

STORY PAPER  
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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## THE EDITOR'S CHAT



## NEW YEAR GREETINGS

As I write this editorial I am surrounded by decorations and tokens of Christmas warmth and cheer. Once again I want to thank the many C.D. readers who have sent me cards and seasonal greetings. Although I cannot respond individually to all of these, I hope that you will understand how very much I appreciate these expressions of your good and kind wishes.

And now we are welcoming a New Year which I trust will be happy, peaceful and prosperous. As you will see from issues of the C.D. later on this year, 1998 will mark several hobby anniversaries. Two of special note will be celebrated in our February number - the *Magnet's* 90 year anniversary, and the half-century of the London Old Boys Book Club.

It is a fairly safe bet that back in 1908 none of the *Magnet's* readers - nor even its editors and Frank Richards himself - expected it to run for decades and still be relished and discussed towards the end of the twentieth century.

The resilience of this weekly paper is indeed remarkable, and so too is that of the O.B.B.C. With its regular monthly meetings over a fifty year period, the existence of the London Club is not only an affirmation of the value of the old papers which inspired its creation but also of shared joys and lasting friendships. The C.D. will be celebrating all this, and of course the coming into being of the other Clubs.

## LOOKING BACK - AND LOOKING FORWARD

As an editor I am fortunate in being sent an abundance of contributions for our magazine. There is, I am delighted to say, no shortage of fresh material from month to month and I look forward to receiving items from new as well as from our long-standing contributors. Not surprisingly, from newer readers

who do not have complete or even long runs of the C.D., I receive several requests in the course of a year for reprints of material which has previously appeared in the magazine. As you know, the recent special publications prepared by John Wernham and myself (*S.P.C.D., The First Fifty Years* and *Ninety Glorious Years*), which comprised many reprinted items, have proved extremely popular. I cannot promise to grant every request, but it would be good to know what readers generally feel about reprinted material, and which series - or 'one-offs' - might be particularly welcomed, if repeated.

## OUR ANNUAL

Almost as soon as the Annual was sent out early in December I began to receive enthusiastic letters about it: once again that heart-warming phrase, 'the best ever!', was frequently used. Many of you also wrote to say how much you had enjoyed the December issue of the monthly C.D., which pleased me a great deal as I had set out to make this really Christmassy.

With warmest wishes for 1998.

MARY CADOGAN

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## MORNING BREAK

by Ted Baldock

As the Doctor drew up a chair, the sharp clang of a bell made itself heard throughout the whole building. And suddenly, with wild whoops and shouts, the boy-life imprisoned in class-room and gymnasium let itself loose, and a vision of college-caps and scampering feet grew on the horizon.

Kent Carr. *A Rank Outsider.*

The old quadrangle at Greyfriars rang and echoed to the laughter and shouts of a host of fellows newly released from the bondage of the form-rooms for a spell. 'Letting off steam' was the order of the day. In a shady corner beneath the elms a crowd of boys were jostling and bustling for advantageous positions outside the tuckshop.

Within this little temple of pleasure and brief relaxation the buxom figure of Mrs Mimble, ably assisted by her spouse - unseen in the back regions - was working like a Trojan to supply the many and various demands of her impatient customers who were loud in their demands for immediate service.

"Jam tarts here Mrs Mimble."

"Doughnuts for me, take no notice of that fellow, I was here first you know."

"Rubbish you ass - don't heed him Mrs Mimble . . ."

"Cough up my tarts there please."

"I say you fellows . . ."

"Five glasses of lemon squash and ditto slices of that spiffing looking cake over there Mrs M."

"I say . . ."

"Roll away Bunter."

Animation and demanding voices filled the little tuckshop with sound. 'Break' had a duration of fifteen minutes, every one of which was of inestimable value to the throng of fellows. Mrs Mimble was kept at full pressure to meet the demands of the hungry boys all demanding immediate service.

"Are those sausage-rolls fresh? I'm sure I saw them here yesterday."

This impertinent enquiry emanated from Harold Skinner who, with his two cronies Snoop and Stott, were shouldering their way through the crowd of juniors round the counter.

Had Mrs Mimble been rather less occupied with business at that particular moment, Harold Skinner would have received a goodly portion of the sharper edge of her tongue. So, happily for him his remarks were ignored in the general hub-bub of noise.

"I say Wharton, old chap, would you lend me half a crown until the post comes. I am expecting a postal order from one of my titled relations you know."

"Roll away barrel, we're busy . . ."

"Beast - I say, Mauly . . ."

It is quite remarkable how swiftly fifteen minutes flash by when one is engaged in congenial pursuits such as, for example, consuming lemon squash and raspberry tarts. In the grey, dusty form-room a quarter of an hour could, and did, spin itself out to an aeon of time, especially when Mr Quelch's humour was in an advanced state of acidity, as was not infrequently the case. Here in the tuck-shop - with so many good things on tap and so limited a time in which to do them ample justice - it would appear to most fellows that justice was in very short supply.

"Make way there you fags. Clear those ticks from that table, Greeny. Look alive, Potter, lend a hand here and don't slack!"

It was a voice - or rather a bellow - of which Stentor of old might have been justly proud. It has been recorded that the ancient Greek gentleman could equal in density and volume of sound the shouts of fifty ordinary mortals. Be it said here that Horace Coker of the Fifth form at Greyfriars could run him very close in this particular field. Horace was once again exemplifying his 'short way with fags', although having made a more than adequate breakfast that morning he was 'sharp set'.

A less than happy exchange of views in the Fifth form-room that morning had left Mr Prout the victor, and although not in any way enhancing Coker's intellect it had certainly had that effect on his appetite.

Custom dictated that these commands from the 'great' man were followed immediately by pandemonium and war. All feuds and disagreements among the juniors, for the moment, were put aside and they presented a united front to the enemy. They closed ranks and with one accord fell upon Coker, and dreadful things were enacted upon his person - all to his extreme discomfort. Time was in short supply. They had not a moment of that valuable commodity to waste - and they did not squander a second. Potter and Greene, as ever on these occasions were, to say the least, reticent, displaying a less than eager desire to participate. They faded from view and left their leader in the hands of the enemy.

Not a hundred miles from this scene of battle another 'break' was being celebrated. In the austere and dignified atmosphere of Masters' Common-room a somewhat different scene prevailed. Here was no jostling or scrimmaging. Here emotions were, more or less, under control (although an opposite state had not been entirely unknown in the past). Coffee and biscuits were the order of the day, plus the airing of sundry views and opinions among the gowned figures of Dr Locke's staff.

