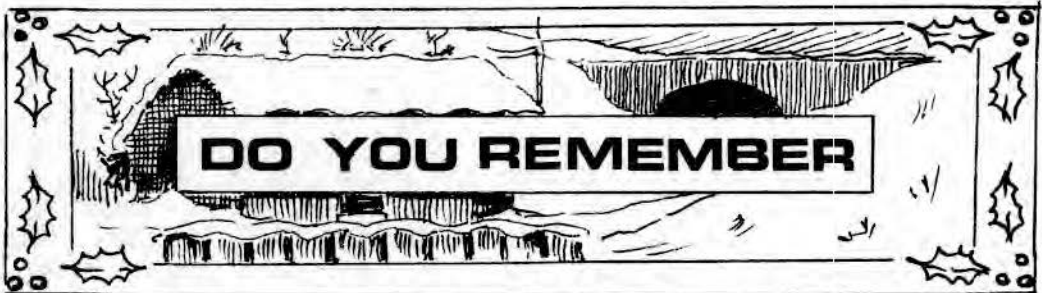
No. 212, of all strange things, was a reprint from 1st New Series Lees "The Bootboy Baronet" (Jimmy Potts) which appeared in the Lee in 1928. Why pick this out from all the dozens of Lees of the New large series if they wanted some of those?

S.O.L. No. 216, "The Wizard of St. Frank's" was a very heavily

condensed version of the Ezra Quirk series from the autumn Lees of 1925. Fancy, eight Lees squeezed into one S.O.L." No wonder someone who had never previously read a St. Frank's yarn read this one and said "I don't think much of St. Frank's stories".

S.O.L. No. 224 was by E.S. Brooks and dealt with the adventures of Handforth at St. Jim's. It was a reprint of Gems Nos. 1059/1062 which appeared in 1928.

The people who picked out these stories and series for reprinting and played about with the sequences etc make one think that they were the office boys or lesser mortals. No doubt Hamiltonians agree with this viewpoint after what they have suffered in this respect.



No. 219 - Magnet No. 152 - "John Bull Junior" By Roger M. Jenkins

There was no Magnet Christmas number in the year 1910, since throughout December all the Greyfriars stories were set at the school. To make up for this, the first number in 1911 described a New Year's holiday at Wharton Lodge which seemed to be a continuation of a longer stay, because all the juniors were there at the very beginning when the Colonel suggested a resolution for the New Year: the juniors should each pay a forfeit of threepence or sixpence for various offences, like the use of slang. John Bull, who had arrived at Greyfriars as a new boy the previous week (and was called John Bull junior because his father was also called John Bull), was already on friendly enough terms to be invited, and Fisher T. Fish, another recent arrival at the school, came later. Bunter turned up uninvited, pretending to be ill, and Aunt Amy kindly dosed him with medicine.

Seasonable activities abounded. There was skating on the lake, and Fish (who was boastful but not otherwise unpleasant at that time) talked much of his prowess but was unable to support his words with his actions, and there was a fancy dress dance nearby which was attended by some Cliff House girls as well as a rather

miscellaneous trio from St. Jim's - Lowther, Blake and D'Arcy. Bunter danced with Wilhelmina Limburger because neither of them could find another partner. As Charles Hamilton said, "He considered Miss Limburger a decidedly bad dancer, and she had the same opinion of him, and they were both quite right".

As with most early Magnets, there were a number of miscellaneous episodes, but there was the expected Yuletide mystery, relating to Johnny Bull who was a notoriously bad concertina player. There was also a contretemps when the butler, Mr. Plummy, locked Bunter in the pantry which he was raiding in the middle of the night. Perhaps the oddest thing of all was the cover picture showing Bunter smiling as held up a lighted match to survey the attractive array of food on the shelves. C.H. Chapman, the famous Magnet artist, told the London Old Boys' Book Club that every illustration was drawn specially for the current manuscript; yet the cover of Magnet 1454 is an exact copy of that on No. 152 except for the addition of a cat and a few more items of food on the floor. The caption in 1911 ended with the words "They can put it down to the cat in the morning". In 1935 the whole caption read "They'll think it was the cat". Not only was this copying completely unnecessary and an apparent breach of the regular practice but it is also astonishing to think that someone looked back through a quarter of a century's Magnet files in order to discover an appropriate picture to copy. Truly the ways of the Amalgamated Press were an impenetrable mystery at times.

