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VOL. 49

No. 580

APRIL 1995

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# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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W.H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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HERBERT LECKENBY

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## The Editor's Chat



### AN IMPORTANT CENTENARY

I am grateful to Bill Bradford from Ealing for pointing out that January of this year marked the Centenary of the launching of the Boys' Friend weekly. This paper, of course was eventually to feature Charles Hamilton's famous Rookwood School, as well as a host of other fine stories and characters. I am delighted that for this month's C.D. Bill has written about the history and development of this long-running and popular paper.

### ST. GEORGE, THE DRAGON AND THE RAINBOW

On April 23rd we shall be celebrating St. George's Day. Appropriately, Roy Whiskin from the Cambridge Club has sent a copy of a 1936 Holborn Empire programme of WHERE THE RAINBOW ENDS. This carries an illustration of England's patron saint in deadly combat with the Dragon. As well as giving details about the cast (which includes fairies, elves, mice, frogs, waterlilies, moths, dragonflies, bats, hyenas, rainbow-children and various more down to earth humans!) this almost 60-year-old programme describes the aims of the Rainbow League, and invites its members to a tea-party at

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**T**HE Rainbow League is a non-political, non-sectarian League of Hope, to encourage Youth to be proud of their Nation's Ideals, to foster friendship and understanding, first among all young people of the British Empire, secondly among the Youth of the World.

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The subscriptions are purposely very small : 2/6 annually for members and 6d. for associates, the proceeds go to help found Rainbow Beds in British Hospitals, or to help any movement for the good of Children, for their Vocational Training, and for their better education in their duties as future Citizens of our Empire.

**So help St. George and join the Rainbow League.**

Yours faithfully,

*Italia Conti*

(Founder and Honorary Organiser)



London's Waldorf Hotel 'to meet St. George and the members of WHERE THE RAINBOW ENDS company'. (perhaps the E.C. should take heed of the Rainbow League's ability to combine national pride and 'true internationalism'.)

Roy Whiskin comments: "I have been meaning to write to you about Brian Doyle's article on WHERE THE RAINBOW ENDS in C.D. 564 and 565. This was always one of my favourite books as a child... In his article Brian mentions the Italia Conti productions of the play at the Holborn Empire and I recently acquired a 1936 programme which

shows Richard Todd (whom Brian mentions) playing 'The Slacker' and Italia Conti herself as 'Mrs. Carey'."

A Happy St. George's Day to You all.  
MARY CADOGAN

\*\*\*\*\*

### ANSWERS TO LAST MONTH'S *TURN ABOUT QUIZ* SET BY GEOFF LARDNER

- |           |          |           |
|-----------|----------|-----------|
| 1. Dupont | 2. Snoop | 3. Carne  |
| 4. Gore   | 5. Fish  | 6. Wynn   |
| 7. Todd   | 8. Clive | 9. Trevor |
| 10. Raby  |          |           |

\*\*\*\*\*

### MABEL AND JOYCE AND ANNE AND FRIENDS; Part One

by Donald V. Campbell

Recently I had the pleasure of seeing some original art work for postcards very much after Mabel Lucie Attwell. These were in delightful colour. Possibly by Vera Hibbert. With them was an original Florence Hardy (lady in crinoline in garden) and a similar and much superior pen and ink original by Anne Rochester.

This prompted me to go back to that series of Odhams' books with "Favourite, Golden and Gift" in their titles. Why? For a reviving look at female illustrators from the past. Not, you must know, in any properly historical sense, just a little meander into a world of pictures and stories long gone.



For me the first in line has to be Joyce Mercer. She seemed to work in two basic styles, which may have had to do with publisher's needs or with her own development - who knows? The most striking of the two is her "whirligig" art nouveau-ish pen and ink work. This she produced for fey folk stories like Walter De La Mare's "The Dutch Cheese" (FAVOURITE WONDER BOOK) and for poems as in "The Fairies' Passage" (THE CHILDREN'S' GOLDEN TREASURE BOOK FOR 1938). The latter also demonstrates her links to art nouveau with her own florid "gothic" lettering so loved of the style. Miss Mercer also produced end papers of endless fascination.

Her alternative style is featured in a nursery rhyme picture. This is much more foursquare and, in blocks of colour, with strong contrasts. There is also a rather more stylised signature set in a box. The "boxed signature" was a much loved device at the time.

For fairy stories a premier exponent was undoubtedly Anne Anderson. Her colour work for the other Andersen (Hans Christian) has a delicacy of both line and colour that is irreproachable. Her line work has a nice freedom to it with her characteristic "pushed in" faces. Her pen and ink is as nothing



*Out stepped White Cat, her long hair hanging down.*

nose in "The Pea-green Nose") Onslow produces pictures of both sentiment and charm. The rather pale green-yellows and subdued browns and oranges of the main picture are, I promise you, a joy. Her delicate tracery and balance are carried nicely on into the line drawings.



*The beautiful young girl discovered the prince lying on the sand.*



**THE LITTLE MATCH-GIRL.**

*The poor little girl was sitting under the most beautiful Christmas-tree she had ever seen.*

*Line drawing and water colour by Anne Anderson*



# THE PEA-GREEN NOSE

By The Right Hon. E. H. Knatchbull-Hugessen

*Illustrated by Lola Onslow*

By the way. We are pleased to find that her highness does manage to vanish the pea-green nose. (THE CHILDREN'S' GOLDEN TREASURE BOOK FOR 1938). The story is by that most unlikely of authors:

**The Rt Hon E.H. Knatchbull-Hugessen.** Honest! I kid you not, as they say!

*(To be Concluded)*

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## MONOLOGUE

by Charles Hamilton

(We have much pleasure in including in the C.D. this hitherto unpublished feature by the celebrated creator of Greyfriars. We are indebted for it to Una Hamilton Wright who makes the following introductory comments:

"Enclosed is a monologue which uncle wrote for himself to perform in our amateur theatricals at his home. He acted it very well and entertained his audience. He wrote it in response to a request from me - aged eleven - for items for a 'Family Magazine' which I wanted to bring out. I had some music and jokes from father, a song from mother, and from uncle this monologue and several poems, including the 'Ballad of Sir Fatted de Fitz Booters and his Fair Lady' which was specially written for the occasion.")

### SMITH MINOR!

*(SCENE: Smith minor's study in the Fourth-form passage at St. Freda's School. Door Open: Smith minor discovered speaking to a junior unseen in the passage.)*

Seen anything of that new tick? What study are they putting him in? Just like old Pie-face to stick him in my study - that I've had to myself over since Richards left. I don't want him here! Like his cheek to butt in at half-term, anyhow I don't know where these new ticks get their cheek from. Oh, you've heard - what? - my study! - Look here are you rotting? Well, of all the putrid, poisonous luck!

*(Turns from door, and faces audience)*

I jolly well won't have him here, I know that! Pretty sickening when a man can't have his study to himself. Just like old Pie-face! I'm not standing it - only the worst of it is, you can't argue with a form-master! With a dozen studies along the passage, they had to choose this one - it's rotten! A moon-faced new kid that can't say boo to a goose - landed on a two-year man! I'll jolly well make him glad to change out - Holy smoke! I've got it!

*(Puts his finger to the side of his nose, and winks)*



I'll jolly well pretend to be mad, and frighten the silly young ass out of his seven senses! I fancy he will be glad enough to ask old Pie-face to put him in another study. Hallo! Who the thump's that!

*(Turns to the doorway)*

Oh! You! What's your name? Parkinson! And Mister Pybus says you're to be in his study! He does, does he? Well, there will be three of us! This is Johnson minimus -

*(Takes a chair and pulls it forward)*

I'll perform the introductions --- Johnson minimus, Parkinson is a new kid --- Parkinson, Johnson minimus! Now you know one another, and I hope you'll be friends! What are you staring at, young Parkinson? Why don't you come into the study? Can't you speak a word to Johnson now I've introduced you? What? Who's a chair? Are you calling my study-mate a chair? Off your rocker? Look here, come in and have some of these jam tarts.

*(Takes up school-books, and holds them towards doorway)*

They're topping, I can tell you --- fat, creamy, juicy, jammy! Don't you care for tarts? Books! Who's talking about books? I'm talking about these scrumptious jam-tarts! Why don't you come in! What the merry dickens are you backing away for? Think you've butted into a lunatic asylum or what? If you don't care for tarts, what about some lemonade?