The right to monopolise the 'Times' and 'Guardian' was contested vigorously between Mr Prout and Mr Hacker, the former by virtue of seniority reasoning that he should have

'first go'. Both gentlemen felt that they had an inalienable right to these august journals. Little Mr Twigg of the Second form contented himself with a copy of yesterday's 'Thunderer', taking his coffee in a quiet corner on the periphery of the battle area. Meanwhile Mr Quelch, smiling grimly to himself, sat in his refreshment, safe in the happy knowledge that his own private copy of the 'Times' was awaiting him in his study for perusal later. This was the little daily comedy played out.

So the fleeting moments slip by, small antagonisms and rivalries all rising briefly to the surface as the respective protagonists seek tarts and lemonade, or newspapers, during that hallowed institution of 'Morning Break' which runs like a golden thread through the fabric of the Greyfriars day - and indeed generally through our great society.

Billy Bunter and Lord Mauleverer, odd companions but of one mind here, have oft-times advocated an extension of this time-honoured ritual. Why, they wonder, do we not embrace the highly civilised hot-country custom of indulging in the 'mid-day siesta' also? Perhaps this might prove a little too revolutionary.

That great military leader Napoleon Buonaparte is said to have remarked that 'an army marches on its stomach'. The realisation of this is probably why his conquests were so numerous. In a similar context it may be wondered whether the scholastic achievements of the Greyfriars Remove were in any way attributable to the 'Morning Break'.





## THE UNION JACK, THE THRILLER, AND THOSE MONTHLY LIBRARIES

by J.E.M.

The demise of the *Union Jack* - or, more precisely, its metamorphosis into *Detective Weekly* - was an unwelcome surprise for a great many Blake fans. It was, and to some extent still is, a bit of a mystery as well.

We must presume that the *UJ's* circulation had been falling, though the continuing popularity of Sexton Blake himself was hardly in question. The monthly *Sexton Blake Library* flourished and went on doing so up to and long after World War Two. Perhaps that was no small part of the *UJ's* problems. The 1930s *SBLs*, with up to four full-length novelettes a month, their brilliant covers designed by the incomparable Eric Parker and printed by the newly introduced three-colour process, were an irresistible attraction on any bookstall.

But the *Union Jack* was obviously facing other difficulties; for one thing, its very name had increasingly become "old hat". *Union Jack* might easily have been the title of a journal devoted to a flag-waving jingoism which, at the beginning of the Nineteen Thirties, was extremely unpopular. The 1914 War had now become a bitter memory, inspiring a lot of pacifist writing ("Journey's End", "All Quiet on the Western Front" *et al*) while, to make matters worse, the world was in the throes of economic depression. Changing the name of Sexton Blake's famous weekly presented no problem, of course, but there were clearly other causes of decline.

Let us look at the last two full years of the *UJ's* life (1931 - 1932). Some staunch loyalists like the late Blakian expert, Josie Packman, thought that the gangster element loomed too large in some of the later stories and this, it was believed, decisively damaged the traditional Blake image. It is true that 1931 did see a lot of Blake - versus- Gangland tales. "Sexton Blake Cleans Up Chicago" (*UJ* 1435), "Rival Racketeers" (1437), "Bootleg Island" (1447), "Gangland's Decree" (1450) and "The Gang Girl" (1458) are some titles from this period which speak for themselves. They are certainly a long way from the old 'tec tradition but did such stories by themselves prompt a significant fall in circulation? It is worth noting that the new companion weekly, *The Thriller*, launched only two years before, also carried a number of gangster stories at this time. But *The Thriller's* real advantage was its employment of some very well-known authors of the day - Edgar Wallace, Leslie Charteris, Sydney Horler and many others.

Such writers were also introducing a different kind of crime story, often with the crook as hero. Charteris's 'Saint' and Barry Perowne's revival of Raffles struck a new and very different chord from that of the Sexton Blake *mythos*. It is hard not to feel that *The Thriller*, and the whole crime fiction trend it represented at this time, had quite a lot to do

with the end of the *Union Jack*. The *UJ*'s successor, *Detective Weekly*, itself fairly soon dropped Blake, introducing what might be called *Thriller* style stories. (The *DW*'s later revival of Blake in re-hashed form represented only the brief last kick of our sleuth in weekly format.)

I like to believe that the *UJ* itself went out in a blaze of glory. Following the so-called gangster period, 1932 saw some of the cream of the whole Blakian saga: the famous Tram Series, the Onion Men stories, the last Wu Ling encounters (referred to by Derek Hinrich and myself in recent Digest articles), superb tales of Zenith and Waldo, as well as reprints of the great Criminals' Confederation series. In addition, most of these stories were illustrated by Eric Parker at the very top of his form. If not already familiar with them, try to get a look at the covers, if nothing else, of "The Witches' Moon" (*UJ* 1488), "Sexton Blake in Manchuria" (1494), "Volcano Island" (1500), "The Masked Carollers" (1521) or almost any of the Tram and Onion Men stories - a feast for all Blake and Parker fans.

Returning to *The Thriller*, it is interesting that its editor(s), impressed by the ever-growing success of the *Sexton Blake Library*, decided in the middle of 1934 to launch a monthly *Thriller Library*. Authors for this series included Val Gielgud (brother of actor John) as well as other celebrated names from *The Thriller*'s weekly stable. Its covers, if I remember accurately, were usually by Ernest Hubbard and were quite striking (Hubbard was especially good at sinister Chinamen and nubile young ladies!) Ironically, however, and for whatever reason, the *Thriller Library* lasted less than a year, though *The Thriller* itself vigorously survived until the paper shortage imposed by the Second World War.

So we conclude with an intriguing paradox. The weekly *Union Jack* disappeared while Sexton Blake continued to triumph on a monthly basis. The weekly *Thriller* reached a huge circulation but couldn't for long support a monthly publication. It would be interesting to hear other readers' views on all this.

(FOOTNOTE: In half a lifetime of being a collector, I have never come across a single copy of the monthly *Thriller* (1934). Has any other Digest reader?)

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## PLEASE REMEMBER -

It helps the C.D. if readers advertise their SALES and WANTS in its pages. The rates are 4p per word, or £20 for a whole-page displayed advertisement, £10 for a half-page and £5 for a quarter-page.

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## BLACK, WHITE AND GRAY

by Mark Caldicott

### Part One: The Trials of Augustus Hart

Brooks' writing spans more than fifty years, during which the moral ethos within his society evolved and changed dramatically. This is evident in his stories; and the way recurring themes can be seen to have been subtly changed is often a reflection of that social change. In my next few contributions I thought it might be interesting to present some seemingly disparate selections from Brooks' work, but to retain an underlying theme, namely the way in which Brooks' portrayal of good and evil evolves over time, the link with the changing society, and the historical consequences for ESB's career.

