

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 49

No. 584

AUGUST 1995

THE
MAGNET

"The Spy of the Gestapo!" ... Gripping Greyfriars Yarn





**COLIN CREWE
COLLECTORS BOOKS**

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UNION JACK. Year 1921, vg copies at £3 each.
917,918,919,922,923,924.

THE THRILLER. Year 1929/1935, gen vg at £4 each or 10 copies or more at £3 each. 22,38,39,41, 42,43,57,72,73,76,77,79,82,83,89,90,93,94,97,98, 99,345,346,347,350,352.

SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY. Year 1925/1940. Four Penny covers at £6 each or 10 copies or more at £5 each. 26,95,105,318,374,348,390,392,406, 419,420,478,527,533,612 and 33.

SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY. Original first series. 132,361,367. VG copies. each £7.50

RADIO FUN COMICS, Years 1952/1953. Vgc. Favourite Stars from those Radio Times £4 each or 10 or more copies at £3.50 each. 693,696,699,705, 706,707,708,709,711,712,714,717,718,719,721, 723,724,725,726,727,729,732,733,734,735,736, 737,738,741,745,748,752,754,763,765,768,770, 780,782,783,784,786,801,814.

CHAMPION. Year 1948. VG at £3 each or 10 or more copies at £2.50 each. Remember the team that shook Division 2. Rocklist Rogan, Fireworks Flynn. Those Halycon days! 1353,1354,1355,1356,1357, 1358,1359,1360,1361,1362,1363,1364,1365,1366, 1367,1368,1369,1370,1371,1372,1373,1374,1375, 1376,1377,1378,1379,1380,1381,1382,1383,1384, 1385,1386,1387,1388,1389,1390,1391,1392,1393, 1394,1395,1396,1402,1403,1404.

ADVENTURE. Years 1947/1948. Gen vg at £3 ea or 10 or more copies at £2.50 each. Among the old friends, Baldy Hogan, Solo Solomon, Savage Head of St. Jude, Dixon Hawke. 1177,1178,1179,1180, 1181,1182,1183,1184,1185,1186,1187,1188,1189, 1190,1192,1193,1195,1196,1197,1198,1199,1200, 1201,1202,1203,1204,1205,1206,1207,1208,1209, 1210,1211,1212,1213,1214,1232,1233,1234,1235, 1236,1238,1241,1242,1243,1244,1245,1246,1247, 1248,1249,1250,1251,1253.

HOTSPURS. Years 1948/1949. Gen vg at £3 each or 10 or more copies at £2.50 each. Read once, again my friends, Red Circle, Iron Teacher, Cannon Ball Kidd. Give the TV a Holiday. 602,603,604,606, 615,624,628,639,640,642,643,644,645,646,647, 649,650,651,655,665,666,667,668,669,671,673, 674,675,677,680,681,682,683,684,686.

WIZARDS. Year 1947. Gen vg at £4 each or 10 or more issues at £3.50 each. 1947 Edrich & Compton scoring all those runs and we were reading Wilson. 1121,1122,1123,1124,1125,1126,1127,1128,1129, 1130,1131,1132,1133,1134,1135,1136,1137,1139, 1140,1141,1142,1143,1144,1145,1146,1147,1148, 1149,1150,1151,1152,1153,1154,1155,1156.

WIZARDS. Year 1949. Gen vg at £3 each. 1226, 1227,1228,1233,1234,1235.

THOMSON wants list very welcome.

HOTSPURS. Years 1955/1956. Gen vg at £1.75 each or 10 or more at £1.35 each. 947,948,950,951, 952,953,955,956,960,962,963,963,964,965,970, 974,978,981,982,983,988,989,993,994,995,996, 997,998,1003,1004,1007,1008,1009,1010,1013, 1014,1015,1016,1017,1018,1019,1020,1022,1023, 1025,1035,1036,1038,1044,1045,1046,1047,1048, 1049,1050,1051.

CHAMPION. Year 1954. Gen vg at £1.75 each or 10 or more copies at £1.35 each. 1677,1678,1679, 1681,1682,1683,1688,1690,1691,1692,1693,1694, 1696,1699,1700,1701,1702,1703,1705,1706,1707, 1710,1711,1712,1713,1714,1715,1716,1717.

ROVER. Year 1972. Gen vg at £1 each or 10 or more copies at 80p each. 6/5,13/5,20/5,27/5,3/6, 10/6,17/6,24/6,1/7,8/7,29/7,5/8,12/8,16/8,14/10,21/ 10,28/10,4/11,25/11,9/12,30/12.

WIZARD. Year 1974. Gen vg at £1 each or 10 or more at 80p each. 5/1,12/1,23/3,30/3,6/4,18/5,25/5, 1/6,8/6,16/6,22/6,29/6,6/7,13/7,27/7,3/8,28/12.

ROVER & ADVENTURE. Year 1962. Gen vg at £1 each or 10 or more issues at 80p each. 6/1,13/1, 20/1,27/1,3/2,10/2,17/2,24/2,3/3,10/3,17/3,24/3, 6/10,13/10,20/10,27/10,3/11,10/11,17/12,8/12,15/12, 22/12,29/12.

ROVER & WIZARD. Year 1964. Gen vg at £1 each or 10 or more issues at 80p each. 4/1,11/1, 25/1,1/2,8/2,22/2,7/3,14/3,21/3,28/3,4/4,18/4,25/4, 2/5,9/5,16/5,30/5,6/6,13/6,20/6,27/6,4/7,11/7,18/7, 25/7,8/8,15/8,24/10,31/10,7/11,14/11,21/11,28/11, 26/12.

THE NEW HOTSPUR. Year 1962. Gen vg at £1.25 each or 10 or more issues at £1 each. 116, 118,119,120,121,122,123,126,127,128,129,130, 131,132,133,134,135,136,139,140,142,144,146, 147,148,149,151,152,155,156,158,159,160,161, 162,163,164,166,167.

WIZARD. Years 1970, 1971 and 1972. Gen vg at £1 each or 10 or more issues at 80p each. 13,62,65, 66,67,86,88,92,97,98,118,119,120,121,122,123, 124,125,126,129,130,131,136,138,139,148.

WIZARD. Year 1978. Vg copies at 80p each. 21/1, 28/1,11/2,11/3,14/6,5,20/5,27/5.

ROVER & ADVENTURE. Year 1961. Gen vg at £1 each or 10 or more issues at 80p each. 4/1,25/3, 29/4,17/6,24/6,17/5,8,12/8,19/8,26/8,30/9,28/10, 25/11,2/12,9/12,16/12,23/12,30/12.

ROVER Year 1956. Gen vg at £1.50 each. 1609, 1612,1613,1616,1619,1626,1638.

HOTSPUR. Year 1970. £1 each or 10 or more issues 80p each. 539,541,542,543,546,547,548,549, 555,551,552,553,554,555,556,559,560,561,562, 563,564,565,566,567,572,576,577,584.

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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BETWEEN OURSELVES



NEW LOOKS AT OLD FAVOURITES

Once again I am happy to be able to write in this issue about a further crop of books which deal with stories and pictures that warmed and influenced so many of us in childhood days. These are reviewed by me this month and I hope that many C.D. readers will share my enjoyment of **CICELY MARY BARKER AND HER ART**, **VISITORS FOR THE CHALET SCHOOL** and **THE SILENT THREE COMPANION** (see pages 24-27).

It is especially appropriate for me to be browsing through Helen McClelland's Chalet School story in a week when I am preparing to take off for a trip with my husband to the Bernese Oberland. Elinor Brent-Dyer's long-running Chalet School series began with an Austrian setting but ended (after the school's flight from the Nazis, first to the Channel Islands and then to Britain) with a new base in the Oberland. The potent charms of mountainous terrains were thus restored to the series, and on all my visits to the Bernese

Oberland (somewhere around 35 in all!) I hear echoes and see glimpses of that very international group of fictional schoolgirls who, in their flame and brown uniforms, so colourfully caught the imaginations of real-life girls in the 1920s and '30s, and still attract new young readers in the 1990s through Armada's paper-back reprints.



It all goes to prove that a good story remains a treasure for children (and adults) who were born long after its original publication. It is good to see that, despite insistent pressures from 'politically correct' activists, books which offer decency, common-sense and other traditional values remain resilient.