*(Takes up a bottle of ink, and pours some into a glass)*

Here you are! I don't care for lemonade myself --- I keep it for visitors. Ain't you thirsty? Ink! What do you mean by ink? Joking! Who's joking! For goodness sake, don't stand there mooning in the doorway, but come in! But mind you don't tread on my feet! They're made of glass. I have to be frightfully careful about my feet, being made of glass. It bars a fellow off from footer, and that sort of thing. What are you goggling like that for --- ain't you afraid of your eyes coming out! Look here, are you coming in or not?

*(Makes a hideous face)*

I'm jolly glad to have you with me in this study - the other men bar it, because they fancy I ain't quite right in my head. But that's just rot, of course. Look here, I'll cut you some of this spiffing cake!

*(Lays a big dictionary on the table)*

Where's that knife? I've got a carving-knife here somewhere. Where the dooce is that knife? I haven't seen it since I threw it at Thompson. Come in and help me look for that knife, will you --- a big sharp knife --- keen as a razor. Oh, here it is --- come in, young Parkinson --- I'm just getting hold of the knife --- My hat! Where are you going --- wait a tick till I get the knife, and --- Gone!

*(Doubles up with laughter)*

Well, my hat! Gone --- buzzed --- bunked --- skedaddled! Ha, ha, ha! I fancy that young shaver has gone back to Pie-face to ask to be put in another study! I've got a sort of an idea that he doesn't like this study! Ha, ha, ha.

*(Looks out at the door, and roars with laughter)*

Ha, ha, ha! Well, that's done it! My hat! what a stunt! This is where I gloat!

*(Prances round the study in great glee.)*

*Finally sits down at the table, with his back to the door, and begins to scribble.)*

I'd better get these lines done for old Pie-face --- bother him! Arma virumque cano --- blow it! Arma---rot! --- virumque --- piffle --- cano --- rats! I wish I had been Augustus Caesar! I'd have had Virgil's head off before he could have said 'knife'. Oh scissors --- there's a blot --- and old Pie-face hates blots! That means beginning again!

*(Speaks in a high-pitched voice, imitating form-master)*

"If you cannot spell, Smith minor and if you cannot write legibly, you can at least avoid slovenliness --- Pah!"

*(Begins again: then suddenly lifts his head and listens:)*

Great Caesar! If it isn't that tick Parkinson coming back! Well, if he's not scared enough yet, I'll scare him all right!

*(Speaks over his shoulder:)*

So that's you, is it! Come in --- come right in! I know you're there --- I heard you coming! Push your ugly mug right in, you fish-faced freak! I'm going to brain you --- knock your silly brains all over the study --- splash 'em right and left.

*(Picks up a big ruler and jumps up, towards the door. Then his jaw drops, the ruler falls from his hand with a crash, and he stutters:)*

Oh, jiminy! Old Pie-face --- I --- I mean Mr. Pybus --- Oh Lord: a beak! Oh, scissors! I --- I thought --- I --- I mean --- Oh, lor'l

*(Dodges down behind the table: curtain.)*

(Copyright, Una Hamilton Wright)

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## THE TRIBULATIONS OF AN EDITOR. Part 3

by Bill Lofts

The Second World War killed many papers off never to return, so that Jack Lewis, like most other writers found his income greatly reduced, but not as bad as some, as he was able to continue penning children's stories in the new style Knockout, Jingles, Tip Top and Radio Fun, as well as some school stories. He also returned to writing for the Sexton Blake Library after five years absence. These stories, very topical and far removed from his Master Mummer days, were very well written and about blackouts, merchant seamen, and war-time events. Derek Adley and I enjoyed these, both of us having sea connection experience, Derek in the Fleet Air Arm, and myself for a time serving on a gunboat patrolling a Burmese River.

His last Sexton Blake story was No. 244 in 1951 (curiously when I just entered the hobby) which included a sort of epitaph for Leon Kestrel - the Master Mummer. On page 25 there is a paragraph which states...

This morning, Blake spent some time over his toilet. He had never been theatrical over his methods, but disguise in its subtle form was an art he had learned long since to respect. The imimitable Leon Kestrel had taught him that. Kestrel the Master Mummer. The greatest Protean expert of them all.

This story also has a great element of mystery, as a number of readers have questioned whether 'Lewis Jackson' really wrote it, as it does not read like his style. Official records show that Jack Lewis certainly was paid £75 for it. It was Chris Lowder who eventually discovered that it was actually rewritten from the story 404 (Second Series) 'The Victims of Devil's Alley' by Paul Urquant (Ladbroke Black) who had died in 1940. As a number of stories once before had been rewritten from long dead authors' work in the late 2nd series, it is probable that Jack Lewis had full permission to do this.

To obtain biographical details of Blake writers is far from easy, as they are often demised an one has to track down relatives. Even then it can take months, as well as being costly. Many times I have found that they know hardly anything about a writer's work, and I already know far more than they do!

Jack Lewis, for instance, the main subject of this series has a common name. One is not sure if he was actually christened John, and there are simply thousands of people who have had that name. Information to add to that given in *Men Behind Boys Fiction* (Lofts/Adley Howard Baker 1970) shows that he was probably born in North London circa 1890. Leaving school he became a boy clerk, with the intention of eventually going into the Post Office. But he changed his mind, and in 1911 joined the staff of Harmsworth Brothers (later Amalgamated Press Ltd.). There his bosses were the great Hamilton Edwards and W.H. Back, controlling editor of *Union Jack*, and the man who can claim to have made Sexton Blake a household name. Lewis's first stories were for a woman's paper, but later on he wrote short stories and features for *Answers*. The Spring of 1914 saw him decide to become a full time free-lance fiction writer, and he wrote for nearly all the boys papers. It should be mentioned that he had the greatest admiration for Charles Hamilton, often referring to him as *The Master of his Craft*.

His entry into the Sexton Blake field was prompted by W.H. Back, when the saga was edited by Lewis Carlton (the man who played Tinker in an early film). This first story appeared in No. 620, 'The Case of the Cataleptic'. When he started the *Leon Kestrel* Series, it was the art-editor of *Union Jack*, Phil Swinnerton (who drew *Weary Willie* and *Tired Tim*, *St. Jim's* characters, the *Pip & Squeak* for *Daily Mirror*, and later was editor of *Chicks Own*) who tagged on *The Master Mummer* piece, having a deep interest in the theatre and acting. By this time *The Great War* was with us, and Jack Lewis was waiting to be called up for *The Royal Navy*.

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## ESB IN THE MAGNET

by Mark Caldicott

### Part Two - 1914/1915 - Quality and Variety

In 1913 we saw ESB's steady improvement in producing substitute stories for the *Magnet*. He concluded his first year with credible tales in which departed from his normal all-action style. As 1914 gets under way, however, he shows us that he has not abandoned his usual style altogether. Indeed "The Factory Rebels" (*Magnet* 313, 13/1/14, GBC 68) is ESB in full flight. The storyline is equally as ridiculous as "The Greyfriars Pantomime". This proprietor of the nearby jam factory, Mr. Hardinge, for whom the boys of Greyfriars have great regard, is besieged in his own factory by striking workers. His assistant, Mr. Jackson, appeals to Dr. Locke for assistance from the *Remove Cadets* to fight off the strikers and release Mr. Hardinge. This is done, and the cadets continue to camp out near the factory to protect it from harm, eventually occupying the factory and fighting off strikers trying to get in. This time, somehow, the magic works, the *Remove's* involvement is made to appear natural, and therefore we are able to enjoy the adventures of

Wharton and the Remove. The story in a minor way has some of the elements of the barring-out stories, which are always a good read.

The good reading continues with "Blundell's Prize" (Magnet 317, 7/2/14, GBC 69), an original, enjoyable and typical ESB story. Blundell discovers Snoop bullying a small boy and administers retribution. In revenge Snoop tricks Blundell into believing that he has won £100 whereas in fact he has won only £1. In anticipation of the cheque arriving Blundell misappropriates club funds to purchase a motor cycle, and when the true amount of the prize is discovered, Blundell faces disgrace. Blundell's escape from his predicament is a classic ESB plot resolution.