By April 1919 the Nelson Lee Library stories of St. Frank's were well-established and reaching the height of their popularity. So much so, in fact, that Amalgamated Press thought it worthwhile to ask ESB to write a parallel series of St. Frank's stories in the newly-launched *Boy's Realm*. These were original stories and, in order to fit the format of *Boy's Realm*, were shorter than their Nelson Lee counterparts.

The twelfth week of the new paper brought a story entitled "The Surprise Packet", the first of a series of eight (*Boy's Realm* 12 - 19, 21 June 1919 to 9 August 1919), which introduced Augustus Hart, a newcomer to the Remove at St. Frank's. Hart arrives in the middle of the term, an unusual occurrence which Hart chooses not to explain. He is well-dressed, has plentiful cash and has an air of cool self-assurance which Handforth feels is unbecoming to a new boy. Hart's new study mates, Clifton and Simmons, were not too keen on the idea of a third occupant in Study K until Hart revealed seemingly unending generosity in the matter of food for study teas. Indeed they soon begin to realise that for all his mystery he is a decent fellow.

Nipper and the fellows of the Remove agree, but soon have cause to think again. De Valerie notices Hart has a cigarette packet.

... De Valerie's smile vanished, and he looked grim.

"That was a packet of cigarettes, Hart!" he said sharply.

Hart gave the other junior a cool stare.

"Was it?" he said.

"Yes, it was!" exclaimed De Valerie. "You don't smoke, do you?"

"Cigarettes are made to smoke, aren't they?" said Hart. "Haven't you ever seen me smoking, anyhow?"

De Valerie looked serious.

"I'm not going to preach," he said, "but if you start any of Fullwood's games here, Hart, you'll get into trouble. Smoking is rotten..."

Smoking, of course, is an indication of the bounder. Unfortunately Hart gives every indication that he is indeed a bad type when, losing his temper with De Valerie, he knocks him to the ground and, not content with this, kicks De Valerie before he can get up. Kicking a man when he is down, figuratively or literally, is archetypically caddish behaviour.

Immediately, however, Hart recognises the unacceptability of his behaviour, and is filled with remorse. He apologises - the sign of a decent fellow - and later reveals that the cigarette packet is filled with postage stamps.

Fullwood, thinking that Hart is a fellow-spirit, and one with a well-filled wallet, invites him to Study A. Dared to smoke, Hart does so, showing that he is no stranger to the habit, but immediately throwing the cigarette away in disgust. Fullwood, Gulliver and Bell, thinking Hart is naive in the ways of poker and easily parted from his money, invite Hart into a card game. Thus we discover that Hart is an accomplished gambler, but one who takes pleasure from turning the tables on the Nuts of Study A. It is Fullwood who is parted from his cash. Hart adds to Fullwood's confusion by posting his winnings to Bannington Cottage Hospital as an anonymous gift.

Hart, then, is a decent fellow with the skills of the bounder. How can this be?

A chance meeting with a boy in a lane begins to reveal Hart's secret. The boy is from Hazlehurst College, another public school, and is on his way to St. Frank's to organise a cricket fixture. He reveals that Hart was formerly known as Hyde, and threatens to "let Nipper and the rest know what kind of a serpent they're harbouring". The boy, Riley, sets off to carry out his threat, but not being familiar with the country, falls down a gully where he manages to hang onto a sapling, poised above a drop to rocks and certain death. Hart takes his own life in his hands to rescue Riley, and the grateful Riley promises to keep Hart's secret.

We are left to consider why, if Hart is a "serpent", he should act so selflessly and bravely.

We begin to see more of Hart's former life when he encounters another acquaintance whilst in Bannington. This time he is accosted by a Mr Hooker, a shady bookmaker who claims he is owed money and demands repayment. Augustus Hart is not willing to comply and meets him in the Cups Hotel to tell him so.

"I want thirty pounds. Have you got it?"

"I've got forty," said Hart.

Mr Hooker beamed.

"Well, that's handsome of you!" he said genially. "I don't mind waiting if a young gent does the right thing at the finish!"

"Good" said Hart. "Because that's just what I'm going to do - the right thing! You say that I owe you thirty pounds. Hasn't it ever struck you, Mr Hooker, that the whole deal was a rotten fraud?"

Hart refuses to pay. Hooker threatens to go to St. Frank's and get him expelled, but Hart responds:

"You can't scare me, Mr Hooker. I've been a bit of a fool at times, but I've learnt my lesson. And I know exactly what to do with cattle of your breed . . . Your speciality is to entice rich schoolboys into rotten habits and ways, and then you fleece them of every penny they possess . . ."

Enraged by Hart's attitude, Mr Hooker throws Hart out of the hotel and into the gutter - unfortunately in view of Fullwood who takes great delight in telling the other Removites how he was "coming past the Cups Hotel in Bannington when Hart was pitched out into the bally gutter - hoofed out like a drunken tramp!" To the surprise, and horror, of the others Hart owns up to having been ejected from the hotel by a bookmaker. It seems to them that Hart may not be a decent fellow after all.

However, Hart regains their confidence when Mr Hooker appears at the school and Hart, instead of trying to avoid trouble, takes the forthright step of telling Nelson Lee the true facts of the situation. The housemaster-detective warns Mr Hooker of the legal position with regard to dealings with minors - and this time it is Mr Hooker who is ignominiously ejected by Nelson Lee himself.

It is clear now that Hart is struggling to escape his own past - a past in which he has smoked, gambled, imbibed liquor and bullied, and in which he was hated by decent fellows. It is an uphill struggle but with this latest vote of confidence from Nelson Lee, Hart appears to be winning the battle.

However, Fullwood has not finished with him yet!

(To be continued)

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## THOSE BAD, BEAUTIFUL GIRLS!

by Margery Woods

### Part 1 Lydia

Should the definitive history of Cliff House School ever be written it would probably settle quite naturally into three major sections: the eras of *The Magnet*, *The School Friend*, and *The Schoolgirl*, and the individual approaches of the authors who penned the lives and adventures of those fascinating girls who enthralled young readers week after week. Those characters would also fall into three distinct categories: the good girls, who played the game and whose moral code was impeccable: the meanies, who provided the trouble-making and much of the essential conflict in the stories: and the rest, the vaguely known names who occasionally featured in the stories but who were necessary to flesh out the school's complement of characters, lest the impression might be given that this great school housed only a dozen or so pupils and staff.

It was accepted right from the start that the good girls were pretty, attractive, clear-eyed and vibrant with good health and sporting prowess, while the meanies tended to be

plain and colourless, of spiteful nature and unattractive personalities, and thin, lank, straight hair without lustre. Marcia Loftus was once described as having a sallow skin, tallow hair and lynxlike eyes. With Nancy Bell she made the most snobbish and spiteful pair of girls in the Fourth. All that need be said of Nancy Bell is that she was cruel to the little creatures in Pets House and once plotted to bring about the disgrace of Miss Bullivant.