REVIEWS

GOOD-BYE, GREYFRIARS!

Frank Richards.
(Howard Baker: £12.95)

Let's hope that the overall title of this volume is not as ominous as it sounds. We can take comfort in the fact that it very obviously isn't. This is the 100th production of these Facsimile Volumes - a splendid achievement - and it is advertised as being the last of them that we shall get.

It is, perhaps, a slight pity that the others who built up the success of this popular series - St. Jim's, Rookwood, Sexton Blake, St. Frank's, and the like - are not given a little show in it, but the predominance of Greyfriars herein is proof of the overwhelming popularity of the Harry Wharton stories.

The volume comprises 8 Magnets (not consecutive) of late 1916, the early period of the white cover era, and the generously proportioned illustrations from C.H. Chapman in his prime - a heartwarming feature - is proof that the paper shortage had not yet begun to bite.

The opening yarn is "The Other Bunter", and he, of course, is Wally, who, later on, was to change places with Billy in a long and memorable series. Wally

Bunter tales, though a bit unbelievable, were always popular, and "The Other Bunter" is a winner on all counts. Next comes "Sticking to His Guns" which is an excellent school story of the type which was to be very popular much later. We find Vernon-Smith responsible for the capture of Slippery Jim, a kind of 1916 "Courtfield Cracksman".

Another exceptionally fine story - "A Split in the Study" - follows, a tale centred on Wharton's hasty temper and a foretaste of the famous Rebel series of later years. Then comes "The Sentence of the School", a well-plotted little drama, rather unusual in having Ogilvy of the Remove and Temple of the Fourth in starring roles.

"For D'Arcy's Sake" was a famous tale in its day, though its memory has faded with the years. One of those tales of huge parties, made up from Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood, and Highcliffe, and set at Eastwood House. The notorious Captain Punter, born in the Gem, puts in an appearance in this Magnet.

"The Stolen Study", though familiar in theme is delicious reading material. Wharton and Nugent, arriving back late for the new term, find their No. 1 study bagged by Bolsover and Co. Then comes "The Bounder's Guest", a superb school story. The guest, uninvited, is Mornington in his pre-reform days, and his arrival does nothing to help the Bounder's reputation as a reformed character.

Final tale is "Under Bunter's Thumb" in which the Owl tries to blackmail himself into the Remove football eleven as centre forward.

So! Eight tales of Greyfriars at its best. If this volume does actually prove to be the last of the series, it can be said that the series has gone out with a bang.

THE ARRIVAL OF WILLIAM WIBLEY

Frank Richards
(Howard Baker Special: £18)

It is, of course, good news that these superb Howard Baker "Specials", the Book Club editions, are to continue. This volume is one of those, and comprises 6 Red Magnets of the Spring of 1914.

The opening story is "Easy Terms", with Fisher T. Fish at his hilarious best. Great fun, and a real period piece.

"April Fools All!" is a substitute story, credited to Edwy Searles Brooks, and thus of special interest to his fans. For the Hamilton fan, it has its moments or can be ignored. It is, of course, worth its inclusion here to keep the run complete.

Next comes the story "Wibley's Wheeze", the theme of which provides the overall title for the volume. It tells of the arrival at Greyfriars of Wibley, the schoolboy actor, and it is of unique charm as such. This is followed by "The Runaway", an outstanding Vernon-Smith drama.

"Harry Wharton's Diplomacy" is the rather bleak title of the story which introduced a new master, Mr. Larry Lascelles, to Greyfriars readers. He has been Larry Lynx, a professional boxer, and when the truth emerges he is allowed to stay on at the school in recognition of a service he rendered to Dr. Locke. A few years later the theme was used again to herald the arrival at Rookwood of their Mr. Dalton.

"Coker's Plot" is a typical Coker romp, with a cricket setting, and will

delight all admirers of the great Horace.

A lovely volume, packed from cover to cover with period charm, with stories which delighted boys and girls just before the Great War broke out and altered everything. Today, those stories will delight even more positively than they did so long ago.

Production, as usual, is impeccable.