HAPPY HOLIDAY READING!

MARY CADOGAN

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NEW LIGHT ON MR. QUELCH

by Ted Baldock

I enjoyed Mark Caldicott's article in the May C.D., 'E.S.B. in the Magnet', and was brought up very sharply at the incident described in 'False Evidence' in which Mr. Quelch is in eminent danger of an accident involving a motor-cycle and sidecar. The intriguing sentence was 'Mr. Quelch is having an unlucky night, for, having recovered he paused in the road to light his pipe...' This set a whole train of thought in motion. Mr. Quelch stopping to light his pipe, a seemingly natural, even irrelevant, little incident, yet one shedding light on an interesting and hitherto unknown characteristic of the Remove master.

The idea of Mr. Quelch indulging in the narcotic weed was quite new. Of course the widespread condemnation of the practice was as yet far in the future. Did not King George V command that a tin of tobacco and a pipe be issued to every man serving in the trenches during the First World War? Were not the Baker street rooms of Sherlock Holmes frequently reeking with blue tobacco smoke? There appears to have been no protest from the no doubt long suffering Dr. Watson, who was fairly sharp when discussing the use of other admittedly more lethal drugs.

Mr. Quelch, being an extremely vigilant person, may have seen the light early in his career and consigned his pipe to oblivion. There appears to be no further mention of it or any other form of indulgence in tobacco. It was left to Vernon Smith and a few other 'smoky cads' to carry on the tradition clandestinely.

Yet who would condemn Colonel Wharton or grudge him his after dinner cigar in the privacy of his sanctum at Wharton Lodge? Compton Mackenzie in his well researched book 'Sublime Tobacco' (1957) extols the virtue of the weed and brings many opinions from the past to substantiate his theories, one of which was written by a certain Thomas Warton (no connection, one hopes, with our own hero) pleading in 1764:

Return ye days of endless pleasure,
I found in reading or in leisure
When calm around the Common Room
I puff'd my daily pipe's perfume.

One can almost hear the protesting boom of Mr. Prout! "Have the goodness to open the window, Hacker my dear fellow, the atmosphere is quite intolerable ... really!"

WANTED: I am seeking to purchase a copy of Greyfriars Book Club Volume No. 76, entitled "Billy Bunter's Uncle" (Magnets Nos. 355 to 359). The volume must be in good condition - will pay reasonable price. COLIN E.I. COLE, 271 Firs Lane, Palmers Green, London, N13 5QH. Tel: 0181 807 7375.

MORCOVE MUSINGS

No. 5 of an occasional series

by Dennis L. Bird

For readers of the Morcove stories in the 1930s, Betty Barton must have seemed very much an "Establishment" figure (although that phrase was not coined in its present sense until 1955). Secure in the love of her friends, clear in her mind as to where her duty lay, she was the girl to whom her classmates looked for leadership.

It was all very different when she first went to the famous Devonshire public school for girls in 1921, as this series has been showing. The basic problem was social class. Betty's Lancashire parents were humble folk - father a factory worker, mother a charwoman. Only the arrival of rich Uncle George, who had made a fortune in Canada, changed the Barton life-style. It was he who paid for her to go to Morcove, albeit with a query: "You'll be amongst some rich girls there, you know. Do you think you'll keep your end up - eh?"

"Yes, uncle," was the answer. "I'll manage!" But neither he nor Betty knew just how difficult life was going to be for her among the supercilious snobs of Morcove.

Horace Phillips (or "Marjorie Stanton," as the author was better known) began the third instalment of his long-running saga with Betty being forcibly evicted from the study to which she had been allotted (ironically, the Study No. 7 which was later to be famous in the annals of Morcove). She had been told to share with the spiteful Grandways sisters, Cora and Judith, who did everything they could to make her unhappy. Their latest effort roused Betty's fighting spirit. "This is the study I was placed in, and here I mean to stop until I'm told to shift... I don't care a rap for you or the rest of the Form. I'll keep my end up somehow, against the whole lot of you!"

The riotous eviction was interrupted by the Form-mistress, Miss Massingham, who arranged a rather unsatisfactory compromise: Betty would move out into a study of her own - but it would be a small, grimy, ill-lit boxroom. At least it removed her from the company of the Grandways girls - but life was otherwise no better. Still the cruel tricks and sneering gibes of the Fourth Form continued against the Council-school girl. She was assailed with pillows; her bed was made unusable. And there was never any friendly ear into which she could pour her troubles, no kindly word to give her fresh heart.

Then, at last, a change came in Betty's fortunes, although at first she did not realise it. Intent on cleaning up her insalubrious study, she had gone downstairs to borrow a broom and a dustpan. Passing through the hall, she met "a girl who was a complete stranger to her, entering the house while Steggle's porter was bringing in a portmanteau.

"Hallo," said the strange girl loftily. "You might fetch in my other things from the cab! Steggle's grousing, and I can't carry everything in myself."

"I'm sorry I can't help you; but I'm not one of the servants," said Betty, rather resenting the other girl's manner. "The newcomer found it hard to believe that Betty was a scholar - "A Morcove Schoolgirl with a dustpan and broom - my word, this is something new!"

That was the rather unpropitious beginning to what was to become a firm and lasting friendship - for the unknown girl, returning from a few days away to attend a family wedding, was Polly Linton. Like the other Morcovians, Polly was well off, with Linton Hall as her address; but she differed from her Form-mates by having no silly ideas about class distinction. Polly took people as she found them - and she soon found Betty to her liking. Some unobtrusive kind acts showed Betty that here at last was a girl who might befriend her.

And so it proved. After a particularly nasty trick was played on Betty, Polly overcame the normal schoolgirl scruples and went to Miss Redgrave, the junior Form-mistress. "Cried Polly excitedly: 'I'm a girl who hates blabbing; but there is something in all this that fairly sickens me, and the truth has got to be told by me.'"

Horace Phillips entitled this episode "The Friend She Found" (February 19th, 1921), and it ended with dewy-eyed sentiment. Polly told Betty how she had for some time been "feeling terribly fed-up" with the supercilious Form captain Paula Creel and the rest: "Isn't snobbery a hateful thing, Betty? Wouldn't it be glorious if someone could fight it!... We are the couple to do it." And despite Betty's demurs, she foresaw that Betty might one day become captain of the Fourth Form - "and don't forget that I predicted it!"

Polly's alliance with the unpopular new girl was at some cost to herself. She too became an outcast. In the following week's episode she moved in with Betty into the latter's minuscule study. This, in fact, was no hardship, for Polly had previously had to share with the Form sneak, Ursula Wade.

Polly soon lent a hand in improving the boxroom study, and sent Ella Elgood and others about their business when they remonstrated. She made no secret of the fact that she detested the Form's attitude to Betty, and Fate played into the new chums' hands at the school concert. Cora and Co. presented a malevolent playlet about "Barty Betton" and her working-class family - and inadvertently started a fire backstage. It was Polly and Betty who extinguished it ("The Girls Who Saved the School" - Horace Phillips' title for this episode of February 26th, 1921) and earned the public gratitude of the headmistress, Miss Somerfield.

A tide of hatred had threatened to engulf Betty Barton, but now it was slowly turning - and its new trend was reinforced at the end of episode 10 (April 9th, 1921) when she and Polly were joined by the musical member of the Form, Madge Minden.



THE UNHEEDED COMMAND!

"Stop that row!" exclaimed Ella
 "Hullo, what do you
 asked Polly Linton. "This is
 not yours! All old lumber will
 away to-morrow!"

won't
 ant?"
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THE PASSING OF 'HILARY KING'

by W.O.G. Lofts

I can well remember when buying my monthly Sexton Blake Libraries in January 1951 being pleasantly surprised to see a new author's name on the cover of No. 232, 'Partners in Crime'. The name was 'Hilary King'. One was getting a bit tired of the same group of writers each month, who to my mind were getting worse, in comparison with the excellent stories they used to write a decade earlier. A new author certainly could not do any worse!

I was not disappointed, as the story was excellent. The late Gerry Allison who was reviewing the monthly stories in the C.D. confirmed my opinion. He stated:

"Greetings to a new author. A welcome surprise!
This is a tale about diamonds. Plenty of action and movement, and some good characterisations. Blake and Tinker on the scene on page one, which is what I like. Nice work, Hilary King. Come again."