But there were exceptions to the rule. The meanies were not all plain and dull. One of the bad girls during the *School Friend* era was the famous - or notorious! - Augusta Anstruther-Browne. She was described as having jet black hair, cold grey eyes and finely chiselled features. Not a pretty girl but one of commanding appearance and great elegance. She was spoiled and rich, and once turned up for a school camping holiday in most uncampinglike attire.

'There was no one who could pose better than Augusta. Her light blue costume fitted beautifully. Little articles of jewellery glittered here and there. Her face - or rather what was visible under her large picture hat - showed traces of powder.'

One of Augusta's satellites is Vivienne Leigh, who is pretty, with golden, shoulder-length curls. She follows her idol, Augusta, and the third member of the trio, Marcia Loftus, into whatever bad behaviour they choose to cook up. Augusta could be exciting and daring, even as she shocked, but unfortunately she reformed, becoming a much loved and well behaved member of the Fourth. Somehow she was never quite so interesting after that. Vivienne, ever faithful, also reformed, and that left only the unattractive meanies to carry the flag for treachery but without the panache of Augusta.



Marcia and Nancy soldiered on in the revived Cliff House after *School Friend* was reshaped as *The Schoolgirl*, where they were joined by two decidedly hedonistic and self-willed girls who were determined that their schooldays were not going to depress them with boredom and dreary old lessons. One was Rosa Rodworth, quite a dark and smouldering beauty, and the other was Lydia Crossendale. Both were extremely spoiled and equally awash with the funds necessary to express their spirit of freedom.

Redeeming qualities were difficult to find in the haughty and treacherous nature of Lydia, self-styled leader of the Fourth's Smart Set. Although she was not pretty in the usual sense of the word - perhaps too vapid a term to apply to her - she was striking in the sheer force of her determination to be somebody. She had silky brown hair with a glossy sheen, and indulged in forbidden make-up whenever she broke bounds to go dancing. She smoked, loved gorgeous clothes and jewellery, hated Barbara Redfern because of her great popularity, and although not yet fifteen had already decided that when she got married her husband must be wealthy and also have a title! But the most revealing insight into the true depth of Lydia's character comes in the surroundings of her own home.

Her father is depicted as a good-humoured, kindly and indulgent man. Her mother as having a fading prettiness and being very like Lydia in a softer, gentler way. Two good people who seem never to have discovered the true character of their daughter. For Lydia at home is an accomplished actress and has succeeded in a life-long portrayal of a gentle, sweet-natured daughter, devoted to her parents. A false, twisted mirror image of the

snobbish, unpleasant girl known to her fellow pupils at Cliff House. A false image almost frightening.

The little maidservant at Courtlands adores Lydia, seeing only the at-home role of the daughter who is always sweet to the servant, Henrietta, who is known as Freckles. For Lydia had long since realised that guile and a cunning sweetness could win most of the things she desired; it was when the guile failed with less blinkered people that the true Lydia showed through. During the summer holidays Lydia had a spill while canoeing on the river near her home and almost drowned. Freckles rescued her and Mr Crossendale was so grateful that he decided to reward Freckles by sending her to Cliff House. Neither father nor maid had any inkling of the rage and hatred that surged in Lydia's heart, especially when she learned that her father had had a financial setback and must economise

for a while, in order to keep his promise to Freckles, and Lydia must manage with a reduced allowance until his financial position improved.

This bodes ill for Freckles when the girls arrive at Cliff House and she begins to discover the true nature of the young mistress she has always admired. Lydia expects her to continue being a servant, even to the extent of lighting a cigarette for her at the precise moment Miss Primrose chooses to enter the study. Freckles has to take the blame and realises that she has made a disastrous impression on her first day. Yet she tries to make excuses for Lydia, telling herself that she owes so much to Lydia's father. So she acquiesces, even though she is



expected to wait on Lydia's sycophants as well, the unappealing Frances Frost and Freda Ferrier. Only Rosa tends to veer against Lydia during a study tea party at which Freckles is subjected to some insulting remarks. The party quickly erupts into a row and disintegrates into a walk-out by the guests. Naturally Freckles gets the blame for this fiasco.

The new relationship between mistress and former servant is not improved by Clara Trevlyn's discovery that the new girl shows great promise at hockey and captained the village team at Courtland. Lydia is furious. She is too inherently lazy to be a sportsgirl, much preferring to sparkle on the dance floor, but there are other aspects causing her worry. The previous term she had run up large bills at Madam Judith's for clothes and indulged in other extravagances. Now, on her reduced allowance, she is unable to settle them. There is also the matter of the pearl necklace her father had given her on her fourteenth birthday, which she had handed over to Madam Judith in part payment of her overdue account. Then her father had decided it was too valuable to keep at school and instructed her to bring it home at holiday time and leave it there. Lydia, in desperation, had gone to Bill Whiteman,

a local jeweller, and got him to make her a copy. Now he wants paying. The only lifeline she can grab at is the five pounds her father had promised her when she got her school colours. This sudden desire to star in the hockey team does not impress Clara, but Freckles is straight in, much to Lydia's chagrin.

How is she to extricate herself from this ever tightening mesh of her own making?

She decides to break bounds one night to meet Bill Whiteman and pay what she can and beg him to wait a while longer for the rest. But she needs the help of Freckles, to wait up in the lobby and open the window for Lydia's return. (The thought of a fourteen-year-old daughter keeping a midnight meeting with a suspiciously shady jeweller would be enough to give any mother a heart attack, but this never occurs to the self-willed Lydia.) Inevitably things go wrong and there is an encounter with Miss Bullivant, for which the whole school will suffer until the culprit owns up. Lydia is quite ready to let Freckles take the blame (a conversation has been overheard by a sneak) but reckons without the redoubtable Babs (Barbara Redfern). Lydia stages an expert *volte-face* and goes with Freckles to confess to the smothering of the Bull with the lobby window curtain, presenting a plausible and innocent excuse. As a liar Lydia was second to none. She escapes with five hundred lines and thus reinstates herself as Freckles' beloved heroine. She declares them chums again and for two days pets and fusses over Freckles, preparing the way for the price to be paid. Freckles is to step down from the team so that Lydia, as first reserve, can play in the match that will gain her the precious colours - and the much needed fiver. But Clara is not pleased. She refuses to countenance the change.



"WHY should I be passed over for my own servant?" Lydia flared, white-faced. Clara eyed her coolly.  
"Because your servant is a better player than you, that's all!"

Lydia pretends to accept this, then on the day of the match sends Freckles on a supposed errand to the jeweller, whom she has persuaded to lock Freckles up for a couple of hours until Lydia has got into the team.