MAGNET CHRISTMAS

by ESMOND KADISH

I suppose that, when I started reading the MAGNET and GEM in 1932, what I really wanted to see at Christmas was a holly-bedecked cover, complete with snow-festooned title. Inside the paper, of course there would need to be a school story with a comfortable country-house setting, a good seasonable plot - which incorporated a mystery and a "spook" - and familiar schoolboy characters gathered together to share in the festivities. Such sentimental stuff would, perhaps, have seemed inappropriate for readers of such papers as the MODERN BOY, but, perhaps, I was never really a "modern boy".

Hamilton's Christmas tales in the MAGNET, however, did not always live up to my youthful expectations, and I found the 1934 series at Hilton Hall, with its escaped convict theme, a trifle grim for the holiday season. Later, in the thirties, the Christmas stories in the Valentine Compton series had the Famous Five uncomfortably close to reality, with the "Firefly" on which they were cruising, gun-running in the Spanish Civil War. It was certainly topical, but not quite what I had in mind for Christmas.

It is the 1933 series with Bunter hiding away at Wharton Lodge which is my idea of a perfect Hamilton Christmas - neat and compact, (only three tales) totally free of padding, and with an absolutely splendid opening. Those two terse words, "Slam" and "Click" postively draw one into the story, as Mauly's study door, (unbeknown to Bunter, "Fishy" is inside) slams in the face of the fat owl, who as usual, is hunting a holiday berth. For once, Hamilton does not spend his first few chapters with half Greyfriars scurrying out of the path of a desperate W.G.B. He is abandoned right at the beginning, and it's impossible not to feel some sympathy for Bunter in his plight at Christmas time. The plot, with Bunter hiding in the attic at Wharton Lodge, is well known. His expeditions in search of food and bedding, cause some mischief at Wharton Lodge, although, to do him justice, most of it is due to his obtuseness, rather than deliberate malice. Hurree Singh, showing, perhaps, an unsuspected depth of character, quarrels with Harry

Wharton, and Thomas, a relative of the dignified, Wells, the butler, also suffers as a result of Bunter's foraging. In fact, Bunter feels "quite sorry" for Thomas when he observes the "worried expression on his chubby countenance" after he is suspected of pilfering, but not enough, of course, to put things right for him! Bunter earns his right to stay at Wharton Lodge in typical fashion by alerting the household one night, and saving Colonel Wharton from injury at the hands of a revengeful rascal.

There's a happy and good-humoured atmosphere about the whole series, in spite of the misunderstandings, old friends turn up on Boxing Day:- Maudy, Hazel, Marjorie and Clara with "several other Cliff House girls", and even Fisher T. Fish since Harry has had "a kind thought for the fellow who was left at school on his lonely own". To set it all off, there are three splendid MAGNET covers by Shields - good enough to make Christmas cards out of! There is Bunter, ensconced in the attic aiming a snowball at the colonel's unsuspecting topper; Bunter, at midnight, dragging his stolen provender up the stairs at Wharton Lodge, with sausages trailing behind; Bunter showing off his skating prowess on the ice.

A positive "gem" of a series - if I may be permitted a Monty Lowtherism at Christmas time!

YULETIDE by E. BALDOCK

Again at Christmas did we weave
 The holly round the Christmas hearth.

Tennyson - In Memoriam.

We have all enjoyed, over the years, the Christmas festivities at Wharton Lodge, Mauleverer Towers, Cherry Place and various other homes of the Greyfriars' fellows. Would it not be of some interest to give a thought to the old school, they have for a short period, left behind. Holidays are and have always been jolly times. We pack our bags joyously and for a short time exchange one domicile for another all with the full intention of having a 'jolly good time'. But we leave, by this general exodus a vacuum as it were. A vast empty building denuded of all sound and movement. Standing silently under the slowly falling flakes of snow which are gradually obliterating all but the largest objects beneath a gleaming canopy of white. True there remains the odd domestic here and there. Old Gosling, for example must, we suppose breathe a wheezy sigh of relief when the gates are finally closed behind the last fellow, the last master, for a period. His rheumy old eye will no doubt gleam with satisfaction as he counts, in his cosy little sitting room

in the Lodge, the emoluments and 'tips' he has received during the last few days of term.

Later Mr. Mimble, unusually free, as the garden is lying under a deep covering of snow, will drop in at the Lodge and these two trusty old retainers will - if tradition follows its accustomed norm - enjoy a glass (or two) of 'something warm' and a chat over current school affairs as may concern themselves, by the fire.