The stories ESB is now providing for Magnet readers are of a high quality: in the absence of Hamilton copy, ESB is still providing value for money. "April Fools All" (Magnet 321, 4/4/14, GBC 70) is a splendid romp, full of twists and turns as each April Fool joke becomes trumped by the next. Bunter, for once, is the only japer who escapes victorious.

One aspect of ESB's Magnet contributions is the sheer variety of storylines. In "Changed By Adversity" (Magnet 347, 3/10/14, GBC 74) Peter Todd takes it upon himself to set Mauleverer a test. He wants to prove that the slacker of the remove has the strength of character to reform his ways if put to the test. Todd cleverly leads Mauleverer into thinking he is a pauper, and that he must relinquish his lazy ways. Mauleverer indeed shows his strength of character, and does buckle down to a life of hard work. Then through the mischief of Bunter he is brought to the point of expulsion. All, however, is resolved through the intervention of Peter Todd, and Mauleverer is able to resume his ways having demonstrated to the school that he can come up to scratch if the need arises.

One indicator that the stories Brooks was now producing were considered by him to be of a better quality is that when, two years later, he introduced us to St. Frank's, he revisited some of these later Magnet stories. He did not reproduce the plot lines in their entirety, but he certainly borrowed substantially from them. "The Mystic Circle" (Magnet 377, 1/5/15, GBC 80) deals with the double treacher of Loder, the wayward prefect of the sixth whose past scoundrelly actions catch up with him in the form of Lucas Judd, from whom he had won money at cards whilst Judd's capacity for play was impaired by drink. The first treachery is Loder's agreement to open the doors of Greyfriars so that Judd can rob the Headmaster's study. This treachery is compounded when Loder double-crosses Judd by locking him in a cupboard and claiming to have caught him in the act of burglary. In the fracas which ensues Bunter mistakenly allows Judd to escape. Loder is attacked by Judd, but is rescued by Harry Wharton & Co. Readers of "The Messages of Mystery" (NLL 1st 120, 22/9/17), the fifth St. Franks' story, will recognise similarities. There are even closer similarities between "The Mystery of Bridge House" (NLL 1st 122, 6/10/17), the sixth St. Franks' story and "The Mystery of the Gables" (Magnet 388, 17/7/15, GBC 81).

In "The Mystery of the Gables" the Famous Five settle an argument over distances by setting out on a bicycle ride. The ride ends in disaster when, after an argument with the joy-riding Ponsonby and company, Nugent ends up unconscious from a head wound. Seeking assistance and water from the nearby house, The Gables, they are forcibly ejected by the ungentlemanly Mr. Roff and his strong-arm assistant Marris. This behaviour leads Harry Wharton to suspect that Roff may be a German spy. Bunter, tricked by Coker into hunting for "lost" fivers overhears a conversation between Roff and Marris which confirms they are up to no good. The attempt by Bob Cherry and Squiff to discover the mystery of The Gables ends with them imprisoned in a cellar by Marris. The rescue party of Harry Wharton and Johnny Bull are themselves on the point of capture when Squiff and Bob Cherry, escaped from the cellar, intervene. The real mystery, when revealed, is that Roff has discovered there is oil under the property. He believes the owner is unaware of this fact when selling the property at such a low value. There is a final twist to the tale which causes the Famous Five rapidly to revise their plans with some fancy footwork to restore

the equilibrium, Harry Wharton acting as a tramp in order to bring about the final resolution.

"The Bounder's Relapse" Magnet (411, 25/12/15, GBC 85), begins with a successful jape by Coker upon Squiff. The Remove's attempt at a counter-strike against Coker is diverted when their nocturnal activities lead them to view the recently-reformed Vernon-Smith acting suspiciously. He is suspected of slipping into bad ways following an encounter with the reprehensible Ponsonby of Highcliffe School. All attempts by the Wharton and Co to find out the truth seem to point to the indisputable fact that the Bounder is sneaking away after lights out to meet with Ponsonby and indulge in old habits. The truth, when it is finally revealed by accident, is somewhat surprising, and confirms Harry Wharton's faith in Vernon-Smith.

The stories written in 1914-15 are well up to ESB's high standards of writing, and there is evidence that ESB himself felt they were worthy of retelling. Those followers of ESB who have not yet enjoyed these stories should seek them out.

*(To be concluded)*

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## DETECTIVE-INSPECTOR McCARTHY

by Ian Godden

The many books published by Wright & Brown which featured this famous John G. Brandon character had on the title page the legend 'A Detective-Inspector McCarthy yarn' which sums things up nicely because they were great yarns from one of the prolific masters of popular fiction.

When McCarthy appeared with ASP he was overshadowed by that splendid character but, on his own, blossomed into quite a dominating character himself. If we take the detailed descriptions that Brandon gives of Detective-Inspector Patrick Aloysius McCarthy, C.I.D. in his first appearance with ASP in WEST END, and in an early book of his own BLACK JOSS, when he was still a Sergeant, we can learn most of what we need to know about him

He was born in a dilapidated tenement in Saffron Hill, Soho, of an Irish father and an Italian mother. "He was a man in his early thirties... with raven-black hair, olive skin and dark, soft eyes, delicate aquiline features and a square jaw which utterly belied them." He can speak several European languages fluently, is well-dressed and is a master of disguises (he appears as an Italian in the early part of THE BLACK JOSS and as a negro in THE PAWNSHOP MURDER). From his father he has inherited a sense of humour and a love of fighting. He is said to be a "most damnably tenacious inspector" and, "easily the most popular young man at the Yard". He still lives in Soho where he lodges in rooms over a sweet shop kept by Signora Carminati and this is where he keeps his collection of disguises.

In his desk, at the yard, he kept a small, locked book, "which constituted what might be called a Pocket Encyclopaedia of roguery, in which was carefully set down an

exhaustive tabulation of the higher-class crooks of the day, their methods of work, aliases, hang-outs, female connections" (THE PAWNSHOP MURDER). All of which is very similar to Edgar Wallace's Assistant commissioner Thomas Xavier Meredith of THE CLUE OF THE TWISTED CANDLE, "T.X. kept in his locked desk a little red book, steel bound and triple locked which he called his Scandalaria."

In THE TRANSPORT MURDERS we learn that McCarthy was, "an exceedingly busy and much sought-after man" and because of his many talents is often borrowed by the Special Branch to work on special assignments.

McCarthy is friendly with Sir William Haynes, Assistant Commissioner of Police (C) and they often dine together and are on first name terms as can be seen in BONUS FOR MURDER.

McCarthy appeared in some 45 books and is a memorable character.

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## BOOK REVIEW

by Brian Doyle



A Collection of Just-William's  
Wartime Adventures

"William at War: a Collection of Just William's Wartime Adventures" by Richmal Crompton. Story selection and Foreword by Richmal C. Ashbee. Illustrated by Thomas Henry. Macmillan, 1995, Paperback, £3.99.

"William really had a very good war", says Richmal Crompton Ashbee (Richmal Crompton's niece) in her Foreword to her selection of some of the best of the lad's World War Two adventures (misadventures, more often than not). The stories are taken from the four books published during the war years - "William and the Evacuees" (1940), "William Does His Bit" (1941), "William Carries On" (1942) and "William and the Brains Trust" (1945). "William and A.R.P." might just scrape into this period too, since it appeared in 1939. (In post-war years, just for the record, the title of "A.R.P." was changed to "William's Bad Resolution" and "Evacuees" became "William the Film Star".)

Mrs. Ashbee has chosen ten stories, with such then-topical titles as "William and the Parachutist", "William and the Bomb", "William the Fire-fighter"

and "William and the Mock Invasion". They all make marvellous and hilarious reading, as ever, especially my own favourite "Reluctant Heroes" (from "William Carries On") in which William memorably captures 'Adolf Hitler' himself and imprisons him in the old barn, ready for brother Robert to fight him...

Mention of Robert reminds me that, in "William and the Evacuees" he is described as being 'too young' for the Forces and is working for the A.R.P. But Robert is usually remembered (by me, anyway) as being around 19 and would surely have been called up in the normal way (though Mary Cadogan does state, in her admirable "William Companion" that Robert hovers between the ages of 17 to 21 during the saga). He later joins the Army anyway (in "William Carries On").