While all the plotting is going on Freckles appears to have a guardian angel in the form of a mysterious flower woman. It is this woman who sees Freckles enter the jewellers and fail to emerge. A phone call to Babs just before the coach leaves brings the cavalry to the rescue, and also brings Mr Crossendale on the scene. Lydia is now in deep disgrace.

This series consisted of three stories (*Schoolgirl* 423 - 425) in which Lydia goes on to cause Freckles to be demoted to the Third, whose young ribs make her anything but welcome. But her plans to discredit Freckles in her father's eyes still seem to fail as he still has a great affection for the youngster who had saved his daughter's life. Meanwhile preparations go ahead at the school to welcome the return of a distinguished old girl who lives nearby, Egyptologist Mrs Winchester, who has spent several years exploring the Valley of Tombs. A reception is planned and the flower woman is helping with the floral decorations at the school. By now Lydia is afraid of this woman and her interest in Freckles. She smashes her own watch and then accuses the flower woman of trying to steal it. Miss Primrose shocks her by saying that the flower woman is a friend and reprimands Lydia severely. Then Lydia loses an incriminating letter she has written to Marcia Loftus, a former crony now expelled, and is convinced that the flower woman has the letter. By chance she sees the flower woman enter the old coastguard station on the cliff and locks her in the building, hoping to keep her out of the way while Mr Crossendale is at the school for the reception. But a severe storm is brewing and there is a landslide on the cliff by the old station.

Suddenly Lydia's almost extinct conscience flickers to life and she rushes out to see if the woman is all right. When she meets her, somehow freed, Lydia thinks she is seeing a ghost. By now mentally unstable, Lydia collapses and is taken back to the school and put in the san, where later, after the wonderful event of the reception, her disillusioned father tells her he is removing her from Cliff House. For now a twelve year old mystery has been solved. The flower woman is a detective who has been called in by Mrs Winchester in a final attempt to discover if Mrs Winchester's baby daughter, kidnapped all those years ago, might still be alive. For the kidnappers had died when their car crashed as they fled with the baby, but the baby had survived, been assumed to be theirs and sent to an orphanage. Of course, as the reader has been suspecting, Freckles is the long lost baby, but of Mrs Winchester, and not the flower woman.

Freckles, deliriously happy to find she has a loving mother, begs Mr Crossendale to relent. Lydia seems genuinely repentant and, while he says he can forgive his daughter's treachery, he feels he must punish. But he does relent and leaves the two girls to make their peace.

After this Lydia does make a genuine effort to atone and at last finds love and loyalty for the girl she has treated so despicably. Perhaps, as in the old tale of the evil Snow Queen and the icy splinter in the heart of the boy Kay that was melted by tears of love, a small part of Lydia's cold and selfish heart softened and let in a spark of affection for someone whose faith in her had worked that small miracle.

(Next month: Rosa.)

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## CARDEW, THE CHRISTMAS DETECTIVE

by Ray Hopkins

When Cardew stumbles over Gussy's inert body in the thick snow covering the deer park at Eastwood House he knows immediately who has performed the foul deed. Not, as believed by some of the more gullible members of the downstairs staff, the family ghost that Gussy had been speaking about earlier the same evening.

During the reign of King Charles I, Sir Fulke D'Arcy, keen supporter of His Majesty, buries the family silver in the deer park to stop it from falling into the hands of the Roundheads who attack Eastwood House and imprison all the inmates. Sir Fulke, however, escapes, but is recaptured before he can retrieve his buried treasure and join the Royalists. In the ensuing fight, Sir Fulke is killed and his shade returns on the anniversary of his death and attacks anyone in the vicinity of the old oak where the treasure is buried. The following morning, the unlucky individual is discovered with a terrible head wound supposedly caused by a heavy blow from the hilt of Sir Fulke's sword. But, as Blake said, how can a phantom sword cause such a nasty injury?

The younger members of the house party, of course, have no patience with such superstitious falderal and have probably had more experience with ghosts who are no such thing. Tom Merry and Co., Jack Blake and Co., Wally D'Arcy with Reggie Manners and Frank Levison, Frank's sister Doris and Cousin Ethel make up the younger contingent. Levison, Clive and Cardew are expected on Boxing Day.

The last-named three, on their way to Eastwood House, have arrived on a later train than the one on which they are expected and have to walk from Easthorpe Station. Crossing the deer park they see a mysterious light flashing and report this to their host when they arrive. The entire house party becomes tremendously keen on a ghost hunt, and they all surge out leaving Cardew frowsting by the fire in Gussy's den. Cardew, however, bored by the thought of a ghost hunt on a perishingly cold night, becomes equally bored at just sitting alone, and later decides to follow but is unable to find any of them. They have all split up to go in several directions after spotting the mysterious light and then losing it when the "ghost" hears them coming and presumably switches off his torch.

Returning to the warmth and cosiness of Gussy's den, they are perturbed to find that Gussy is missing, as also is Cardew when they go to his bedroom and find it empty. By half-past twelve they are concerned enough to tell Gussy's elder brother, Lord Conway,



As Cardew groped his way through the snow, he suddenly stumbled over something that lay on the ground. "What is it?" he breathed. He struck a match and in the flickering rays of light recognized the white, unconscious face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy I. (See Chapter 3.)

who is still up. He is about to organise a search party when a faint call for help is heard. They find Cardew carrying D'Arcy on his back and the still unconscious junior is seen to have a large bruise on his head. Cardew tells them he found Gussy near the haunted oak, and thinks he knows who struck Gussy down. But how can he know this, having seen nobody?

The following day Cardew astonishes them all by saying that Cousin Ethel will be able to help him in his investigation. He asks her if there was a robbery the previous summer at some large house no more than a mile away involving stolen jewellery. Ethel confirms that Lady Hundon, a friend of her aunt, whose home is about a mile away from Eastwood House, had a diamond necklace stolen. But how did Cardew know? Cardew says the thief and the man who struck Gussy down the previous night are one and the same. The house party wonders at the lackadaisical one suddenly turning into an astute detective. "When Sexton Blake has completed his case he calls in the assistance of the official police," says Cardew. And that's just what he's going to do, Cardew assures the bemused Cousin Ethel who cannot understand how Cardew can be so certain of his facts. There are roars of laughter from all the Co's when they hear this.

Upon returning from a visit to Inspector Blane at Easthorpe Police Station, Cardew calmly informs the chortling chums that the man will be arrested that night. The police have already, upon Cardew's information, found the booty hidden in a hollow tree, and the culprit will be caught when he returns to the deer park to continue his searching. The booty is Lady Hundon's thousand pound necklace.

Manners is accompanying Cousin Ethel at the piano in Eastwood House's music room when the police arrive with the man they have arrested in the deer park. When Levison and Clive see him they know how Cardew was able to figure out who the thief was going to be, and how he knew he would be caught searching for the diamond necklace.