Mrs. Mimble has, with a sigh of relief, turned the key in the door of the tuckshop for the time being and has run down her stocks of perishable tarts and cakes - until next term brings its voracious appetites and demands once more. The two small tables (by unwritten law sacrosanct to members of the Sixth Form) and the chairs stand dusted and empty for the nonce. Bright and enticing labels on bottles and tins stare blankly upon a deserted shop. The glass covered receptacles on the counter are freshly washed and gleaming - and empty, waiting.

The Remington in Mr. Quelch's study is carefully shrouded with a dust-cover (The Master of the Remove was ever the most meticulous of gentlemen) and is, for the time being silent. Keys which have rattled out little gems of historical interest are still and silent for the time being. His study has an unusually neat and tidy appearance - not always apparent in term time. Mary, one of the few maids at the school with whom we have a nodding acquaintance has already 'done' masters' studies and is now on her way to 'do' those of the Remove - a somewhat more arduous task, before going off to her home in Friardale. Mr. Prout, Mr. Twigg and Mr. Hacker together with their colleagues have all departed and gone their various ways. Prout to boom and pontificate, Twigg to twitter and the lugubrious Hacker - we hope - to smile, albeit frostily; all to enjoy in their individual ways the celebration of Christmas.

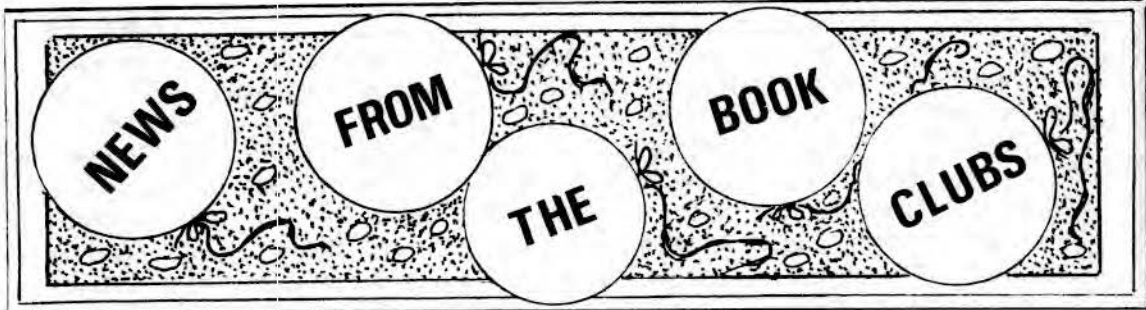
Trotter the Page has been heard to opine to his fellow domestics in the kitchen that he would not mind at all to see several Christmas celebrations each year, for they are good and profitable times for him. Also there is piling up in his room - for Trotter lives 'in' - a growing heap of 'Boys' Friend Library' and 'Sexton Blakes' needing his undivided attention. It has been the custom from time immemorial for fellows to leave on their study tables at the end of term any extraneous matter no longer required, for disposal, among which of course are many old books and papers - not all of an educational nature. This provides a happy and lucrative hunting

ground for Trotter who manages to augment his already considerable library with all manner of fresh acquisitions, not least among which may occur old 'Holiday Annuals' and the odd Henty or Brereton. Yes, Christmas is a very fruitful season for Trotter. For a brief day or so the world of Greyfriars ceases to exist for Trotter. Closing the door of his little room he at once enters into the gloomy and exciting regions of the Blakian underworld, crimes are mounting up to be solved, clues to be sought, and wrongs to be righted. Blake is impatiently awaiting his temporary 'Tinker' and Trotter will not keep the 'Guv'nor' a moment longer than he can help. He is eager to embark upon the exciting career as the master's very able assistant.

The Head's house, snow enshrouded, is a haven of peace and tranquility, with Mrs. Locke quietly presiding over the preparations for the festive season, while Miss Rosie, the Head's daughter is giving much attention to the outward manifestations of the season the decorating of the rooms with holly and - hopefully we may assume - with mistletoe. Dr. Locke, the venerable old Head is relaxing. Yuletide is for him a happy and much looked forward to break in the academic year. He is at present seated by a fine fire in his drawing room attired in a flowing dressing-gown (the weather being in traditional Greyfriars style, bitter) his feet encased in comfortable looking carpet slippers. This is the revered 'Head' off duty to everyone - except perhaps his staunch old friend and colleague Mr. Quelch. But as this angular gentleman is spending the vacation with Colonel Wharton at the Lodge, his advent is unlikely.