In one of these wartime stories, William is actually responsible for catching a pair of German spies ("Crumbs!"). In another, General Moulton (the local military veteran) gathers a large group of children around him and warns them of possible enemy invasion. "No child is too young to help his country," he encourages them, in his fruity enthusiastic tones. This quotation could be said to be William's guiding star for this entire collection, and he goes on to 'help', as he usually does, in his accustomed (but so often unappreciated) way.

He finds, all too often, that his youth is frequently a decided disadvantage. "Gosh! I wish I was grown-up" said William, "they have all the fun." "And I bet you anythin' the war'll be over by the time we're grown-up," said Ginger.

"William at War" is the latest in Macmillan's occasional 'one-off' William collections, published in addition to their complete paperback set of the original William books. Other recent titles have included "The William Stories", a selection by Martin Jarvis from the stories he has told so well on BBC Radio and on BBC Tapes, and "Just William As Seen on TV", reprints of the stories dramatised in the recent BBC TV series. There have also been other William 'spin-off' volumes.

"William at War" is a delight. "You have given me my first good laugh since the Blitz started," a man says to William as he presses a half-crown into his sticky but eager hand. William did just that for many people during those often dark wartime days and nights and will doubtless continue to do so for younger generations who regard World War Two as a far-off chapter in British history.

(Editor's Note: It is particularly satisfying that Macmillan have used an original full-colour Thomas Henry cover for "William at War".)

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## **CRIME AT CLIFF HOUSE**

by Margery Woods

### **The Last Round Up, with Jemima**

A survey of crime at the school would not be complete without a tribute to the school's own super sleuth, who solved so many mysteries in ways that were as devious as the crimes. The sleuth of the school, strangely enough not hyped or even formally recognised as such, was, of course, Jemima Carstairs of the sleek Eton crop and the well polished monocle.

Of the many memorable characters at Cliff House Jemima was the most original and fascinating in that her strong and individual style was created by one author, L.A. Ransome, and maintained faithfully by another, John Wheway, during their respective reigns as Hilda Richards. Apart from the sturdy core of originals, Babs, Clara, Marjorie and Bessie, Primmy, the Bull, and others not featured so prominently, many newcomers were introduced through the years, some to become permanent inhabitants and others to fade out as new authors took over the pseudonym of Hilda Richards. But there was never any doubt about Jemima's success, that here was a very special character so strongly etched that she

would always take over the story the moment she was allowed to enter the scene. Her skills were both humorous and skilful, disguised by her flippant, languid, quintessential style of a girl of the twenties which modulated into her cool, elegant depiction of a very modern thirties miss. Along this merry way she solved many of Cliff House's mysteries, invariably to the disgruntled surprise of the crooked characters who could never fathom this inscrutable girl who seemed such an inane creature with all that burbling nonsense and idiotic monologue. Even her chums would underestimate her deductive skills.

Her advent at Christmas 1925 led to her solving the little matter of the forged deeds of Katie Smith's home and the restoring of that family's happiness. The following Easter, in **THE CLIFF HOUSE INVESTIGATORS**, she bowls out the jewel thieves who appear to have joined in the Easter vacation at Delma Castle.

Jemima is at her most irresistible in this story, especially when having to deal with her own Aunt Aspia, a most formidable lady, who makes her maid's life a misery. Aunt Aspia is quite prepared to believe the hapless woman is implicated in the theft of £15,000 worth of diamonds, unfortunately uninsured, belonging to Jemima's father, Captain Carstairs. After a procession of mysterious incidents and strange encounters, Jemima proves the maid to be innocent, recovers the diamonds and discovers that the butler did it!

Back at school, Jemima befriends another victim, who in truth is really the niece of Miss Steel, the then mistress of the fourth Form. The favourite ploy of impersonation in order to defraud a person of her rightful inheritance is exploited yet again. It was used many times in the Cliff House stories yet invariably succeeded each time, so skilful were the authors who exploited its aptness for a school setting. Runaway Vera was the child Miss Steel has sought for years, unaware of the machinations of Mrs. Farnsted and her daughter Maud, who ill treat Vera while misappropriating money from Vera's father's will. Miss Steel had quarrelled with her sister, Vera's mother, many years before, and had repented bitterly after her sister's death and searched for the orphaned child without success. But thanks to Jemima, aunt and niece were reunited while the awful Maud and her ghastly parent were allowed to escape, as the villains so often were.

Most of the Jemima stories were essentially humorous affairs, especially in the earlier ones during the second series of **THE SCHOOLFRIEND**, which, of course, were by Jemima's creator, L.A. Ransome, whose light touch and clever dialogue were irresistible. Also, Cliff House did not seem quite so crime ridden as it became in John Wheway's decade in **THE SCHOOLGIRL** of the thirties. Not that Wheway's stories were any less appealing for this. The regular invasions of the criminal fraternity greatly added to tension and enhanced the emotional appeal, besides giving Jemima opportunities of keeping her own special collection of grey cells well exercised.

Apart from her own feature stories Jemima played a major role in several of the long series. In the Shaw Dennis/Miss Charmant stories she was instrumental in getting Alphonse Biquet, brother of her close chum, little French girl Marcelle, into the school to confront Shaw Dennis, for Alphonse was the one man who could bring about Dennis's downfall. Jemima was also to the fore in one of the Celeste Margesson yacht series when yet another impostor was at work, and she successfully brought about the downfall of yet another of the tyrant headmistresses who tended to inflict themselves on Cliff House whenever the school betrayed the need for a certain tightening up of discipline. But Miss Shale didn't last long in **CLIFF HOUSE'S NEW HEADMISTRESS** once Jemima took a hand.

One of the drawbacks of being an enigmatic loner, as sometimes she appeared to be, even to her friends, was getting the blame for the results of her actions, for instance when Babs was beset by a secret enemy and Jemima had to remain so infuriatingly silent about her movements and her theories, and the occasions when Jemima actually played ghost, for the very best of reasons. And sometimes, even her very expert knowledge was questioned, as in **JEMIMA AND THE RIDDLE OF THE CRIMSON STAR**.



This was a very tiny secret society of one, not worth the title, in which the usual campaign of damage was waged and the blame thrust elsewhere, all apparently to ensure that a part in a play taken by Elsie Effingham and formerly played by Jemima herself, should be handed back to Jemima. Somehow, the innocent and urbane Jemima gets the blame until the enigmatic one has no option but to unmask the mean yet pathetic one girl society as Frances Frost and reveal the truth behind it all. A somewhat sad and paltry little truth concerning a five pound note intended for Effie and misappropriated by Frances some time earlier. This truth would have been revealed had Effie taken part in this performance at the special function where the original donor of the five pound note would be present and thus discover that Effie had never received it. But Frances's miserable efforts were no match for the matchless talents of Jemima.

This story brought us into 1940, nearly the end of the Cliff House saga, and a few months later in April, Jemima made her final bow in JEMIMA THE JAPER.

With this story her own entertaining saga fittingly came full circle after fifteen years --- with diamonds.

Yet again the chums were on the track of treasure, (Cliff House must have been sitting on the equivalent of several goldmines!), a treasure concealed there half a century previously by the grandfather of Janet Jordan's newly found cousin, Winnie, who has just arrived from Australia. Actually the treasure isn't on Cliff House land this time but on that of Whitechester School, which naturally leads to a great deal of aggro between the two schools.

Of course an adversary is also on the trail of the treasure and Janet's friendly cousin is not exactly what she seems. Jemima is her usual burbling self, though a little put out that Winnie disputes her expertise on fossils and geological matters, and begins to feel suspicion stirring in the little grey cells. But the chums are fooled by Winnie and Jemima proceeds on her own enigmatic way to solve the mystery that centres on Smugglers House, old and creepy and tending to flood at high tide, all in the best of old house tradition. Unfortunately it belongs to Whitechester and a few feathers are ruffled when Jemima gets going. But all the right --- or wrong! --- reasons are at stake, and Jemima can't worry about little things while kidnapping, impersonation, larceny and imprisonment have to be dealt with.

And deal with them she does, revealing that Winnie isn't Winnie but an impostor whom the real Winnie had encountered on the voyage from Australia and who with her unscrupulous father had decided there could be lucrative pickings to be had if they could keep the real Winnie imprisoned while they collected the treasure. Jemima had to sink a boat and a few other things, rescuing Babs and Co from their prison in the flooding house as she brought the two villains to justice, also discovering the fortune in diamonds and substituting a bag of old fossils for the villains to find.