Indeed Hilary King did come again in another five stories, his last being in July 1953 No. 292, 'The Crime of the Fair'. Then he completely disappeared from the scene of the Sexton Blake Library.

There was no doubt that he was a better writer than many of the other regulars at that time. Maybe he was commissioned only for six stories. He also finished writing several years before the new look started in 1957, so this was not the reason for his absence. The name of 'Hilary King' began to niggle at my brain, as I was certain it was another well known writer using a nom-de-plume. A letter to the editor, Len Pratt, brought no response to my query, whilst I actually tracked down a person named 'Hilary King' who confessed that he "could not even write a sentence correctly - and never even read detective stories".

It was not until the sixties - a decade later - that I was able to discover that 'Hilary King' was a nom-de-plume of James Grierson Dickson, a writer of some repute in the crime and spy thriller field, who in his early days was tipped by reviewers of his books to become one of England's best crime novelists, though for some unknown reason his early promise was never entirely fulfilled.

Original research into biographical details indicates that Grierson Dickson was something of a mystery man. His output was tiny, to say the least. It was impossible to make any sort of living out of it. This strongly suggests that he wrote under other names unknown to the general public, or else held some editorial or other position, and only wrote when it suited him.

Two different sources have indicated that he was in the British Secret Service, which may explain his long absences from writing, and have given many of his stories an authentic background regarding Europe and espionage - but one must start at the beginning: research has discovered the following.

He was born at Fulham, London on the 19th August 1900, his first known contribution was in the Union Jack (series of articles on Secret Societies and Espionage). His first books were in the thirties for Hutchinsons, 'Soho Racket' in 1935 bringing rave notices from the reviewers. Even the great Denis Wheatley was to remark 'I predict a big name for Grierson Dickson as a crime book author'. But then surprisingly until 1958, when his last novel for Robert Hale appeared, only seven books had come from his pen. He did write about three stories for The Thriller before the war, when, apart from a series in Eagle about cowboys, that was his sole output.

James Grierson Dickson died in 1974 on August 4th. He lived near the railway station at Chipstead, Surrey, the setting almost in detail of his second Sexton Blake yarn "On the 11.40 Down", dealing with a crime on the Southern Railway from Waterloo.

It's more than likely that he wrote for Wright & Brown in one of their long running mystery series, with the author's names completely unknown (as 'Hugh Desmond', for example, for both writers had a number of similarities). Both wrote in the same period from the mid-thirties till up to Dickson's death. Both were fond of writing up real life crimes and also spying. Both also had the odd novel published by Robert Hale. But I must stress this is only theory, and not fact.

If James Grierson Dickson did write elsewhere unknown there is obviously a feast of reading to come. Investigations are still continuing about a Sexton Blake writer who was a cut above the ordinary.



FROM COLIN COLE:

I read Mark Caldicott's article in the March 1995 issue of the Collectors' Digest with interest.

He states that the following Magnets were written by Edwy Searles Brooks: No. 257 "Fish's Fag Agency"; No. 273 "Friars v Saints"; No. 287 "Self-Denial Week at Greyfriars".

"The Concise Magnet Companion '86" published by Howard Baker Press Ltd. lists the above Magnet stories as having been written by Charles Hamilton. Other Magnet stories referred to by Mark Caldicott were written by Edwy Searles Brooks and were shown as such in the "Magnet Companion". These stories were: No. 259 "Left in the Lurch"; No. 260 "Harry Wharton & Co.'s Rescue"; No. 291 "Up Against It".

I have read Nos. 257 and 273 and see no reason for stating that these stories were not written by Charles Hamilton. These stories were written in the Hamilton style of the Red Magnet period. I also perused No. 287 briefly and it is clearly the work of Hamilton.

When commencing on "Friars v Saints", Mr. Caldicott points to the idea of mixing the characters of two different Amalgamated Press publications into a single story as being a typical ESB ploy. Readers of CD can surely refer to many Magnet and, indeed, Gem stories throughout the life of both publications where characters such as Gussy, Tom Merry, Figgins, Jimmy Silver and Lovell mingle with Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry and Vernon-Smith. So, this particular ploy cannot be attributed solely to Brooks and cannot be a reason for crediting "Friars v Saints" to ESB.

I look forward to Mark Caldicott producing some proof or quoting an authority for his assertions with regard to Magnets Nos. 257, 273 and 287 which contradict the findings of the "Magnet Companion".

THE HAZARDS OF CD WRITING

by Mark Caldicott

Article writing can be a risky business. The problem is that confident assertions made in print remain indelibly as evidence of one's poor research and lack of knowledge. I have my own catalogue of errors.

For example, in a CD article "Conquest On The Road" in 1990 I asserted that ESB's reference to Mavis Grant, the girl who would not fan-dance for Rurik Voegler, was an error on his part. I am grateful to fellow readers who pointed me towards "Meet The Don". The error was decidedly mine, not Mr. Brooks'. "Meet The Don" is a very rare book and I had seen neither that nor those issues of The Thriller in which the story had originally appeared.

Again, in my article on Professor Cyrus Zingrave and The Green Triangle (CD 529) I presented what was meant to be a comprehensive account of Zingrave's misdeeds. It was only at a later date that I read the Circle of Terror series discovering Zingrave's involvement in that organisation, nor did I realise that Zingrave at one point became headmaster of St. Frank's. These shortcomings in my research were accompanied by an assertion that the Green Triangle was ESB's first major original creation, revealing my ignorance at that time of the wonderful Frank Kingston stories appearing in The Gem in 1911-12.

Should I add my recent CD contributions on "ESB in The Magnet" to this catalogue of errors? I am grateful to Mary Cadogan for forwarding to me Colin Cole's letter, and giving the opportunity to respond.

The source of my list of Magnet titles was, as stated at the outset of the articles, that given by Bob Blythe in the updated second edition (1971) of his "The Nelson Lee Library: A Complete Guide and Bibliography of the Writings of Edwy Searles Brooks" produced on behalf of the London Club. In using this list, I had no intention of arguing for the establishment of E.S. Brooks' authorship of the stories since I had no idea there was any dispute.

My excuse for making no investigation of authorship is that the Bob Blythe catalogue is the bible for ESB followers, this second edition being completed after Mr. Blythe had had access to all ESB's papers, and had checked his sources as accurately as possible. I had not considered when writing these articles that Mr. Blythe may have been in error. Furthermore, on reading the stories listed, no suspicion entered my mind that they may not be ESB stories - struggling to appear as Frank Richards yes - but ESB all the same. Considering the number of ESB stories I have read, I find it strange that no warning bells sounded.

It was, then, with a degree of concern that I learned of the different view of authorship accorded in the later Magnet Companions. Mr. Cole had stated in his letter, Magnets 257,

273 and 287 were not by ESB at all. Could this astonishing assertion be true? It had been with some trepidation that I had ventured into the kingdom of Greyfriars, particularly whilst flying the colours of ESB. If the assertion were indeed true then my article could be in serious disrepute. And the article to which Mr. Cole referred was only the first of a series of three. What other errors could there be? Had I brought disgrace upon the ESB column of the CD in the eyes of the Hamiltonians?

I wrote to Bill Lofts, surely the most knowledgeable expert on such matters. He was kind enough to reply within a few days, and his reply, whilst confirming that Mr. Cole is entirely justified in his views, did at least confirm to me that on the basis of textual analysis alone, authorship of these Magnet stories is almost impossible to determine. This has, to a small degree, salvaged my conscience. He has given permission to reproduce the relevant text of his letter. He writes:

Actually several people wrote to me about your interesting piece in the CD relating to the works of ESB in the Greyfriars field. They were all pointing out the errors of some stories, which I had noticed...

Firstly I must point out that my own record book of stories is as near possible accurate to get, as they came from official records held at the time by Amalgamated Press Ltd. Cash books and Stock books show also the amount paid (which is a confidential matter between the author and the firm) when the cheque paid would eventually be returned to the firm and kept as a legal document signed on the back by the author concerned. As I worked freelance in a legal department, I had special permission to examine old records by the Directors, for my special successful work for them - much of which I cannot disclose.