Thus does Greyfriars stand, empty in a snowy landscape. Empty, well not completely, a spiral or two of smoke rising from the odd chimney would suggest that somewhere in the old building life is still extant. But the fellows are away, another term is over, another Christmas is here.

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MIDLAND

The attendance struck a new low, with only 5 members attending. I myself have scarcely missed a meeting. I am an old man and not in good health. If I can do it, so can others. Unless the number improves the club will become extinct.

A quiz by your correspondent had 15 questions, and three prizes were awarded.

The refreshments were provided by Betty Hopton, and Ivan Webster brought the utensils and ingredients for making tea and coffee.

There followed a reading from Magnet 617 about Gosling's attempt to marry a "widdler" keeping a public house where, as Potter remarked, he would have been sure of one good customer.

We learnt with interest that one of our members, Gerald Price, with his family, has been on holiday in Soviet Russia. It would be a great thing if he would give us a talk on his impressions.

A sad piece of news was the death of Ena Davey, wife of Ted Davey who was a prominent member before his sudden death some years ago. Ena had kept up her subscriptions to the club till the end.

Our Christmas Party will take place on 16th December. Best wishes to all O.B.B.C. members everywhere.

JACK BELLFIELD

LONDON

Scheduled to meet at the Walthamstow venue, the November meeting was hurriedly switched to the hospitable home of Suzanne and Chris Harper as access to the former place was inaccessible. Thus a convey of cars went through the Epping Forest and were soon at Loughton where hurriedly the meeting room was set out for the Sexton Blake meeting.

Terry and Rosemary Beenham produced their admirable Blake quiz. Sixteen pictures of Union Jack covers with part of the titles omitted. Ann Clarke had the most correct. Jack Adrian filled second place.

Duncan Harper had another Union Jack covers quiz for members to solve during the tea break. Winners were Roy Parsons and Jack Adrian. Chris Harper read a chapter from a Union Jack story. Then came the piece de resistance, Jack Adrian giving a discourse on Sexton Blake, the various authors and editors who contributed to the Union Jack, Sexton Blake Library, and the Detective Weekly. Jack had brought along copies of his book Sexton Blake Wins. Great were the plaudits at the conclusion of his talk.

Mary Cadogan read a chapter from a School Friend which told of Bessie Bunter's arrival at Friardale station bound for Cliff House. Phil Griffiths read an extract from 'More William'. Thanks were accorded to the Harper family for their hospitality. Christmas meeting at the Ealing Liberal Hall on Sunday, 14th December. A full tea will be provided but inform Bill and Thelma if attending.

BEN WHITER

NORTHERN

Meeting held: Saturday, 8th November, 1986

Chairman Keith Smith astounded the 13 members present by claiming he had recently purchased from a newstand, a number 1 copy of "Gem". However, it turned out that it was in fact "JEM" (spelt with a "J") being a new paper for girls issued on a fortnightly basis'

Geoffrey Good spoke on "A Debt To The Future" explaining that there were clubs throughout the country, meeting to preserve the literature of years gone by. It was our responsibility to preserve this literature for the future. There were plenty of examples of story papers and books that had seen the ravages of time. Attempts to repair books can sometimes be disastrous. Geoffrey showed us examples of attempted repairs - all of which were common sights to us. People should never attempt repairs with self-adhesive transparent tape - it looks all right when first applied, but after a while it becomes discoloured and leaves nasty stains.

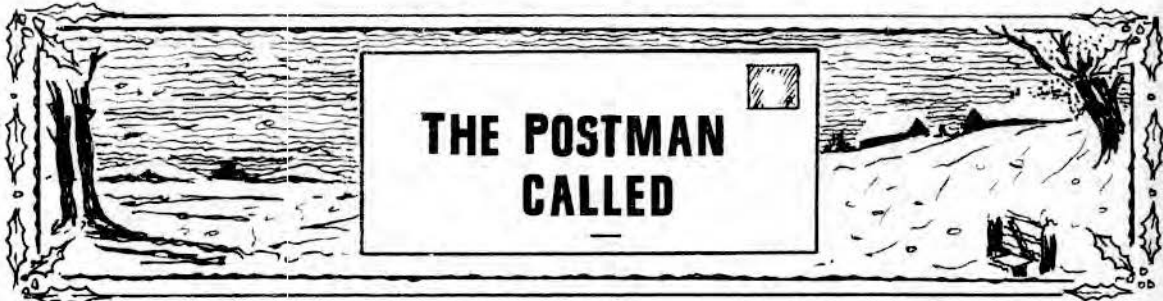
Keith and Darrell had on display a number of books that were relevant to our hobby and recently printed. Members agreed that some of the books were never seen in bookshops - perhaps because they were of "minority" interest: on view were Sexton Blake and