A wonderful character, always intriguing, always entertaining. Fiction today could do with a few more like the inimitable, unique Jemima Carstairs.

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**WANTED:** ENID BLYTON, W.E. JOHNS, CROMPTON. First editions in wrappers and ALL ephemera related to these authors. ANY original artwork related to Bunter, Blyton, Biggles, Eagle or other British comics and boys papers. ALL Boys Friend Libraries by W.E. Johns and Rochester. Many "Thriller" issues and first editions in wrappers by Charteris required. NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, WD1 4JL. Tel. 0923 232383.

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**GEMS OF HAMILTONIA from John Geal No. 13 Sir Hilton Popper  
MAGNET No. 1028**

"Sir Hilton Popper was not popular at Greyfriars. His tall and angular figure was seldom seen unless he had some complaint to make. Fellows would cross footpaths on his land, and they would row to his island in the river - or Sir Hilton fancied that they did, which came to the same thing. Dr. Locke sighed whenever the testy old baronet was announced. Dr. Locke would rather have been Headmaster of Greyfriars than Emperor of the East and West; but he realised that the headmastership had its drawbacks, with a testy, touchy, unpleasant member of the governing body living at Popper court, only a couple of miles away.

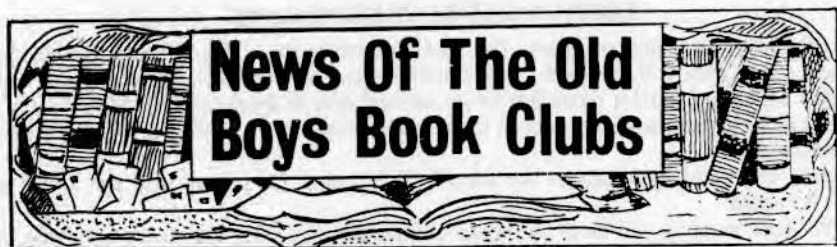
Sir Hilton was a managing gentleman. He managed his estate with an iron hand - and heavy mortgages. He dealt with poachers so severely that any poacher in the county would have walked ten miles to do him a bad turn. He governed his servants like a little Tsar, with the result that he was constantly changing most of them, and those who remained for a lengthy time remained to cheat him. He took his duties as a governor of Greyfriars very seriously, as he took everything in connection with himself. He attended every meeting of the board, and always made his voice heard. He kept an eye on Greyfriars fellows when he met them on their walks abroad.

The baronet was in a bad temper that afternoon. Possibly his mortgages were weighing on his lofty mind, and the difficulty he found in meeting certain interest due to a gentleman in Lantham who held mortgages on his estate. Having nothing particular to do, Sir Hilton had gone out with a gun under his arm to kill something. Killing some inoffensive bird or beast was his great resource on dull days. But on this particular afternoon bird and beast were wary. With what amounted to reckless imprudence, they disliked the idea of being killed even to relieve the tedium of so important a person as Sir Hilton Popper. Altogether, the universe was not being run to the entire satisfaction of Sir Hilton, so he was naturally cross."

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**ORIGINAL MAGNETS:** Nos. 204 to 231, Nos. 437 to 438, 441, 443 to 445, 456 to 460, 462 to 463, 593, 600, 612, 615, 639, 643. Will negotiate at a reasonable price. All are Hamilton written magnets, not re-printed by Howard Baker. MR. C.E. COLE, 271 FIRS LANE, PALMERS GREEN, LONDON, N13 5QH. Tel. 0181 8077375

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### CAMBRIDGE CLUB

For our March meeting we gathered at the Linton village home of Roy Whiskin. Roy presented a talk entitled *Three Girls' Papers*. We listened to a well-researched history firstly concerning the 'Girls' Own Paper' from its 1880 launch to its withdrawal (as 'Heiress') in 1956. Designed to mirror the success of the 'Boys Own Paper', the original magazine was unsure of the age of its readers, so it split into a woman's magazine and a girls' paper. GOP's heyday was in the Thirties and Forties. During World War II it was intensely patriotic and provided a launchpad for W.E. Johns stories the 18-year-old WAAF "Worrals". Roy also discussed the 'Girls Crystal' and the 'Schoolfriend', and he observed that because or hobby is so male orientated the girls' papers are less well documented than their boys counterparts.

Michael Selwood then gave us fascinating insights into aspects of railway catering. Dining car coaches first began in 1879 on the Leeds to London service. Breakfast/morning coffee/luncheon/afternoon tea and dinner was served daily. Although many of the restaurant services have now been withdrawn due to short journey times, catering on the move is still a feature on our railways. Members' memories were greatly stirred by Michael's reminiscences and there was a considerable feedback for this new nostalgic subject

ADRIAN PERKINS

### NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

A warm welcome was given to the nineteen present including our special guest Mike Billington. This was Mike's second visit to us, representing "The Friends of Nutwood". He showed us, through the various Rupert annuals, how the style had changed over the years. Mary Tourtel's artwork was rather "wooden": when Alfred Bestall came on the scene, he tried gradually to put more characteristics into the animals. Now that John Harrold is the artist, the storyline has the occasional new character, and there is also more "humour" in the artwork. Mike's excellent talk was well illustrated with many examples of Rupert through the years.

Darrell then spoke on "Greyfriars, Linbury Court and Chalet School". His introduction to Linbury Court and Greyfriars was during his school days: it was 1994 when he read his first Chalet School book which unfortunately had been the *last* of the saga - not a good way to be introduced to any series! However, having now read the first four he was able to make comparisons of the style, environs, discipline, number of scholars, type of adventure, humour, staff etc. that were depicted in each school. (In July we shall have expert speakers with us from "Friends of the Chalet School").

Our 8th April meeting will have "Collectors' Pie" by Donald Campbell and "Radio Comedy" by Paul Galvin. May 13th will see "Beatrix Potter" by Eleanor Caldicott and "Norman Conquest" by Mark Caldicott.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

## LONDON OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

At the March meeting at Eltham, Bill Bradford spoke about American Pulp Magazines and their connection with aviation. Phil Griffiths presented his 40 question Biggles quiz and Peter Mahony played a recording of an unusual quiz from the radio. This was in the form of a monologue, the object was to identify the voices of the comedians as used by the impressionist.

Jenny Schofield spoke about the life of W.E. Johns, his career, and the books and articles he wrote.

The April meeting will be at the home of Suzanne and Chris Harper in Loughton, and the May meeting on Sunday, 14th May will be at Bill Bradford's home in Ealing.

SUZANNE HARPER

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### HAMILTON'S 'COLONIALS'

by Peter Mahony

#### Part 3

"Dutchie" Van Ryn came to Rookwood in September 1916. Of mixed Boer and English origins, he was altogether different from Clive. Hamilton, once into the South African genre, obviously sought to portray both kinds of 'white' colonials. Van Ryn was more 'pushy' than the self-effacing Clive and he had an unusual talent to exploit. Like William George Bunter, he was an adept ventriloquist. Unlike Bunter, he did not flaunt his gift and so was able to generate some unsuspected japes.

Mr. Bootles sent Townsend and Topham to meet Van Ryn at the station - an unhappy choice of welcomers. Assuming from his name and his dark complexion that he was a 'bit of a nigger', the ineffable pair wondered aloud whether he spoke 'broken English'. Van Ryn, justifiably annoyed, duly obliged with 'pidgin Dutch'. When they proposed truancing and telling lies to cover their tracks, the 'Boer' refused and manhandled the precious pair back to Rookwood.

At Rookwood, Towny and Topy told their tale of woe to their form-mates. The bullying Higgs decided to put "the German" (these were World War I times) in his place. He accused Van Ryn of being a 'rebel' and made insulting remarks about his father (a Transvaaler, who had fought with the Boers). Van Ryn slapped Higgs' face - hard. In the ensuing scrap, Higgs was counted out - another bully vanquished by a colonial.

Later, when Townsend & Co. set on Van Ryn, five to one, Higgs surprised everyone by going to his conqueror's assistance. The cads were routed; Higgs and Van Ryn became study-mates.