257 Fish's Fag Agency, 273 Friars v Saints, 287 Self-Denial Weeks at Greyfriars, 291 Up Against It, 451 The Mystery of Mauly was penned by G.R. Samways. The previous four were paid to Charles Hamilton.

Personally and as a Greyfriars reader, I find it rather difficult to define at that early period the substitute stories. Charles Hamilton was in an early period before his brilliant style had fully developed say in the mid-twenties. There were a number of pot boiler tales by him. On top of this there was a lot of sub-editing with editors inserting their own style to confuse things.

I know Bob Blythe very well indeed, and even he admitted it was an extremely difficult job to identify some stories. He had actually sent some presumed Magnets to Edwy Searles Brooks once, but they were quickly returned to the effect that it was impossible to recall them over such a period of time. This was of course before official records became available. Derek Adley also tried it but received a negative terse reply...

I am quite happy to accept that Mr. Lofts' listing is the most accurate we are likely to have, and therefore I acknowledge that I do indeed have to add to my catalogue of errors. Mr. Cole is certainly justified in his remarks. Does this make a difference to the CD articles in question?

In reassessing my articles in the light of this information there are obviously some statements which are completely misguided. Strange that I thought ESB was failing to capture the Greyfriars style in "Fish's Fag Agency" when this is in fact Hamilton. I still, however, maintain that the story is one of the "pot-boilers" mentioned by Bill Lofts. Of

Friars v Saints I should point out to Mr. Cole that I was not using the fact of mixing characters to prove ESB's authorship since I had not considered this to be in doubt. Did other Amalgamated Press authors mix their series characters as much as ESB? On reflection, although I did think the story had ESB characteristics, the Bunter/Vernon-Smith plotting and the humour is more typically Hamilton. The loss of "Self-Denial Week at Greyfriars" and "Up Against It" is a bitter blow to my article, since I saw these as ESB's turning point. No wonder I thought that he was handling the comedy and the "situations story" well!

I apologise to readers of the CD, and ask for other offences mentioned above to be taken into account. I hope that despite the errors, readers feel that the basic tenet of the articles (i.e. that ESB picked up after a poor start to write some very creditable Magnet stories) holds true.

As a complete aside, a matter which has puzzled me for many years has been resolved during these enquiries. In the dedications included in ESB's novels we learn only that he lived in Pollards Hill. I remember discovering from the London A to Z that Pollards Hill is not the name of a road but of an estate near Norbury, SW16. The question was where exactly ESB lived on the estate? In his novels he almost invariably gave houses the number 26, and I had concluded that this was a personal reference, probably the number of his own house. In "Murder With A Kiss" (Victor Gunn), ESB describes his own estate, disguised as Raydons Hill but with all the roads in their appropriate places, and refers to "Bush Retreat", which corresponds to Briar Close, with some affection as "the quietest part of the whole estate". From this fairly flimsy evidence I concluded his own road was Briar Close and his number probably 26. Mr. Lofts included with his letter a copy of the letter referred to from ESB to Derek Adley, and for the first time I learned for certain ESB's precise address - 26 Briar Road, Pollards Hill. At least I had got one thing right!

GEMS OF HAMILTONIA from John Geal
No. 16 Cecil Temple MAGNET No. 973

"Cecil Reginald Temple, the captain of the fourth, was reclining in an elegant attitude in an armchair in his study in the Fourth Form passage. One elegantly trousered leg was crossed over the other, carelessly, but with due regard to the crease in the elegant trousers. Such matters were not unimportant in the eyes of the dandy of the Fourth. Indeed, it was said that Cecil Reginald, though he was football captain in his form, attached more importance to clobber than to games; and was more concerned, even on the football field, with the set of his jersey, and the cut of his shorts, than with putting the ball into the net. But perhaps that was an exaggeration. Certainly, Temple was a well dressed fellow, and he knew it, and made all Greyfriars aware of it.

At the present moment, Temple, in well-cut Etons, socks that were quite a dream, tie tied as only he could tie it, looked a picture that might well have delighted his sisters, and his cousins, and his aunts; but did not, perhaps, look as if he were going to beat the Remove at football on Wednesday.

"I've been pulling the team into good shape", said Temple. "I'm makin' the men work at it. Some of them are grumblin'."

"Let 'em grumble," said Fry. "If I were football skipper, I'd boot out the grumblers and put in triers."

It was very good of Edward Fry to give him advice, and Temple, whose manners were brightly polished, always took advice with courteous politeness. But he did not heed it. He was satisfied that what he did not know about the game of Soccer was scarcely worth mugging up. He was satisfied with his own gifts of captainship. If victories did not happen, it was perhaps irritating. But such trifles could not be allowed to disturb the equanimity of Cecil Reginald."

THE DESERT ISLAND SYNDROME...

by Margery Woods

Part 3 THE SCHOOL FRIEND and OTHERS

One of the secrets of AP's enduring success with their storypapers must have been the broad, inclusive appeal of their fiction. No youngster's interest was left out. Be this adventure, school, sailing, treasure-hunting, secret societies, music, dancing, guiding, travel to exotic lands, spooks, theatricals or a spot of gentle trouble-making, somehow, like those old-time variety acts who kept an array of plates spinning endlessly on top of rows of tall canes without ever losing one, the AP authors kept all those diverse young readers enthralled week after week with their favourite reading, plus many permutations of plot that could combine several interests in one story. Quietly and subtly they kept emotional as well as dramatic appeal present and any adolescent hormones beginning to awaken were gently targeted by the introduction of boy and girl friendships that held just a hint of the possibility of romance developing in the nebulous future after the storyline reached its happy ending.

While the extroverts and the sporting enthusiasts and the artistically inclined were well catered for, the dreamers and the shy natures were never forgotten. Somehow they were convinced that it could all happen for them, even in their humdrum little lives, when sometimes their hopes and ambitions and desires were either unrecognised or ignored: in the story papers adventurous exploits and missions achieved were within their reach, even if only vicariously in the secret retreats where they lost themselves and dreamed along with their favourite characters. Perhaps in this lies the secret of the desert island castaway story's unique appeal. Because the desert island is on no known map or charted shipping route. During the decades of its greatest success with readers of all ages, it fulfilled one of the greatest desires of the human psyche, that of discovery and escape, and of a place in which to fight for control of one's own destiny. In the desert island story nothing could limit the imagination of either author or reader. There could be an abundance of water and natural food, or very little on which to survive; the nature of the flora, fauna and other life present, the proximity of shipping, hostile humanity or ill-tempered volcanoes existed entirely at the discretion of the author. This gloriously untrammelled kind of fiction also held one useful advantage, in that it tended to limit the activities of the little clever-clogs who love to write in to editors to point out that there are no tigers on Tahiti, or that Bali H'ai has a weekly boat service and a thriving copra trade, or that the monetary unit of Tonga is the pound, not the dollar, and so on, leading to stern editorial conferences about Getting The Facts Right...

The AP authors seemed to be pretty skilled at avoiding these pitfalls and struck a wise centre course between pure invention that could not be questioned and factual background

that lent conviction and a sense of realism. They also believed in exploiting proven successes.

When the new series of SCHOOL FRIEND was launched in May 1950, almost thirty-one years to the day after its original namesake, it flaunted a scarlet masthead, full colour cover, and picture script stories, a feature that would probably have been scorned by the readers of the first SCHOOL FRIEND. They could read sentences, couldn't they? and paragraphs! They'd grown out of comics years ago! But 1950 was a different age, the age of visual communication, TV, and the pop mania explosion, which would overtake teenage generations before another decade arrived. But there was one interesting comparison.

"Jill Blair was a castaway on a lovely Paradise Isle. She thought she was quite alone --- until one day, exploring further inland, she was astonished to discover a human footprint..."

So ran the intro to JILL CRUSOE, a serial in pictures to carry on from the successful serial by Julia Storm, THE GIRL CRUSOES, that began in the first issue of SCHOOL FRIEND in May 1919. It brought a sequel, and later a third island story, and the new JILL CRUSOE was to be a regular feature for several years of the new paper. The same

JILL CRUSOE



Jill Blair was a castaway on lovely Paradise Isle. She thought she was quite alone---until one day, exploring further inland, she was astonished to discover a human footprint.



HALF UNEASY, HALF CURIOUS, JILL FOLLOWED THE FOOTPRINTS.