Sapper paperbacks; Sherlock Holmes Centenary Book: reprints of Wodehouse stories. Members showed interest in the Charles Hamilton Famous Schools Calendar.

To conclude, Geoffrey read an hilarious episode from "Billy Bunter's Vengeance".

Our next meeting is on Saturday, 13th December - our Christmas Party from 5.00 p.m. until 9.00 p.m. All friends are welcome: we meet at SPCK Bookshop/Holy Trinity Church, Boar Lane, Leeds 1 - two minutes from the railway station.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR



ROGER JENKINS (Havant) You ask if there are still subscribers around who were there at the very beginning. I believe I had an article in No. 1 and I have every issue of the CD safely stored, both monthlies and annuals.

I was interested to see that Danny's Diary refers to the end of the trams in Portsmouth. I well recall this, but they were replaced by trolleybuses, not motor buses, and the Portsmouth trolleybuses were claimed to be the most comfortable on the South Coast. Like most trolleybus systems they disappeared after the war and then were replaced by motor buses. It is interesting to note that on the continent, most large cities keep trams for the heavily used routes through the centre and if trolleybuses are used at all they work the outer suburban routes. Single decker trolleybuses have a very small passenger capacity, of course.

G. THOMPSON (Belfast) I have been a subscriber from No. 1. I have never missed a copy. I have them all from No. 70 - October 1952. Mr. Martin, the deceased dealer, probably got the missing numbers.

JOHN GEAL (Hampton) I was in it from the beginning, although I dropped out for a couple of years in the middle years, reading

somebody else's copy. I well remember the "Heady" early post-war years when the Hobby really took off. Came that happy day when, with the O.B.B.C. having been formed, that a certain Eric Fayne, who was hosting meeting No. 3 at his school, wrote, inviting me to attend. At that same meeting J. Robyns came up from Brighton and, as new boys, we were drawn together, and we have been firm friends ever since. Through that meeting and the magazine I have enjoyed many fine friends in the hobby and have always blessed the day when Herbert Leckenby got in touch and started it all.

BILL LOFTS (London) Regarding my recent article in Blakiana pertaining to Percy Clarke, readers may be sorry to learn that I have established that he died as far back as 1974 aged 79. Born at Paddington and full name Percy Arthur Clarke he will be remembered as playing a large part in the history of our boys' papers.

In answer to George Beal's query in 'Skeleton Islands' and the mysterious pen name of "W. Haines Jull" - it looks to me as if this is rather poor anagram of 'Bully Hayes/Haines/' with various old English spellings of a very famous pirate who operated in the period of the story.

J.F. BURRELL (Bristol) I was pleased that Danny commented so favourably on the Compton series. Of all the stories I think that this is the one that captures most the atmosphere of the countryside and sea coast around Greyfriars. Having re-read it more than once I can almost feel that I am there. The nocturnal visit to the cave, when both parties get a surprise, is also beautifully done. The cover of No. 1500 also creates atmosphere.

DON SPIIERS (Basingstoke) In a Magnet of (I think) one of the Christmas periods between 1923 and 1928, there was a short complete story in the centre pages entitled 'Mick O' the Midnight Mail' I cannot find this tale in any of my store of Magnets and have often wondered in which number it appeared; it has remained vividly in my memory since those far off days though I have never managed to locate it since. Perhaps I remember it most because it was around that period that I joined the old Great Western Railway in steam days. Can you please help me to locate?

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: The title is familiar, but I cannot trace it myself. Can any reader give the information for Mr. Spiers?)