Then the ventriloquism began. Beaumont, an unpopular prefect, was locked out of his study - apparently by Knowles, the Modern House captain who 'slanged' Beaumont through the door. When the study was opened at last, it proved to be empty. Then a "Rag and Bone Man" interrupted lessons by calling his wares through the form-room window. Mr. Bootles had an awful time searching for the disembodied voice. Later, Beaumont was worried by a 'savag dog' shut in his window seat. Incensed, he chased Van Ryn and

Jimmy Silver into the Modern House, where they collided with Mr. Manders. The cane was due to figure in the next scene, but Polly, Mr. Manders' pet parrot, suddenly developed a rich vein of badinage which confused and embarrassed his owner. The juniors were rapidly dismissed - unpunished.

Finally, Townsend and Topham apparently began a slanging match in the Common-room. After they and Adolphus Smythe had come to blows, Jimmy Silver rumbled what was happening. The ventriloquial Van Ryn was exposed and the series of incidents ceased. They were great fun while they lasted.

Charles Pons, Rookwood's French-Canadian, made his debut in Boys' Friend 811 (December 1916). He was duped by Pankley & Co., the Bagshot Bounders. They took him to Bagshot, 'conning' him that it was Rookwood. He suffered a great deal of embarrassment - at both schools - but Van Ryn befriended him and helped him to get his own back.

Pankley, convinced that Pons was an A1 idiot, sent him a challenge to a duel! The 'offended' party, Putter, chose rifles as the weapon. Pankley loaded blanks, of course, but it was arranged that Putter should fall 'dead' to put the wind up Pons. The Bagshot Bounders' consternation when Pons also fell, covered in blood (red ink), was traumatic. Van Ryn carried the 'wounded' Pons away in a trap, leaving Pankley & Co. to follow on to the doctor's. They endured a miserable hour until they discovered the 'victim', unscathed, at Rookwood.

Later Pons wangled his way into the Soccer XI, after displaying an excruciating ignorance of the game. (Shades of Squiff!) He played up well against Bagshot, of course, having made the dubious Rookwooders squirm with anxiety about his inclusion in the side.

Two of the Colonial Co. were now established at Rookwood. The third - and most important - arrived in Boys' Friend 819 (February 1917). Kit Conroy, a cheery Queenslander, was 'taken up' by the Giddy Goats on account of his millionaire father. Smythe & Co. had their eyes on the 'pickings'. Mornington (in his pre-reform days) resented the newcomer. He uttered some arrogant insults; got some painful home-truths in return; a scrap ensued. Mornington, under pressure, resorted to fouling; Conroy gave him a real hammering. Smythe & Co. rejoiced in their new friend's success: it wasn't long before they were trying to draw him into smoking and gambling. Conroy refused; then it transpired that he was not a millionaire's son at all! The Goats dropped him like a hot potato; unabashed, the Australian teamed up with Van Ryn and Pons.

This paved the way for a series of clashes between the Colonials and Mark Carthew, the bullying prefect. Conroy was called on to fag for him - and received a hiding for objecting. The Australian got his own back by whitewashing Carthew's study, furniture and all. Carthew, seething, went looking for Conroy; the Colonials threw him out. Mr. Bootles appeared on the scene; Conroy was caned.

Petty persecutions followed, with Carthew making life hard for the trio. A revenge attack in the dark went wrong; Mr. Bootles was 'sooted' in mistake for Carthew. The three were spotted; a Head's flogging resulted. Carthew seemed to be scoring all along the line, but Conroy got wind of a night-time visit to the Bird-in-Hand. The Colonials locked Carthew out; he was only admitted after signing an incriminating paper. Conroy & Co. had no more trouble that term.

From then onwards, the three dropped into supporting roles. Conroy and Van Ryn were regular members of Rookwood teams; Pons was among the reserves. Hamilton's usual loss of interest in his Colonials occurred; the tribulations of Mornington, Lovell and others took over the Rookwood saga.

In Magnet 515 (December 1917) Hamilton wrote a story about the Derwents - Tasmanian twins, brother and sister, the creations of Pentelow. Philip Derwent of Highcliffe was a good sportsman, but he was soon relegated to a walk-on part as far as Hamilton's stories were concerned. Neither he, nor his sister, occupied a lasting place in the Greyfriars/Highcliffe/Cliff House catalogue.

Another fleeting star was Dick Roylance. This New Zealander turned up in the Gem (Nos. 518, 521 and 522, January 1918). These were three rattling good yarns. Reggie Manners, a petulant young scamp, heard that Roylance was due to arrive at St. Jim's. He laid an ambush, just for the fun of snowballing a stranger. Roylance gave him tit-for-tat and Reggie viciously hacked the New Zealander's shin. While the dear boy was being soundly spanked, brother Harry turned up and assumed that Roylance was bullying. A scrap ensued; the New Zealander was much too hefty for Manners. A feud developed.

During a paper-chase, Reggie Manners was pursued by a mad bull. He fainted with fright and was unaware that Roylance, at great risk to himself, rescued him. Aubrey Racke then stirred up more trouble between Manners and Roylance. Manners, believing that Roylance had called him a 'funk', precipitated a second fight. He was again soundly beaten.

Tom Merry, angered by the slur on his friend, challenged Roylance to a glove fight. He was, in effect, acting as Manners' Champion. This affair was one of the most professionally conducted of all the St. Jim's battles. Seconds, time-keeper, a referee and a full 'house' of spectators turned up at a secluded meadow by the Ryll. The scrap was a hum-dinger - the second toughest of all Tom's fights. It was fought to a finish, without quarter. Tom won, knocking out his man (in the twelfth!) after being lucky to survive the tenth. Roylance, despite his toughness, was not quite as hard as the determined Tom. The need to vindicate his friend, Manners, probably gave Tom the edge. Nevertheless, Roylance's great effort increased his popularity; the feud looked ready to continue indefinitely.

Investigations by Wally D'Arcy & Co. led to the discovery of Roylance's part in the rescue of Reggie Manners. Once the knowledge was public, Roylance and Manners were reconciled.

And that was it! Roylance faded away into obscurity. He never played for the school; he was barely considered for House teams. His fame rested entirely on his fistic prowess. From time to time his name would crop up in a form-room scene or a House row. Those apart - nothing. Having created a character of interest and impact, Hamilton discarded him. Even his flourishing friendship with Gussy petered out. A pity, for there were probably a few more stories in Roylance.

The last of Hamilton's Colonials also appeared in the Gem (Nos. 677-680, January/February 1921). This was Kit Wildrake, the "Boy from the Wild West". Strictly speaking, Wildrake was a Canadian, but he had all the skills and talents of an American Cowboy.

Hamilton had a special regard for Canada. Earlier, during World War I, he had provided the Cedar Creek series for the Boys' Friend. These tales of "Frank Richards' Schooldays" were set in British Columbia. Subsequently, in 1923, Jimmy Silver & Co. spent a long holiday in Alberta and came within a whisker of staying there permanently. The Wildrake stories reversed the setting; though Tom Merry & Co. did take a Canadian holiday in 1927.

Unlike all the other Colonials, except Hurree Singh, Hamilton gave Wildrake a good run for his money. He starred in at least 18 St. Jim's stories; only a handful of stalwarts (Merry, D'Arcy, Levison, Talbot, Cardew) received appreciably greater exposure. Wildrake, capable, keen and deep-thinking, solved a number of problems which bewildered his school-fellows. He fought with Grundy, lasso-ed a runaway bull; exhausted and embarrassed Cardew; frightened the life out of Knox, the bullying prefect; saved Talbot and Darrell disgrace; denounced a villain at Laurel Villa; traced and rescued a kidnapped Frenchman; dealt with an escaped lion; and was the main reason for the separate thwartings of Rogue Rackstraw and Gilbert Blore.

All these deeds occurred in 1921-22, when Hamilton worked his new character hard. The rogue Rackstraw series - one of Hamilton's best kidnapping plots (far superior to the later Krantz series at Greyfriars) - was dramatic and compelling. Wildrake's role could possibly have been played by another (Kerr for example) but his Canadian origins gave Hamilton the chance to exploit his talents for tracking and observation.

After the Rackstraw episode, Wildrake went into cold storage for five years. Then, in 1927, the St. Jim's boys holidayed at the Boot Leg Ranch. It was a good series, but it rather went over ground that had been covered by Jimmy Silver & Co. in 1923. Wildrake, on his home ground, was little different from the St. Jim's scholar. Most of the episodes were predictable and - dare one say it? - 'old hat'. Tom Merry & Co. had gone through similar experiences in the America series of 1909.