THE TRAIL LED BEYOND THE JUNGLE.. JILL GAZED UPWARDS IN WONDER.



A VOLCANO! AND WHAT IS THAT STRANGE THING HALF-WAY UP?



WHAT CAN IT MEAN? DO PEOPLE EVER COME HERE? I THINK I'LL KEEP AWAY FROM THIS WEIRD PLACE!

situations and the inevitable tame leopard, her devoted friend after she had removed a thorn from his paw. Soon the native war canoe arrives to the throb of drums, the volcano begins to smoke, and Jill faces the need to replenish her wardrobe, with a new dress of leaves, stitched with fibre and a needle improvised from a fishbone. Her home is in a cave with the waves lapping outside, a barrel as a table and a bed of rough timbers. She learns to spear fish, eventually discovers a strange eerie idol, and meets M'Lani, her Girl Friday.

Jill Crusoe was still running nine years later, surely an indication that even in a new era the readers could still identify with the desert island castaway theme.

But despite the charm of the Jill Crusoe picture serials, for solid reading one has to return to the pre-war stories. Go back to the SCHOOLGIRL'S OWN LIBRARY 59 of May 1925 for THE ISLAND OF WONDERS by Ada Crundall. Twins Diana and Brenda are flying across the Pacific in their father's plane. The inevitable storm brings down the plane on a very strange island. Their father is lost, and the girls discover that the island is inhabited by English speaking people wearing clothing in the style of Nelson's day. They are the descendants of people who were cast upon the island a hundred years before when their ship was wrecked. They have built a settlement amid the palms and coconut and breadfruit trees and named it London Town. Country folk among the original group of castaways have handed down their skills in tilling the land, and the discovery of a plant that produces a type of cotton has solved any clothing problems. Inevitably the island folk have fallen out with one another, and the twins also fall out as they take sides. The combination of past and present attitudes is amusingly done and Diana has quite a few adventures before her father is restored to her and her sulky twin after being cast on the far side of the island and injured. Soon a great liner appears (the first in a century?) and they return to England, but come back to the island with the world's media in tow. A very strange island indeed!

In THE CASTAWAY GUIDES OF MYSTERY ISLE (SGOL 378) Mildred Gordon demonstrates the combining of two favourite themes to enhance interest and reader identification.

The Guides of the Wattle Patrol are led by Jess Shirley, whose skipper father had been lost at sea two years before, and set off to camp on Luna Island off the southern Australian coast. Jess is possessed of an unpleasant aunt, widow of Jess's father's brother, another sea skipper, and a couple of not very likeable cousins. The reader's impression of Aunt Bertha is firmly set early in the story by her sadistic beating of a dog, plus the disappearance from Jess's home of an old oilskin packet after a visit by Aunt Bertha in which she tries to persuade Jess to come and live with her, thus giving over the rights of a shareholding in a copper mine which Jess's father had left to his two



The Schoolgirls' Own Library No 378

daughters. The younger sister, Doris is a petulant child easily taken in by Auntie Bertha's wiles, but not Jess, who has the copper mine shares carefully stowed away at the bank.

She sets sail with her Guides, forcibly taking young Doris with her, but unaware that they have a stowaway. The friendly neighbourhood typhoon soon whips up to blow them off course and they drift for three days before sighting what they believe is their destination, Luna Island with food and shops if camping gets too rough, but which proves to be Mystery Isle, supposedly once the hideout of Captain Budd and the hiding place of his pirate treasure, a place Jess's father had always planned to seek. But for the Guides its best immediate treasure was fresh water and food. Setting up camp, making a fire and preparing a good meal of turtle eggs, fruit and tea --- and running up the Union Jack --- presents no problem to good Guides, but unfortunately their stowaway, Ruth, and young Doris have made off on their own, taking the boat and some of the stores. Matters are soon complicated by the arrival of Aunt Bertha and the cousins, demanding again that Jess sign over her rights to the copper mine shares or else Aunt Bertha will simply leave them all to their fate on the island.

Moral blackmail and the proverbial cleft stick with a vengeance! Which can Jess sacrifice? Her own future, or the safety of her fellow Guides?

The Guides are puzzled by her reaction to her aunt but rally round Jess when Aunt Bertha betrays her true colours by setting sail, taking Doris and Ruth with her, and leaving Jess and her friends to the mercy of another storm and the illness besetting little Susie, the youngest and most frail of the Guide Patrol.

But Bertha the Brutal has only sailed round to the far side of the island where she sets up her HQ in a network of caves in order to search for the treasure. Her next blow is to kidnap Jess. Fortunately, young Doris is discovering a small shred of conscience --- and perhaps discovering that sweet Auntie Bertha wears a false face. She helps Jess escape and raids Auntie's stores for some quinine for Susie.

The duelling between the Guides and Bertha the Brutal keeps a cracking pace until the great moment when the Guides discover the treasure, only be thwarted by the villainous aunt who escapes in her boat after damaging the Guides' boat which they have been patiently try to repair.

Fate and another storm intervene, almost bringing about the demise (deserved?) of Aunt Bertha while bringing a big fine ship in search of water replenishment. So Jess and her brave Patrol are rescued, Aunt Bertha repents, the State allows the sale of the treasure, which the girls share, and out of the goodness of her heart Jess gives her aunt one hundred pounds, whereupon that woman departs and is never seen again. The copper mine shares prove to have soared in value and another castaway tale ends with rejoicing.

Perhaps the desert island Crusoe theme is waning now. Sheer expansion of knowledge, travel and communications has made the genre more difficult to present convincingly. But tradition dies hard. Robinson Crusoe as a pantomime still plays up and down the land each year at Christmas. Disney filmed a comedy version some time in the sixties starring Dick van Dyke, and more recently two experiments have explored the idea, one becoming the subject of a best selling book, the other featuring the valiant Joanna Lumley, who must have suffered considerable discomfort during her nine day sojourn on a real desert island, even though a back-up team of TV technicians was moored out in the lagoon.

But the true impetus behind the island genre has not gone, it has simply transferred itself to another continuum: space. There lies the unknown, the danger, the struggle for survival, the mystery of exotic lands, the eternal mystery of a footprint in the sand. Crusoe will reincarnate many more times in the future. To boldly go...

"HORNER'S"

by Ernest Holman

The Harmsworth weeklies were already well-known by 1904. In our own Hobby, Marvel, Boys' Friend, Union Jack had been around before the Century turned; several other papers, for adults, had also emanated from the Carmelite HQ. "Horner's Weekly" joined the ranks when No. 1 appeared, dated for Saturday, 4th June, 1904. (It would seem that it grew out of "Horner's Penny Stories for Spreading the Gospel", probably a monthly publication. The origin of the name "Horner" in the titles is not known by the present writer.) It was a large weekly, 13½" by 8¾" - larger than the monthly CD spread out to its "foolscap" size - the Editor was Hartley Aspden; it was primarily a religious paper. Its cost was one penny and the first issue had 24 pages, printed on - for those days - quite good quality paper.

I mention it here, perhaps as a stranger amongst the more usual Hobby items, for one reason. I was recently loaned a bound Volume of the first 26 issues and, after a casual start, began to take more interest in the contents. (Had it been a single copy, it would have meant nothing.) The fact was revealed that whilst religion was the prime purpose of the paper, there was room for 'other matters'. I was left with the feeling, eventually, that there was a keynote of sincerity running through, with the acknowledgement that, provided the true meaning of life was never lost, there was no reason why 'other aspects' should not appear.

Of course, a large portion of the issues consisted of "Sermons in Pictures", "How I Entered the Ministry", "What I Believe", etc. (One whole page was devoted to a "Sermon by the German Emperor, Wilhelm III"). A Question section also appeared, with Answers "for" and "against", e.g. "Should Churchgoers Visit the Theatre?". Notable names of the day, whether in the Ministry or not, filled several small "news item" paragraphs. There was a "Court" page, with much information about King Edward and Family and the late Queen Victoria's many Overseas relatives.