Levison, Clive and Cardew, before going to Eastwood House for the rest of the Christmas hols, had spent some days at Reckness Towers visiting Cardew's grandfather. During one of their walks in the surrounding countryside, they had been approached by a vagrant who requested a word in private with Cardew. He recognises the man as one he had made use of the previous summer when he had wanted to back the gee-gees unbeknown to his grandfather. The man, who refers to himself as Jimmy the Rat, asks Cardew to let him have ten pounds to tide him over. He will return it together with another tenner; all he has to do is retrieve something he has hidden. It may take him some time to find as he had to hide it in a hurry and isn't sure of exactly where he put it. He confesses to Cardew that it is, in fact, a diamond necklace and he had run about a mile with it. He just had time to hide it in a hollow tree before the police caught up with him and shoved him away for six months on suspicion. Jimmy tells Cardew he's a shady young blackguard and his grandfather wouldn't be pleased to know about the betting but he'll tell him if he doesn't lend him the ten pounds. Cardew knocks him down and confesses his sins to Lord Reckness. The rest you know.

(Retold from *The Gem* No. 1,035, 17 Dec 1927.)

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## YESTERDAY'S HEROES

BRIAN DOYLE'S latest subject in his popular series is Ernest Dudley's 'Doctor Morelle', the brilliant but unlovable medico-sleuth, who made his secretary Miss Frayle's life a misery, but who always caught the villain. Introduced on BBC radio in the 1940s, the sardonic Doctor went on to appear in a long series of books, magazines, a stage play and a film - and became 'the man you love to hate'. His busy creator, Ernest Dudley, is happily still with us, as Brian Doyle reveals . . .

The only problem with Dr Morelle was Dr Morelle.

To begin with he had all the personal charm and good humour of Hitler in a bad mood on an off-day in the spring of 1945. He wasn't a man you liked or wanted to get to know. Not a man to share a joke or a drink with or ask a favour of. He had few friends, certainly no 'best friend' - no one could ever live up to his own exacting standards to fit that role. He had no lady-friends, no romantic liaisons and definitely no wife. He was married to himself, and to his profession; and he was a good doctor, a doctor mainly of the mind.

"I based him generally on Eric Von Stroheim, the German film actor and director - the man you loved to hate," recalls his creator, Ernest Dudley. "People hated him and felt very sorry for his poor secretary, Miss Frayle. But they listened, you know, they listened in their millions, even though it was wartime. Morelle became a sort of cult-figure."

Dr Morelle was indeed the man BBC radio listeners disliked so enthusiastically that they felt obliged to listen to him through nine months of his adventures in that first series *Meet Dr Morelle*, a series of 'playlets' in the popular *Monday Night at Eight* programme in 1942-43 . . . . In that relatively brief period, Morelle became one of the most successful and famous BBC radio characters of all time and is still well remembered (by people of a certain age) today.

Ernest Dudley is today a hale and hearty 89-year-old, and, appropriately, lives a stone's throw away from the BBC's Broadcasting House, in the centre of London. He chuckles as he looks back on those busy days of the 1940s when he wrote so many radio series and created so many memorable characters - including Dr Morelle. "I made his name, and I suppose he made my name, in a way," he recalls cheerfully. Later, we'll look back on Dudley and his radio career, and the years before that. But, for the moment, let's devote our attention to Dr Morelle, not forgetting the faithful Miss Frayle.

He might have been described perhaps as an 'anti-hero' several years later - certainly not an 'Auntie-hero', despite his BBC origins. But the good Doctor did have a few good points underneath that gruff and sardonic exterior. Let's switch effortlessly to the present tense and stress that he is basically kind, courteous and well-mannered. And he is a 'good doctor' - literally. In his field he is at the top of his profession; he could best be described as a psychiatric investigator and criminologist - a kind of psychoanalytical detective and a doctor of the mind.

But before we start analysing Dr Morelle himself, let's see how he started . . . .

He made his bow, as we've said, in an episodic series (playlets of around 8 minutes) called *Meet Dr Morelle* in a highly-popular hour-long programme entitled *Monday Night at Eight* on BBC radio, in July, 1942. Dudley already had hits such as *Meek's Antiques* (with Richard Goolden and Jane Grahame - Dudley's real-life wife) and *Mr Walker Wants to*



'MEET DR. MORELLE'

An impression by Ghilchik of the ingenious doctor about to dictate a paragraph to his ingenious secretary Miss Frayle. Inset: Dennis Arundell, who will as usual be heard in the part during 'Monday Night at Eight'.

*Know* (with Syd Walker) behind him, and now came *Dr Morelle*. Morelle was played by Dennis Arundell and Miss Frayle by Jane Grahame.

Arundell, whose upper-crust, acerbic and sarcastic tones were to play a big part in the success of Morelle, was 'a bit of a toff' in real life too. He had a Cambridge degree and was, indeed, a Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge University. He had appeared in many West End plays, also producing over 60 plays and operas and composing music for 40 productions. He was himself a fine musician. In 1939 he had scored a big success with theatregoers as 'Mr Manningham', the cold-hearted villain in the original London production of Patrick Hamilton's soon-to-be-famous play *Gaslight* (later filmed twice). It was this that led directly to his casting as 'Dr Morelle'.

Dudley first met Jane Grahame when they both appeared in a stage tour of *The Constant Nymph* in the late-1920s, when he was only 20. They married soon afterwards. She had a busy stage career, appearing, as a girl, in *Peter Pan* several times from 1915 to 1920, as 'Nibs', one of the Lost Boys. She went on to many other things, appearing especially in hundreds of BBC radio productions.

After his initial huge success in 1942-43, *Dr Morelle* returned to *Monday Night at Eight* for another season in 1946, and then, in 1947-48, for a final run, when actor Heron Carvic played Morelle (Arundell had preferred to go on to other projects). Carvic had the same dry, sardonic voice as Arundell and did well in the role; he went on, many years later, to turn detective-story writer himself with a series of novels featuring a 'Miss Marple'-type middle-aged lady sleuth named Miss Smeeton. The very last radio episode of *Meet Dr Morelle* was heard in March, 1948.

*Dr Morelle*, a play by Ernest Dudley and Arthur Watkyn, was produced at the 'Q' Theatre, Kew, Surrey, in 1950, starring Dennis Arundell in his original role, and Jane Grahame again playing Miss Frayle. Arundell also produced. It didn't transfer to the West End, but was a modest success and also went on a long provincial tour.