So there we have them. 17 Colonials - 14 Hamilton's; 3 'substitute' creations. All of them contributed significantly to the spread of the stories. Only 2 - Hurree Singh and Gordon Gay - could be classified as 'stars'. Several others might have become leading lights - Wildrake nearly made it; Koumi

Rao and 'Squiff' could have been developed. They were all different; Hamilton's genius for highlighting various character traits emerges clearly in this analysis. A fascinating group of "Sons of the Empire".

To finish on a sporting note, how's this for a 'Test' team?

### The Colonials

- |                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Gordon Gay     | - Captain - Bowler |
| 2. Kit Conroy     |                    |
| 3. Harry Noble    | - Wicket Keeper    |
| 4. 'Squiff' Field | - Bowler           |
| 5. Tom Brown      | - Bowler           |
| 6. Jack Wootton   |                    |
| 7. Sidney Clive   |                    |
| 8. Harry Wootton  |                    |
| 9. Hurree Singh   | - Bowler           |
| 10. Dick Van Ryn  | - Bowler           |
| 11. Koumi Rao     | - Bowler           |

A formidable bunch. Why don't readers choose an England XI from Wharton, Merry, Silver & Co. to challenge them? Letters, please, with reasons for your selections, to the Editor.

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### THE GREEN 'UN'

by Bill Bradford

This is the centenary year of the BOYS FRIEND WEEKLY, which first appeared on Wednesday, 29th January, 1895, a Harmsworth publication, subsequently under the Amalgamated Press banner.

Probably the first long running story paper of a large format, it continued until 31st December 1927, a total of 1717 issues. Green in colour, measuring 15" x 11", it was initially priced at ½ penny and averaged 5 serials, 1 short story plus articles. A few years later it was increased to 16 pages and 1 penny. It claimed 'to amuse, instruct and advise boys and, at one stage ran a competition with a prize of £1 per month for three months, quite a large sum as £1 was probably more than a year's pocket money to most lads!

LATEST STORY OF THE FAMOUS SEA-GOING SCHOOLBOYS.



## THE SCHOOLBOY ADVENTURERS

An Amazing New Adventure Story,  
introducing Dick Dorrington & Co.,  
of the School-ship Bombay Castle.

By **DUNCAN STORM.**



Early authors included R.A.H. Goodyear, Henry St. John (Cooper), Wm. Murray Graydon, Wm. Benjamin Home-Gall, and the Editor in Chief, Hamilton Edwards, who personally wrote several serials, mainly with a theme of Britain by Germany, Russia or France. Apparently he was concerned by inadequate Home Defences, and later, John Tregellis (rn. Sydney Gowing) continued in a similar vein.



**CRICKETERS' WELCOME!** "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" The powerful voice of Bob Cherry, of the Greyfriars Ramblers, greeted the Rookwooders as they from the train at Courtfield. Bob Cherry and Whiston and Hurree Singh had come to meet the cricketers at the station.

During World War 1 the size was reduced to 8 pages and the price increased to 1½ pence. During this period, Charles Hamilton began the Rookwood Saga, which ran until 24th April 1927, with only a score or so not written by Hamilton himself. He also introduced us to the Cedar Creek stories, commencing 18th August 1917. Neither should we forget the Bombay Castle stories by Duncan Storm (rn. Gilbert Floyd) featuring Dick Dorrington & Co. which first appeared in 1915.

Increased to 12 pages in 1919, in 1922 it advanced to 2 pence, and about this time reached to 16 pages. Throughout its life, all the popular characters appeared, including Nelson Lee, Sexton Blake, Ferrers Lord, Jack, Sam and Pete, Robin Hood, Dick Turpin, Claud Duval and Buffalo Bill. A well illustrated paper, an early artist, in 1897, was D.M. Dodshon, notable for outstanding contributions to later Cliff House stories. Other artists, later included T.W. Holmes, Harry Lane, Valda, C.H. Chapman, Glossop, of course, G.W. Wakefield, forever to be associated with the Rookwood stories.

Copies of BOYS FRIEND WEEKLY are fairly easy still to find and only two weeks ago I obtained 2 bound volumes covering No's 59-156 (1896/1898). As with most large format papers they had once been folded in half, with the usual resultant wear and discoloration across the middle of the pages. In conclusion I can only really describe this as an interesting paper and mainly collectable because of the Rookwood stories. If the Magnet had a golden period, perhaps one might say that this weekly had a 'Silver' one.



**ALGY ON THE ICE!** Algy's right arm wound round Bob's neck, and his left clutched Frank Richards' affectionate Bob Lawrence was nearly dragged over, and he roared, "Yah! Go easy! Go easy! Hold on!" "I'm holdin' on, ain't I?" gasped Algy. "I'm slippin'!" Algyern certainly was slipping. His skates were beating a sort of tattoo on the ice. The Cedar Creek fellows crowded round and yelled with merriment.



**HOT ON THE TRAIL!** Up the trail from the south came a sudden thunder of hoofs, and a few moments later four horsemen came into view riding hard. At a glance it could be seen that they were not Canadians. Their dark faces and black eyes told of Spanish blood, mixed with Indian. "Greasers!" ejaculated Bob Lawrence.

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# FORUM

**LESLIE ROWLEY (Chingford):** Ted Baldock's piece in the March CD awakens many an echo in my own memory, and I particularly like his verse. There is no doubt that the coming of World War Two marked the end of an era for many things. But the rich store of literature that Charles Hamilton left behind him has already ensured that his well-loved stories continue to influence and amuse. I was told at school that the painting of the Forth Bridge was a perpetual task. Whenever I come to Magnet No. 1683, I start again with an earlier number. The difference is that painting the bridge is an endless task, whereas the reading about Greyfriars is a perpetual joy.

**NAVEED HAQUE (Ontario, Canada):** My over-all favourite Hamiltonian character has to be 'The Rio Kid'. For readers who have never heard of this unique western 'outlaw' character, I refer them to Eric Fayne's article: 'The Roamings of The Rio Kid', which originally appeared in the 1952 C.D. Annual. (It was reprinted under the title 'Charles Hamilton in the Wild, Wild West' in 1987 C.D. Annual.) This is an excellent summary of The Rio Kid series that appeared over some years in *The Popular* (January 1928 onwards) and later *The Modern Boy* (late thirties).

With regard to Hamilton's school tales, I have a great partiality for Rupert de Courcy (The Caterpillar) of Highcliffe school, despite his rather infrequent starring in The Magnet. I also like Arthur Augustus D'arcy ('Gussy') of St. Jim's.

I do feel that Harry Wharton was the main-stay of The Magnet, and not Bunter - even though the fame of our fat owl of the Remove cannot be disputed. Some of the best work produced by Frank Richards had Harry Wharton in the lead role, and he was undoubtedly popular with readers at large.

(Editor's Note: Next month's C.D. will include a very interesting feature on The Rio Kid by Bob Whiter.)

## **MARION WATERS (Wellingborough):**

**Girls and the DC Thomson papers in the 1950s** - I was very interested in Colin Morgan's reference to the girls' story paper 'Blue Bird' in the March issue of 'C.D.'. I had never come across this paper before, and I assume that it was not a commercial success, but it provides an answer to a question that has puzzled me for many, many years.

In the immediate post-war period there was a good selection of boys' papers to be found at the local newsagent's shop. Girls were less well catered for, and even after the new 'School Friend' and 'Girl' appeared in the early 1950s, the choice was still limited. In consequence many girls turned to the boys' papers. In most cases girls borrowed copies from their brothers or neighbours, but I do know that some girls bought their own copies.

Some girls enjoyed the 'Eagle', probably the most popular boys' paper of the period. I have been told that the character of 'Professor Peabody' was included in Dan Dare's crew of space explorers for the benefit of girl readers. Many girls enjoyed the various Thomson story papers with their rather more rugged flavour. I well remember one young lady from a sheltered background being greatly distressed by some of the hardships endured by Alf Tupper, the welder cum athlete, sleeping rough under railway arches, etc. I went to school in Lincolnshire; in the post-war period there were numerous RAF stations, and at times the noise of aircraft made lessons impossible. In consequence Matt Braddock had many girl readers.

During the 1950s, many of my friends expressed their amazement that the Dundee firm did not produce a girls' version of their boys' story papers. I am sure that a paper with the 'gritty' Thomson flavour, rather less traditional than 'School Friend' and less 'educational' than 'Girl', would have been a great success. It would now appear that Thomsons had

attempted to produce a girls' paper in the pre-war era, and its failure had deterred them from a second attempt.