HUBERT MACHIN (Preston) I am one of the "few starters who has stayed the course". As Mr. Leckenby wrote in No. 100 of C.D.:

"The very first letter I opened after No. 1 had gone out was from Hubert Machin... It contained a subscription for 6 numbers. I exclaimed "Gosh! What an optimist" Well his faith was justified".

Miss EVELYN FLINDERS (Hitchin) I remember when C.D. No. 1 was printed. I only sent 6 months' subscription because I didn't think they would find enough material to keep going for very long. And here it is, still going strong in 1986.

I love reading about Princess Snowee. I've a little terrier type dog called Cindy. I got her from Kimpton dogs' home. She's a very good friend and loves everybody.

(SNOWEE COMMENT: My man allow me to send my love to Cindy, and all the other pets among hobby people.)

RAY BENNETT (Codsall) Congratulations. Ruby Jubilee Number of C.D. to hand containing a memorable editorial, and after perusal will be placed with my other 478 copies. It has given me much pleasure to have been associated with our hobby from the beginning during which time I have met and corresponded with many wonderful people. (I still possess one of your letters dated 25th April, 1948.) I now look forward to No. 500.

ALAN STEWART (Burnham-on-Crouch) Three hearty cheers for our worthy editor - 40 not out! A "ripping" score, you have batted magnificently, and I am quietly confident you can continue to add to your score. My sincere thanks for the tremendous effort you have made to keep our little monthly going from year to year. I started subscribing in 1950, but managed to acquire numbers prior to this; therefore my collection goes back to No. 15.

Mrs. J. GOLEN (Streetly) May I nag you just a little? Here goes -- Do think about putting those lovely Mr. Buddle stories into a volume we can treasure. They are so nice to read at Christmas and a collection would be such a bonus.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Thank you for such a warm-hearted tribute. We'll think about it one of these days. Mr. Buddle has an adventure in this year's C.D. Annual.)

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FAIR PLAY

(The story in which Hurree Singh was created
80 years ago)

The Third Form room was very quiet. That alone was a suspicious circumstance if a master had happened to notice it.

The Third Form usually prepared their lessons without the presence of a master, and had the room to themselves, and so it was generally the reverse of quiet. Upon this particular evening the juniors were very subdued. Something was in the wind. The juniors whispered and grinned to one another. Something important was about to take place. Only upon Knowles' face was a sceptical look.

"Bet you they won't be able to bring it off!" he exclaimed, addressing nobody in particular.

"Rats!" said King. "Trust old Redfern!"

"Redfern will do the trick" said another junior confidently. "He'll get at least one of the bounders!"

"Hallo, here he is!"

"With a prisoner!" ejaculated West.

There was a sound of scuffling in the passage, and a muffled, mumbling sound. Redfern, Lawrence, and Hurree Singh came bundling in, and in the midst of them, in a relentless clutch, was Hake,

of the Fourth. Hake was a prisoner, and he had evidently been captured by main force, and not without cost to the captors, for Lawrence's nose was bleeding and Redfern's lip was cut. A towel was tied round Hake's mouth, which accounted for the gurgling sound, for Hake was doing his best to yell and bring his Form to the rescue.

"Got him!" gasped Redfern.

"Got the brute! Collar him, kids!"

The Third Formers swooped down upon the prisoner. In a moment a dozen pair of hands collared Hake, and he was dragged into the room and plumped down upon a form.

"He struggled" panted Redfern.

"We dropped on him in the passage as he was going to his study. He fought like a wildcat, but we got him".

"Hurray!" shouted the juniors.

"Quiet! We don't want any beastly prefect coming down on us!" exclaimed Lawrence.

Silence was at once restored

"Keep that boulder safe till we've got the other" said Redfern.

"Right-ho said King. "We'll freeze to him. I've got a blind-cord here, and we'll tie him to to the form just to make assurance doubly sure."

Hake began to struggle violently. But he was pinned down

by a dozen Third Formers, and he was quite helpless. The blind-cord speedily secured him to the form and the towel was tightened over his mouth, and he could only faintly gasp and gurgle.

"Right! Lock the door when I go out, in case there should be a row and an attempt at a rescue. I'll be as quick as I can."

Redfern, Lawrence and Hurree Singh hastend away and King locked the door and remained waiting inside for Redfern's knock when he should return.

"We shall have a bigger handful with Robinson" said Redfern. "But the jobs got to be done. Mind you back me up".