In 1949 there had been the first (and only) *Dr Morelle* film, *The Case of the Missing Heiress*, starring Valentine Dyall (our old friend, 'The Man in Black', from the BBC radio series *Appointment With Fear*) as the Doctor and Julia Lang as Miss Frayle. The credits read 'Screenplay by Ambrose Grayson and Roy Plomley, from the radio series by Ernest Dudley and a play by Wilfred Burr'. It was directed by Godfrey Grayson and produced by Anthony Hinds, as an Exclusive Picture (the company that later became Hammer Films).

Meanwhile, Dudley had been writing 'Dr Morelle' books - 14 of them over the years. For the record they were: *Meet Dr Morelle* (short stories) (1943); *Meet Dr Morelle Again* (short stories) (1947); *Menace for Dr Morelle* (first full-length novel) (1947); *Dr Morelle Meets Murder* (1948); *Dr Morelle and the Drummer Girl* (1950); *Callers for Dr Morelle* (1957); *Dr Morelle Takes a Bow* (1957); *The Mind of Dr Morelle* (1958); *Dr Morelle and Destiny* (1958); *Alibi for Dr Morelle* (1959); *Confess to Dr Morelle* (1959); *Dr Morelle at Midnight* (1959); *Nightmare for Dr Morelle* (1960); and *Dr Morelle and the Doll* (1960).

'Dr Morelle' short stories also appeared in several magazines, including *Illustrated* and *Thomson's Weekly News*; some also appeared in various German magazines in translation (the 'Morelle' stage play did well in Germany too!).

The good Doctor made a triumphant return to BBC radio too; in 1957 there was a series titled *A Case for Dr Morelle*, featuring Cecil Parker as the eponymous hero, and Sheila Sim as Miss Frayle.

As an introduction to the early 'Morelle' books, Ernest Dudley presented 'extracts' from the 'Medical Directory' and 'Who's Who' giving brief details of the Doctor's life and career. From them we learn that Dr Morelle (no Christian names, date or place of birth given) was educated at the Sorbonne in Paris, in Rome and Vienna, and that he gained his M.D. at Berne, in Switzerland, in 1923. Also that he had been a lecturer on medico-psychological aspects of criminology to the New York Police Bureau and to the police

authorities throughout Europe during the late 1930s; also that he is Hon. Consultant Psychiatrist at the Welbeck Hospital, London: details of several learned books he has written are given. His address is given as 221B, Harley Street, London - a neat combination of the medical and the Sherlockian . . .

From the moment he began his career as a medical practitioner, Dr Morelle has concerned himself only with the unusual and the bizarre; he deals with the frailties and foibles, the ever-insoluble mystery, of the human mind and soul. Each case adds yet another chapter to the remarkable history of human, inhuman and superhuman conduct that he uncovers.

Morelle smokes 'the inevitable' Egyptian Le Sphinx cigarettes, taken from his thin, gold cigarette case, and often speaks through a cloud of cigarette smoke - which must be irritating, not to mention something of a health hazard, to his, no doubt, coughing clients and suspects (not to mention poor Miss Frayle). He invariably carries an elegant walking-stick, which is also a deadly sword-stick, with a razor-sharp blade at its end. He's handy with a .38 Smith and Wesson too, though he rarely carries a gun. His voice is sometimes like a whip-lash, but mostly it is smooth, suave and gentle - though it can often be mocking, savage and cruel when he is speaking to Miss Frayle.

He is tall, gaunt and lean, and often looks vaguely sinister, especially when he wears his favourite long black overcoat and black hat; he has rather saturnine features, with hooded eyes, dark heavy brows, a curving nose above a strong mouth and forceful chin. He has raven-black hair, tinged with grey at the temples, and a high, uncreased forehead. Though his age is never given, we presume that he must be in his early 40s. He drives a low-built, yellow Dusenbergs car, and he drives it well and often fast. His magnetic personality not only attracts almost all with whom it comes into contact (while it simultaneously repels some), it also attracts Trouble (with a capital T).

Morelle is seemingly uninterested in either women or romance. Though he sometimes treats or advises feminine clients, he never falls in love with them and he is far too busy (and obsessed) with his work either to notice or pay attention to any possible beauty or charms they may possess.

In Greece, at dinner with his secretary, Miss Frayle, a beautiful woman named Lola sends him an urgent message (on pink, perfumed notepaper) asking for his help. "She is lovely," remarks Miss Frayle helpfully. Morelle's reply is typical: "My dear Miss Frayle, feminine pulchritude makes an impression upon me so infinitesimal it might well be classified as negligible." Then there's 'lovely, bosomy' New York ex-showgirl Winsome Deans, who falls fatally in love with the Doctor (she calls him 'Doc!'). His face softens (once) and he gives her a second glance (once), but poor Winsome eventually dies, shot, in Morelle's arms in the book's final paragraph (so we never really know if he is distressed or not).

Miss Frayle (we never get to know her Christian name either), on the other hand, does perhaps nurture a tiny, secret love for her icy boss, despite the dreadful way in which he treats her. The two first meet in unusual circumstances on Page 2 of the very first Dr Morelle adventure *The Case of the Lady with the Lorgnette* (first both on radio and in the first book). As he walks home from a dinner party late one night, Morelle stops her from throwing herself into the Thames from the Chelsea Embankment. "Drowning's a cold and dismal affair only a fool would choose," he murmurs helpfully but unsympathetically, as he calms her down and impatiently listens to her story.

He soon has her problems sorted out satisfactorily (also catching a murderer along the way) and, somewhat surprisingly, offers her a job as his research assistant and personal secretary. The reader senses that she may well be back in the Thames within a few days, but she does survive the Morelle experience . . .

Dr Morelle and Miss Frayle. It's a classic case of the ingenious meeting the ingenuous. Miss Frayle (Frayle by name and frail by nature) is shy, timorous, softly-spoken and retiring, though efficient in her work. She is pale and bespectacled (horn-rims) and, in her anxiety to please, often infuriates the Doctor beyond endurance.

To poor Miss Frayle, Dr Morelle is impatient, sarcastic, short-tempered, mocking, irritable and long-suffering. He doesn't talk to her, he snaps at her. He has a habit of addressing her as 'My dear Miss Frayle'. She has an unfortunate habit of fainting - a

BY THE B.B.C. ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE

# Meet DOCTOR MORELLE

"Ernest Dudley's creations appear to be doing not a little to fill the blank caused by the extinction of Conan Doyle's famous medical partners."—Western Mail



ERNEST DUDLEY

forgivable failing, perhaps, when you consider that she is constantly finding dead bodies everywhere. The Doctor is unsympathetic in such matters and is apt to bark at her: "If you wish to faint, my dear Miss Frayle, please do so elsewhere. One inanimate form is sufficient for the moment, I feel." Then he usually returns to the matter in hand: "Hmmm - a paper-knife driven into his heart with some force - he is, of course, quite dead . . . ." Another of his pet comments is: "Do control yourself, Miss Frayle!"