Towards the end of the decade Thomson's did produce 'Bunty' which became extremely popular, but this paper seemed to be aimed very much at the younger end of the market. This new paper must have made large inroads into the sales of 'School Friend', because c1960 the Fleetway paper was remodelled very much on the lines of 'Bunty', with more picture-stories and a generally younger flavour.

**BILL LOFTS (London):** In answer to Colin Morgan, *The Blue Bird* girls paper started on the 28th October 1922 and finished on exactly 100 issues on 20th October 1924. It was one of D.C. Thomson's first attempts to break into the girls market, but I would say an unsuccessful one, as the stories were really boys' ones with girls' names. Not a patch on the Amalgamated Press publications where, although the writers were men, they knew exactly what schoolgirls wanted to read.

Actually I once did hold a small run of *Blue Bird*, and showed them to E.L. McKeag who was on the staff of A.P. girls papers. He told me that he remembered it well. At first, thinking it could be a success like *The Wizard*, *Rover*, *Adventure* etc., A.P. brought out a rival called *The Ruby* of similar style and format, which he edited. When it became known that *The Blue Bird* was far from the success it was hoped, they promptly closed *The Ruby* after only 20 issues in 1923.

I have seen odd copies of *The Blue Bird* in collectors hands since I entered the hobby, but have never seen a *Ruby* apart from the British Library.

(Editor's Note: I sense that *The Blue Bird*, like *The Ruby*, was ambivalent about the age of its potential readership, and therefore short-lived. It was neither a really lively, adventurous girls' paper nor a full-blown, romantic, women's periodical.)

**GEORGE BEAL (Surbiton):** Further to my letter in the March C.D. regarding the *Blue Danube*; I have to tell you that I was quite wrong about the origin of the words which Ernest Holman remembers. I have just come across the sheet music of the piece, which was published, with words by Charles Dunn, in 1926. Here are the complete words:

In the dreams, that old refrain,  
As I hear each passing strain,  
Brings me back just once again,  
To that heavenly night when I first met you.

REFRAIN:

Where the Blue Danube flows along,  
Where I first heard your simple song;  
Out of the blue there came that day,  
Romance that stole my heart away.  
Dreams that enraptured you and me,  
Stirr'd by that old time melody,  
Love softly grows, like a rose,  
Where the River Danube flows.

*Second Verse*

My fate was there I knew,  
By those rippling waters blue;  
And our life was born anew,  
As our hearts beat time to that sweet melody.

The song was sung by Lya Mara, who starred in the Graham-Wilcox film *The Blue Danube*. Since this was 1926, the film must have been silent, so Lya Mara must have simply recorded the song, which perhaps was played as some sort of accompaniment.

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## SCHOOL CAP

by Alan Pratt

When Charles Buchan Publications launched School Cap in August 1953, they clearly intended that it should become the new Magnet.

Each issue contained a long complete story of Rockcliffe School backed up by a short adventure serial, "chat" from the editor and a selection of curious and/or amusing facts. The author of the school stories, Basil Storey, adhered rigidly to the Hamiltonian format, gradually developing his characters and increasing the readers' awareness of the school and its surroundings. Superficially, at least, the resemblance between Rockcliffe and Greyfriars is quite remarkable. Leading lights in the yarns are a group of fourth formers known as the Four Aces of Study A, one of whom, Johnny Knox, is a particularly cheery youth who usually prefaces his remarks with "Hallo, hallo, hallo!". He and his chums are often to be found "under the old elms" discussing cricket or bantering with other fourth formers, their amusing comments often eliciting the time-honoured response of "Ha, ha, ha!". Whilst they indulge in these harmless pursuits, a "lean and bony youth" named Kirkpatrick devises profit-making schemes and different means of relieving his school fellows of their cash and possessions. He is known to his form mates as (surprise surprise) "the Shylock of the Fourth". A particularly obtuse lad known as "Bats" Belfry is wont to committing dreadful howlers in the form room, usually because his mind is actively engaged elsewhere, this causing much merriment among the other boys and evoking retorts of "Upon my word!" and "Bless my soul!" from the form master Mr. Tobias Tring.

Of course it all sounds terribly familiar and, perhaps, a bit of a non-starter. After all, how could the author have hoped to improve upon, or even adequately reproduce the works of the undisputed master. To be fair to Mr. Storey however the yarns are amusing and polished and he clearly sets out to produce a quality product whilst adhering to a prescribed formula.

Presumably it was hoped that the Rockcliffe stories would appeal not only to young readers but also to adults mourning the passing of the old school story papers and the author was clearly commissioned to strike an appropriate balance. It is interesting to note that there are various references in different issues to the fact that "Dad" seems to buy School Cap for himself as much as anyone else. At the foot of the back page of at least one issue the reader is urged "now pass this on to Dad!".

It is, of course, easy to be smart in hindsight but the real mystery to me is that the publishers (who were, I believe, newcomers to the story paper field) could have so misjudged the market. In 1953 story papers were generally in decline, their places on the news-stands having been taken, in the main, by

comics. The few remaining story paper titles were priced at threepence each and were of generally striking appearance. School Cap was priced at sixpence (100% above the going rate!) and had covers that were, to say the least, drab and uninspiring. The messages from the editor and Charles Buchan were very much in the "now listen to me, you chaps" mould and must have seemed quite bewildering to young readers familiar with the irreverence of Beano and Dandy, the staunch working class ethics of the Thomson story papers and the streetwise patois of the many reprints of American comics readily available. To make matters worse, at a time when comic art was coming to the fore, the artwork in School Cap was unusually bland and insipid.

Unsurprisingly, the publication died a death after just ten fortnightly issues: who Mr. Storey was and whether or not he went on to write elsewhere I don't know. Did the boys of Rockcliffe School ever re-appear in other publications? Again, I have no idea. Perhaps someone can fill in the gaps in a future edition of SPCD?

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Pre-War duplicate boys' papers, eg. 'Nelson Lee Library', Schoolboys Own Library', 'Boys Friend Library', 'Sexton Blake Library' (3rd series). Few 2nd series. Various others. Offers. Would prefer to exchange for similar.

**WANTED** 'Dixon Hawke Library', 'Sexton Blake Library', 1st and 2nd series.  
KEN TOWNSEND, 7 NORTH CLOSE, WILLINGTON, DERBY, DE65 6EA.  
Tel. 01283 703305

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Our subscriber and Nelson Lee contributor, Mr. E. Grant McPherson, has written to inform us of the recent passing of his beloved wife. We know that this many friends will join us in sending sincere condolences to Mr. McPherson.

Terry Wahnefeld



1. According to Peggy, Ferdie Flatface can swim like a fish. "Is that so?" tootles Terry-Thomas. "I may not be an expert in that line, but I'll bet him ten bob I can keep my head under water longer than he can." The twerp sniggers.



2. He ducks his head in the park pond, and Peggy counts the mins. and secs. on her watch. "That chap's too big for his boots," mutters Terry. "In other words, he's got a swelled head. Methinks his hat will help me to make him look small."



3. In two minutes, twenty-five and two-fifths seconds Ferdie comes up for air, flops down beside the pond and gasps like a fish out of water. "You'll have to be good to beat him, Terry," says Peggy. Our pal tells her he'll have a good try.



4. Holding aloft Ferdie's hat filled to the brim with water, Terry instructs the fair one to tell him when he's beaten Ferdie's time. "And I'm even smoking under water!" chortles Terry. "Clever, isn't it?" Ferdie doesn't think so. He's annoyed!



5. "I've known that trick since I was in short pants," goes on our chum. "Now you've learned it for ten bob. Part up, handsome." Ferdie murmurs that he has no change, and that Terry can give him ten bob for a pound. "Okay" says our pal.



6. Ferdie has a stunt up his sleeve—or should we say in his hand. He snatches Terry's ten shilling note and whips a one-pound weight from behind his back. "Here you are!" he litters. "Now I've paid my debt. That's a weight off my mind. See!"

From RADIO FUN ANNUAL 1958

**"WASHED OUT!"** —SENSATIONAL STORY OF THE  
GREAT FLOOD AT ST. JIM'S— **INSIDE.**



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