He opened Robinson's door. The captain of the Fourth looked up in surprise as he saw whom his visitors were.

"Get out of this, you kids!" he snapped, reaching for a dictionary to throw. But the kids, instead of getting out, got in, and Redfern shut the door. Robinson looked amazed. He hurled the dictionary, and Redfern dodged it, and it crashed into the only picture in the study, smashing the glass to fragments.

"You young hound!" howled Robinson, jumping up, "I'll teach you to come here smashing my pictures!"

"Well that's cool when you did it yourself," ejaculated Redfern. "But to come to business Robby we want you."

"All right, I'm coming!".

And Robinson came, with a charge that he expected to bowl over the Third Form youngsters and send them flying helter-skelter from the study. But Robinson was mistaken. Instead of being overbourne by his rush, the youngsters closed up to meet it and Redfern, taking no notice

of a swinging thump that made his head sing, tackled Robinson round the waist and hung on to him. In a flash Lawrence was on his shoulders, and Hurree Singh got a good Rugger grip on his legs and had him down. Down went Robinson with the three on top of him.

"Here, hang it, fight fair!" he gasped. "Three to one ain't fair play!"

"No", grinned Redfern; "it's almost as bad as two big chaps collaring a little one in a bike-shed and lathering him."

He had Robinson there and the Fourth Former had no more to say about fair play. But he struggled desperately.

"I'm afraid we shall have to hurt you if you don't keep still" said Redfern, "Take hold of his ears, Hurree, and knock his head against the floor."

Hurree grinned and obeyed, while Redfern and Lawrence pinned the Fourth Former down.

"Hold on!" gasped Robinson. "I give in!".

"Very well, you're a prisoner of war."

"I'll skik-skik-skik ----"

"No don't do anything dreadful like that please."

"I'll skik-skin you for this!".

"I hope we shall be there when you do it, my son. At present we're going to do the skinning. Mind, if you wriggle again, bang goes you napper on the cold, cold floor."

"You little bib-bib-beasts, I'll skik-skin----"

"It's a mercy to stop him when he gets like that" said Redfern, jamming his handkerchief into Robinson's mouth. "I don't want you to eat that Robby, you know. It's a gag, so you needn't gnaw at it in that ghastly way. Bring him

along! Here fasten his arms first with this belt; he'll be safer. Now, Inky, go and do a scout along the passages."

Hurree scouted and came back to report that the coast was clear. They marched Robinson out of the study. With the gag in his mouth and his hands fastened behind him by the belt, Robinson was pretty helpless: but in the passage he struck fast and refused to budge.

They could have dragged him along by main force, but that would have made a disturbance and Redfern was in momentary dread of a rescue-party of the Fourth coming on the scene. But Redfern was seldom without a resource. He drew a pin from his jacket and pricked Robinson slightly. The chief of the Fourth gave a jump.

"Now, Robby, if you don't buck up you'll get that again and deeper" said Redfern."

Redfern brought the pin into play again.

The pin did it, and the chief of the Fourth Form marched as quietly as a lamb to the door of the Third Form room. Just as he reached it a Fourth Former came in sight and stared in amazement at the strange sight.

Redfern thumped on the door.

"Open, open! Buck up!"

Robinson began to struggle and gurgle to attract the attention of his Form-fellow. The latter rushed to the rescue. But the three bundled their prisoner into the room, and turned with clenched

fists, and the rescuer thought better of it. He hesitated, and then dashed away to call his Form to the rescue, and Redfern entered the room and door was closed and locked.

"The alarm's given" said King anxiously.

"Never mind, they can't get at us in here."

"They'll make a row and bring the prefects down on us perhaps."

"No; I don't think they'd do that. Anyway we've got to risk it. We've got the prisoners now. You can take their gags away, Hurree Singh. Nice-looking pair of beauties, arn't they? So amiable and sweet-tempered! Prisoners -----"

"I'll skik-skik-skik----" stuttered Robinson.

"Oh, stop your skik-skik-skikking you make me tired! Do you know what we've brought you here for? You're going to be tried by jury!"

"I'll skik-skik-skin-----"

"Dry up! Prisoner at the bar shuts up when the judge is talking! Gentlemen of the Third Form--- I mean jury--- the court is now open, and the trial of these two desperate offenders will proceed", said Redfern with great dignity.

(to be continued)

* * * *

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