Contributions were from a variety of writers; there was always at least one single-issue story, sometimes with an "uncheerful" outlook. A serial ran for several weeks; one such was "Clive of Claire School" by J. Harwood Panting, who also illustrated his serial. (This writer is mentioned in "Men Behind Boys' Fiction".) Articles about personalities dealt with, among others, General Booth, Evangelist Gipsy Smith and "Clergymen as Cricketers". There were competitions (first prize a £500 house); a Benefit Scheme was also launched; if a family had been regular purchasers of "Horner's" and the Breadwinner met with a fatal accident, the widow would receive a payment of ten shillings per week (presumably for life).

The advertisements were, perhaps, the more "earthy" or practical side of the issues. Veno's Seaweed Tonic was highly spoken of therein - there were also cures for such diverse human problems as rupture, fits, blushing, baldness, stoutness - and for another domestic trouble you could not do better than purchase "Keatings". Some of the ads. were not far removed from those

that appeared in later Magnets, Gems, etc. The Moustache remedy, for instance - and THE Lotion for Milady's Beautiful Hair - as used by leading Actresses. (In view of a previous item mentioned herein, I wonder if many of those Actresses were Churchgoers?)

Christmas Numbers of the time often appeared towards the end of November. "Horner's" for Christmas 1904 was no exception; and the price and contents were enlarged. The issue was full of the traditional messages and spirit, not always from an entire religious viewpoint. (There were several half-page and full-page advertisements, that must have helped towards the cost of production; one full-page was devoted to that noted product, Brooks "Monkey Brand" soap.) There was a typically fascinating Louis Wain illustration, of two kittens at their Christmas dinner. This was the 26th issue and completed the first Volume. The pages were numbered throughout in a consecutive manner and reached 552 - an average of about 20 per issue.

The covers of the 26 issues were not included in the binding; these were probably nothing but advertisements, on the traditionally-numbered i to iv pages. No. 25 printed a facsimile of the coming Christmas Number, which showed a picture on the front.

Although coming from the "Daily Mail" stable, "Horner's Weekly" was, really, just one of the many and varied papers from several publishers that filled the extensive counters of newsagents then. All the same, I would think that it had probably been looked forward to in many homes and, quite likely, held many a "pride of place" there. How long it ran after 1904 I do not know - but it certainly seemed to have been holding its own by the end of Volume One.

FORUM

BILL LOFTS (London): In answer to Ray Hopkins' piece on Reg Kirkham, it is quite correct that some considerable years ago now I told Ray that 'Kirk's, as he was known, died in the forties. Since that date however further research has revealed more facts. In 1940, with most girls' papers closing down through paper shortages, 'Kirks' was most fortunate to inherit a large sum of money, so he became independent. Medically unfit for war service, he bought a fruit business in Kent. At the conclusion of the war, with ever increasing bad health, he went on several world cruises where the sea air was hoped to improve his condition. It's quite possible that he still wrote a few stories in the late forties and early fifties. He eventually died near Sevenoaks in Kent on the 15th February 1956 when he was only 59 (being born at Hendon, Middlesex in 1897).

Sports Budget ran from 1923 to 1939 having over 800 issues in two series. It was a very popular paper with sporting tales and articles. As far as I know

the character 'Sporting Sam' was a Sunday Express weekly strip drawn by Reg Wooten, a Northern artist of whom very little is known. I know he died early this year in his eighties, when it was stated that he had been running there since pre-war days.

I was interested to read that William Jennings was a grandson of Rex Harding, as I must have a record of all that author's stories in my files of Amalgamated Press Ltd. I have always strongly suspected that he wrote far more than was realised in perhaps yet to be discovered paperback fields, as well as for D.C. Thomson and the Dixon Hawke series.

NAVEED HAQUE (Ontario, Canada): Re. June 1995 C.D. - your editorial - I think your comment that Hamilton preferred the illustrations of MacDonald over those of C.H. Chapman is valid.

MacDonald, the Gem artist, was commissioned (with the recommendation of Frank Richards to the publisher Charles Skilton) to illustrate the post-war Bunter books, despite the availability of Chapman. This preference may have been affected by the personal friendship that existed between Frank Richards and The Gem artist, at the time.

It was not until later, (in the 1950s), following the passing of MacDonald, that Frank Richards and C.H. Chapman became personal friends - with regular correspondence and even some visits to Rose Lawn by the latter. Initially they had met at Fleetway House (in the 1920s?) in the editorial office, just as the author was off to the Continent. From all accounts, each made a favourable impression on the other, in spite of the very brief encounter.

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. 01923 232383.

CHAMPION, bound volume 1950, nos. 1458 to 1509, offers or exchange.
WANTED: Sexton Blake Library 2nd Series (have few for exchange). 3rd Series to no. 70. K. TOWNSEND, 7 North Close, Willington, Derby, DE65 6EA. Telephone 01283 703305.

FOR SALE: 444 original Magnets, in one lot. 21 buff coloured Gems. Howard Baker Magnet volumes (separately), nos. 11,15,21,22,23,25,26,27,28. GHA, 1978, 1981, & H. Baker 1974. D.D. BALL, 42 Barnwell Road, Melksham, Wilts., SN12 7DG. Tel. Melksham 705669.

BESSIE AT WHARTON LODGE

by A.W. Godfrey

(Editor's Note: I prepared this issue of the C.D. in truly sweltering conditions, so it was pleasing to be able to contemplate the snow and ice of a Hamiltonian Christmas! An out-of-season delight!)

"Cat!"

That extremely unladylike expression issued from Miss Elizabeth Bunter of Cliff House School as she stood with her brother Billy of the Greyfriars Remove outside their home, 'Bunter Villa'. It wanted but a few days to Christmas but there appeared to be no signs of any forthcoming festivities there; in fact the Village was in darkness, the doors were locked and there was no evidence of habitation. Darkness was beginning to fall, together with a few flakes of snow, and the pair shivered in the biting wind.

"Cat!" repeated Miss Bunter, "I won't speak to that Clara next term." Bessie had just emerged from a near-by call-box, and it appeared that her tempting request to spend the festive season at Clara's home had been turned down with the bluntness for which Miss Clara was noted. "Marjorie and Barbara have gone away for Christmas too," sniffed Miss Bunter. "Such selfishness!"

"Fancy the Pater not letting us know that he wouldn't be there," grumbled Billy.

"I expect he thought you would stick someone for the hols as you usually do," replied his sister tactlessly.

"Oh really Bessie!"

"You would have thought that he would have phoned or written to one of us." This from Bessie. At the word 'written' a strange expression suddenly clouded the plump face of her brother.

"Oh lor!"

With a quaking hand he withdrew from his pocket a crumpled letter adorned with an ancient bullseye. Thrusting the latter into his capacious mouth he hurriedly tore open the envelope and proceeded to read:-

Dear William,

Unfortunately your old Aunt Matilda, who as you know lives on her own in Barnsley, is very poorly so your mother and I have decided to spend the Christmas season with her, so there will be no-one at home for your holidays. Sammy informs me that he will be going with his friends but if Bessie and yourself are not fixed up, your Aunt Mims at Whitstable has (somewhat reluctantly) agreed to have you for the holidays. Please do not annoy her or eat too much. Let Bessie know immediately as I have no time to write two letters. Enclosed find a £5 note for any expenses. Yours in haste, Your affectionate Father.

The face of Miss Elizabeth Bunter, who had been looking over her brother's shoulder, assumed the expression of Attila the Hun on a very bad day! "You stupid idiot Billy," she roared. "Oh really Bessie," bleated her brother, "The fact is I put the letter in my pocket and forgot it." He tactfully omitted to add that as he took the letter down from the rack, Lord Mauleverer had ambled by and the letter had been crammed into his pocket while he advised His Lordship that he would be looking forward to visiting him at Mauleverer Towers. The noble Lord, however, had suddenly accelerated and vanished from view. The letter had been forgotten in the subsequent fruitless chase.

"Christmas at Auntie Mims!" Bessie moaned. "There's never enough to eat and she criticises all the time; you are an idiot Billy!" But a sudden gleam had come into Billy's eye. "Leave it to me old dear," he chortled. "Where's that phone booth?"

The Famous Five were seated around a blazing fire at Harry Wharton's home. The December dusk was falling and they had just returned from an invigorating walk. "This is going to be a jolly Christmas," said Bob Cherry, "And no Bunter either! I wonder what happened to the old fat chap?"

"He was trying to stick Mauly the last time I saw him," rejoined Harry Wharton. "I don't think he had any luck though; thank goodness we dodged him, I expect he's gone home."

At that stage the door opened and Colonel Wharton's sister, Miss Amy Wharton, entered. The old lady appeared rather distressed. "What's up Auntie?" enquired Harry quickly. "Oh dear, your Uncle's gone into the village on business and I have had a most distressing phone call!" Miss Wharton fluttered. The five juniors looked concerned. "It was from your friend Bunter," the good lady continued. "Apparently he arrived home with his sister and found that Bunter Court had been burnt to the ground!"

"What!"

"His poor mother and father are in the hospital for a few days and Bunter and his sister Bessie have nowhere to go. He suddenly remembered that you had begged him to stay with you Harry, and wondered if he and Bessie could spend Christmas here. What could I say? I know your Uncle does not like Bunter but I have had to ask Wells to prepare rooms for them. Bunter also said how pleased Bob Cherry would be to see Bessie!" At that remark the expression on Bob Cherry's face was to put it mildly, "Worth a Guinea a Box!", and as Miss Wharton withdrew it was matched by those of his companions.

"The scrounging rotter!"

"The lying toad!"

"Bunter Court burnt to the ground!" roared Bob Cherry. "There never was such a place!"

"How dare he tell those lies to my Aunt," exclaimed Harry Wharton. "What are we going to do about it?"

"Kick the fat frog out as soon as he gets here," grunted Johnny Bull.

"But the presence of the esteemed Bunter's sister makes the extreme awkwardness," cut in Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

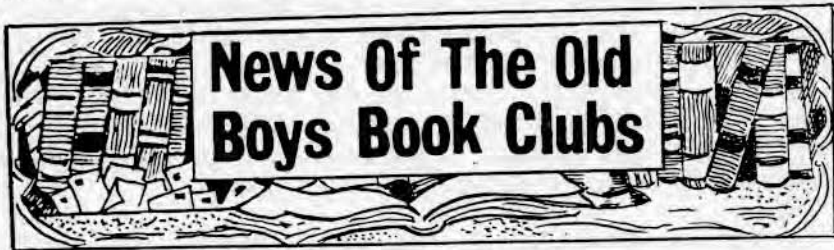
"I suppose we shall just have to put up with them," groaned Harry. "I'd better tell Wells to lay on an extra ton of grub!"

"Ha, Ha, Ha!"

The mirth was, however, short-lived, and the welcome of William George Bunter was unlikely to resemble that of the Prodigal Son.

Darkness had fallen on Wharton Lodge and snow was falling lightly outside when a discreet knock at the door of Harry Wharton's den announced the presence of the butler, Wells. "Pardon me, but Master Bunter and his sister have just arrived. They are desirous of someone paying for the taxi that has conveyed them from the station. Colonel Wharton is not yet back from the village and I did not wish to disturb Miss Wharton." Wells coughed discreetly. "There is also the question of reimbursement for various comestibles that the taxi driver states he paid for on their behalf at the railway station. I am afraid that he is rather -er- petulant, Master Wharton."

(I think that it is best to draw a veil on the subsequent events.)



NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Eight people assembled for an informal lunch at Waterton Hall Hotel, Wakefield. The hotel is in a most delightful setting, on an island in a lake! A very convivial time was held in the presence of Clarissa Cridland and Anne Mackie-Hunter paying a special visit to the Club from "Friends of the Chalet School". The remainder of the afternoon was spent at the delightful home and garden of Geoffrey and Vera Good where Vera provided a splendid afternoon tea of scones and strawberries with cream.

Our evening meeting saw seventeen present and a warm welcome given to Clarissa and Anne who talked about the life of Elinor Mary Brent-Dyer, with the accompaniment of a few slides. It was a sad story in many ways with family problems in early childhood. When she eventually started to write she was involved in teaching and it was interesting to note that she spent some time at Leeds Teacher Training College. Eventually her family moved from South Shields to Hereford where Elinor had a private school for girls - but was a terrible administrator. Not having an agent, she was paid little for her Chalet School

stories although she succeeded in making her publishers rich from the large sales and reprints. Like so many authors (including Frank Richards) she was not fully credited for her work and did not make a vast fortune from it.

Clarissa also showed us many slides of the various dust wrappers of the Chalet School books and paperbacks, and a lively discussion followed. Warm thanks for a splendid evening were conveyed to Anne and Clarissa.

Our August meeting is a free and easy with members' contributions, and our September meeting will be on the 9th with "Comic Asides" from Bob Naughton and "Some Presentation" from Eric and Cath Humphrey.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

SOUTH WESTERN O.B.B.C.

Thirteen members attended our meeting on Sunday, 4th June and enjoyed an interesting and varied programme.

Geoff Lardner began with an intriguing self-penned story entitled "Sam and Millie" - an imaginative story entailing the birth of William George Bunter, no less!

Una Hamilton-Wright entertained us with "Have We Been Here Before?", a study of *deja-vue*. Was a character in Charles Kingsley's "Westward Ho" a possible inspiration for Bunter? This Elizabethan period adventure story was one of Frank Richard's favourites and amongst the bullying and bullish behaviour emerges the Bunter-type character, Jack 'Piggy' Brimblecombe. 'Food for thought' indeed!

Bill Lofts regaled us with his experiences of some notable eccentrics he has met over the years, one being a landlord of a North Country pub who dressed like Bunter and spoke in the style - "I say, you chaps, lights out!" Laurence Price spoke on the Eagle comic strip, "The Road of Courage", the Life of Jesus Christ, a tour de force by the great Dan Dare artist, Frank Hampson.

An excellent strawberry tea followed, generously provided by Mrs. Salisbury.

Bill spoke again on "The Man Who Liked Lambs" about a big man called Lionel Goodheart who had an obsession with juvenile lamb stories. E. Grant McPerson amused us with some humorous anecdotes and Bill closed with his memories of Burma in the war, and how he found a copy of Sexton Blake no. 340 there, the beginning of his love of the world of boy's papers.

The next meeting, to which all are welcome, will be at 2.30 p.m. on Sunday, 17th September 1995, at the home of Tim Salisbury, 20 Uphill Road South, Uphill, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset.

LAURENCE PRICE

LONDON O.B.B.C.

The June meeting at the home of Betty and Eric Lawrence in Wokingham began with a musical quiz from Eric which was won by Mark Taha and Phil Griffiths.

This was followed by a "Comics" quiz from Norman Wright which was won by Alan Pratt and Vic Pratt.

Alan Pratt then spoke about his career in the Scouting movement with particular reference to the Scout magazine.

(Please see page 27 for the continuation of this report.)

SPRITES, SCHOOLGIRLS and SECRET SOCIETIES

(Reviews by Mary Cadogan)

Very few small girls of my generation grew up without enjoying at some time the marvellously attractive and imaginative flower-fairy pictures of Cicely Mary Barker. I first encountered them when, at the age of four, I played the part of her Bird's Foot Trefoil fairy in a Sunday School production. The flower fairy book which I was given at that time intrigued me then, and has charmed me ever since. **CICELY MARY BARKER AND HER ART** by Jane Laing (published by Frederick Warne at £25) is a beautifully produced tribute to the artist whose many books, postcards and pictures of fairies and children, and scenes from nature and religion offer so many delights.

This large format book is lavishly illustrated in full colour and every page had me 'oohing' and 'ahing' with satisfaction and nostalgia.

As well as its wide range of illustrations, which retain the delicate colourings of the originals, the book provides a biographical account of Cicely Mary Barker (until now a somewhat shadowy figure to many of us) with photographs of the artist and her family. It also succinctly assesses her artistic and literary achievements, and sets these in the context of other 'nursery' illustrators of the period (such as Margaret Tarrant). A **MUST** for anyone with an interest in children's books of the first half of the twentieth-century.

Helen McClelland has already made a valuable contribution to the world of girls' fiction as the biographer of Elinor Brent-Dyer and the author of **THE CHALET SCHOOL COMPANION**. She has now written a full-length novel



The Gorse Fairies from A Flower Fairy Alphabet illustrate the old saying that when the flowers are in bloom, kissing is in fashion.

with a Chalet School background, VISITORS FOR THE CHALET SCHOOL (published by Bettany Press at £12.99). I do not often enjoy sequels 'from other hands' than the original author of a series, but I have to say that with this book Helen McClelland has done a splendid job. By any standard it is a good school story; it also convincingly recapitulates the characterisations and atmosphere which Elinor Brent-Dyer so compellingly created. There are some gaps in her 58 book saga, and Helen McClelland has written about a school term which seems to be missing between the 1927 PRINCESS OF THE CHALET SCHOOL and the 1928 THE HEAD GIRL OF THE CHALET SCHOOL.

From Elinor's retrospective references to this term in HEAD GIRL and her 'skeletal notes', Helen has been able to reconstruct the visit of girls from Grange House School in Kensington to the Chalet School in the Tyrol. As she says in her introduction, VISITORS FOR THE CHALET SCHOOL is built around the theme of a 'double journey': on one level the actual journey through Europe travelled by the London schoolgirls; on another, the different 'journey' one of their number was helped to make in order, as the modern phrase has it, *to find herself!*

As well as creating an attractive new heroine, seventeen-year-old Patricia Davidson, with whose fortunes we can easily empathize, Helen McClelland re-introduces Chalet School stalwarts such as Joey Bettany and Grizel Cochrane with remarkable authenticity. Once again we can savour the glowing friendships and sense of internationalism that are the hallmark of Elinor Brent-Dyer's alpine educational establishment.

Turning from a long-running hard-back series of girls' stories to a very affectionately remembered saga in the weekly papers, I have been browsing through THE SILENT THREE COMPANION by Marion Waters (available at £6, post-free, from M. Waters, "Ryburn", 11 Abbots Way, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, NN8 2AF.) This COMPANION is a wonderfully nostalgic

HOLIDAY PICTURES



Cicely's book jackets usually depict two children sharing an activity or discovery

journey through the world of this most celebrated of schoolgirl secret societies formed to right injustices and to champion the weak. It includes an informative historical background to the Silent Three stories, indexes (or indices?) with plot summaries of all the secret society stories in the A.P. girls' weeklies and monthlies, biographical details of the separate characters in the redoubtable trio of hooded and masked schoolgirls, as well as a newly written story of their exploits, *The Silent Three in Scarborough*.

As well as all these delights THE SILENT THREE COMPANION provides details of the life and careers of the saga's original and main artist, Evelyn Flinders, and first author, Horace ('Enid') Boyten, who in co-operation with Stewart Pride, the Editor of the post-war SCHOOLFRIEND, produced this most long lasting of fictional clandestine groups. Evelyn Flinders, of course, was unusual in being one of the very few women illustrators who worked on the A.P. girls' papers from the 1930s. A photograph of her is included in the COMPANION, which also includes a foreword from myself.

Perhaps I can do no better here to recommend THE SILENT THREE COMPANION to you than to quote from part of my foreword, as follows:

"The Silent Three was the most celebrated and addictive of these underground groups and the first to appear in picture-strip form. In this COMPANION, Marion Waters, who has become the chronicler *par excellence* of the history of girls' secret societies, clearly conveys the Silent Three's affinities with earlier text stories. There were forerunners of Betty, Joan and Peggy in the 1930s *Schoolgirl* and *Schoolgirls' Weekly* and in the *Girls' Crystal* during the 1940s. John W. Bobin (a contributor to the Sexton Blake canon) as 'Gertrude Nelson' and Stewart Pride as 'Dorothy Page' achieved particular success with their secret society tales, so it is no coincidence that when Pride became the Editor of the first post World War II girls' paper (the *School Friend*) he should feature a clandestine group of heroines in a starring role."

"With Horace Boyten (writing as Enid Boyten but not to be confused with the creator of Noddy although, like Miss Blyton, he set some stories in a school called St. Claire's!) Stewart Pride provided ideas for the story-line, and Evelyn Flinders was commissioned to produce the drawings. She was an inspired choice of artist. One of the few female illustrators to work on the Amalgamated Press' girls' papers at the time, she had the ability to suggest through her visual images not only action and atmosphere but the personalities and strong friendships of her leading characters. The series began - and continued - in style, with the plot unfolding in glowing pictures with balloon captions and occasional further amplification in small blocks of narrative text.

It is not surprising that in the austerity of those early post-war years the *School Friend's* readers were captivated by the romance of mysterious meetings by flickering candlelight, and - at a time of continuing clothes rationing - the thrill of dressing up in long, un-skimpy hooded robes. As this SILENT THREE COMPANION explains, in the interests of maintaining their

anonymity as a group, Betty, Joan and Peggy had sometimes to move from one school to another, but fortunately each of these was rich in some of the enthrallingly atmospheric trappings of movable flagstones, underground passages, ancient towers with secret escape routes and fountains in whose ornamental gargoyles important and confidential messages could be hidden!"

"Stirring inspirational stuff - and anyone who has ever responded to it in stories of the Silent Three will find this COMPANION extremely satisfying..."



LONDON OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB (Continued from page 23)

The meeting on Sunday, 9th July at the Chingford Horticultural Society hall began with a quiz with the theme of detectives from Duncan Harper. This was in two parts, firstly to give both names of detectives associated with authors and then to name actors and actresses who had played them in films and T.V.

After a smashing tea, Roger Jenkins spoke about John Dickson Carr, the author who became a specialist in the locked room type of detective fiction.

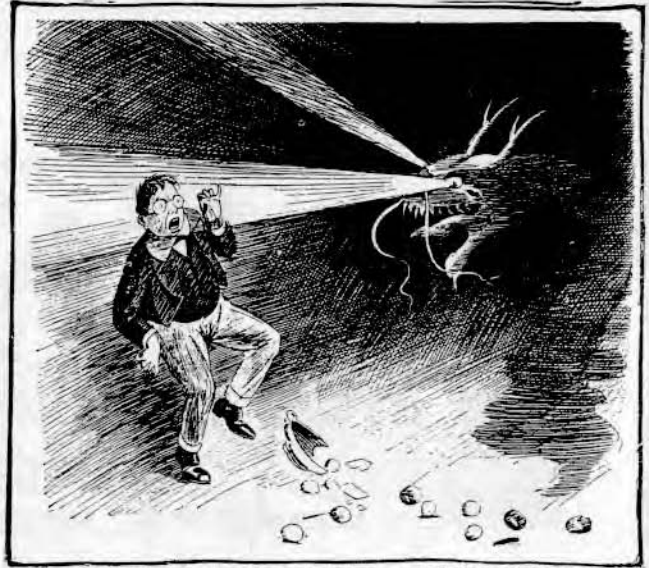
The August meeting will be on Sunday, 13th at the home of Eric and Betty Lawrence in Wokingham. There will be a special Luncheon meeting on Sunday 3rd September to which all members, including postal members, are invited. Details are obtainable from me.

SUZANNE HARPER

THE THREE FACES OF WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER

by Reg Hardinge

It was in 1908 that Billy Bunter, the Brain-child of Charles Hamilton, made his debut in 'The Magnet'. The cover of issue No. 38 (31.10.1908) showed a petrified school boy in an incident from a story entitled THE CHEERFUL CHINEE. This was how HUTTON MITCHELL, the very first artist to draw the Greyfriars characters, depicted the Owl of the Remove. It was hardly the likeness that latter-day aficionados have come to regard as epitomising Bunter.



"HELP!" YELLED BILLY BUNTER, DROPPING THE DISH OF COLD POTATOES HE WAS CARRYING, "OW, HELP!"

CHARLES HENRY CHAPMAN it was who developed and created the now universal conception of this fat, bespectacled, greedy youth, clad in checked trousers. An example of Chapman's art from 'Billy Bunter's Own' is reproduced.

The cover of 'The Magnet' No. 1644 (August 10th, 1939) is the work of LEONARD SHIELDS, who also contributed to PUCK, SCHOOLGIRLS OWN and FILM FUN. The facial difference between his and Chapman's Bunter is most noticeable.

GERALD CAMPION, who played Bunter in the TV series which started in 1952, was an excellent choice for this role. Charles Dickens also wrote about a fat boy who is featured in several episodes of the THE PICKWICK PAPERS. Apart from W.G. BESSIE and SAMMY, another Bunter (no relation) comes to mind, namely MERVYN BUNTER, who, in World War I, was batman to Lord PETER WIMSEY, and continued as his manservant in civilian life. His exploits are to be found in the novels of DOROTHY L. SAYERS.

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