Little Miss F. is forever, apart from discovering dead bodies and fainting, emitting small screams and gasps, becoming breathless, trembling, apologising, looking uneasy and feeling quite sick. To all these activities, the Doctor snaps: "Do not be so foolish, Miss Frayle".

Ernest Dudley recalls that his original name for the Doctor was Corelli. "But I had to drop that idea in case the Estate of the late best-selling novelist, Marie Corelli, objected." He says the name 'Morelle' just came into his head for no particular reason - and it stuck. If you think about it, 'Morelle' could be broken

down to 'More-'ell' - 'More-Hell' - which might be what Miss Frayle may be thinking and predicting as she begins another day's work for the Doctor . . . .

The dust-wrapper of Dudley's novel *Dr Morelle Takes a Bow*, incidentally, had an unintentionally hilarious picture on it, depicting Morelle as a cross between James Bond and Gregory Peck and Miss Frayle as a curvaceous, blonde and bespectacled Marilyn Monroe-type. This was in 1957 and the publishers were obviously trying to attract a younger readership . . . .

Ernest Dudley wrote many drama series for BBC radio - just a few, mainly for *Monday Night at Eight*, include *Meeke's Antiques*, *Mr Walker Wants to Know* (which started out in *Band Wagon*), *Calling X2*, *SOS Sally*, *Crime Chasers Ltd.*, *Call Yourself a Detective*, and *The Haunted Ballroom*.

He also became a Sexton Blake writer, writing radio's very first Blake serial; this was *Enter Sexton Blake*, as part of the *Lucky Dip* show and Dudley adapted it from *The Frightened Men* by Berkeley Gray (Edwy Searles Brooks, of course), which was No 641 in the *Sexton Blake Library* (Blake was played by George Curzon and Tinker by Brian Lawrence). Dudley also wrote a pair of Blake stories for *Detective Weekly* (No. 318, *Mr Walker Wants to Know* and No. 325 *What Would You Do?*), in which the great sleuth

worked alongside the rag-and-bone man Syd Walker, Dudley's own radio creation (who was the subject of Dudley's very first book, *Mr Walker Wants to Know*, in 1940).

As well as writing many other mystery and historical novels, Ernest Dudley also won fame as BBC radio's 'Armchair Detective'. In this very popular programme, Dudley would chat about the latest mystery and detective novels and introduce dramatized excerpts from them. It started in 1942 and ran for many years, even touring the music-halls in which Dudley played himself (*The Armchair Detective*) in a mystery sketch, sandwiched between comics, jugglers, dancers and singers! There was also a film, in 1951, starring Dudley as himself, investigating and solving a crime. And we must not forget Dudley's popular TV series in the mid-1950s, *Judge For Yourself*, in which viewers watched a trial and were then invited by Dudley to write in with their verdict. His final words - which soon became famous - "Remember - you are the Judge!"



BBC Photo

Ernest Dudley on the set of *Judge for Yourself*.

Ernest Dudley was born Vivian Ernest Coltman-Allen on July 23rd, 1908, in Dudley, Worcestershire, the son and grandson of doctors. He grew up in his father's hotel, 'The King's Arms' in Cookham, on the Thames, in Berkshire. On leaving Taplow School, he decided he wanted to be an actor and joined a touring Shakespearean company, making his bow as a messenger in *Hamlet*. He toured for some years as a young actor, later becoming a Stage Manager on such West End productions as *French Leave* and *On the Spot*, both starring Charles Laughton and Emlyn Williams, in 1930.

He married actress Jane Grahame, as I've said, whose step-father was Eille Norwood, the famous actor so closely associated with playing Sherlock Holmes; he played the role in 47 short silent films in the 1920s, followed by a stage play. "So you could say that I was Sherlock Holmes' stepson-in-law!" laughs Dudley.

One story Dudley tells with relish is about the day he danced with Fred Astaire! As a journalist on the *Daily Mail* he knew Astaire and together they worked out a brand-new 'Astaire dance' for a story in the paper. "I danced the girl's part," admits Dudley modestly.

Ernest Dudley recently adapted and revised Eille Norwood's famous Sherlock Holmes play and it toured Britain in 1997, with Michael Cashman as the consulting detective. He is a healthy and energetic 89-year-old (he has run in 8 marathons - 5 in London, 3 in New York!) and keeps fit by running and walking, not eating too much, and drinking lots of water. His wife, Jane, sadly died around ten years ago, and she too was in her eighties.

He is friendly and charming and bursting with memories and anecdotes, which he usually begins with "My dear fellow, do you remember . . . ?" He's toying with the idea of writing his autobiography. But when I suggest (jokingly) the title *The Important of Being Ernest* he demurs, saying that he's in no way 'important'. "What about *Being Ernest*?" I say. He nods. "That's better," he says.

Let's hope he calls it *Being Ernest*. Because, after all, he is. And it's been a fascinating, busy and enjoyable thing to be. Ernest Dudley has brought a lot of pleasure to millions of people over so many years.

Even Dr Morelle would have approved . . .

\*\*\*\*\*

**ANSWERS TO ERIC LAWRENCE'S SONG TITLE QUIZ IN LAST MONTH'S C.D.**

- |                                |                               |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. The Chapel in the Moonlight | 11. Our Love is Here to Stay  |
| 2. Auf Wiedersehen My Dear     | 12. Diane                     |
| 3. Side By Side                | 13. I'll Never Smile Again    |
| 4. Stars Fell on Alabama       | 14. Moonglow                  |
| 5. Memories of You             | 15. Here's That Rainy Day     |
| 6. Send In The Clowns          | 16. Underneath The Arches     |
| 7. Alice Blue Gown             | 17. Sophisticated Lady        |
| 8. When the Lights Go On Again | 18. Jezebel                   |
| 9. I'll String Along With You  | 19. Autumn Leaves             |
| 10. Try A Little Tenderness    | 20. When You Wish Upon a Star |

\*\*\*\*\*

**WANTED:** All pre-war Sexton Blake Libraries. All Boys Friend Libraries. All comics/papers etc. with stories by W.E. Johns, Leslie Charteris & Enid Blyton. Original artwork from Magnet, Gem, Sexton Blake Library etc. also wanted. I will pay £150.00 for original Magnet cover artwork. £75.00 for original Sexton Blake Library cover artwork.

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Tel: 01923-232383.

\*\*\*\*\*

**SALE**

Picturegoers, Pictureshow 1930s, '40s, '50s. Annuals of the same period. A few "Buzzers", a few pre-war Thomson papers, Wizard, Rover, Adventure, etc. Reading copies. Kinema Comics, Film Funs 1950s. Pre-war American comic books (very rare). Greyfriars Holiday Annuals (reading copies - a bit tatty but complete, at £7 each).

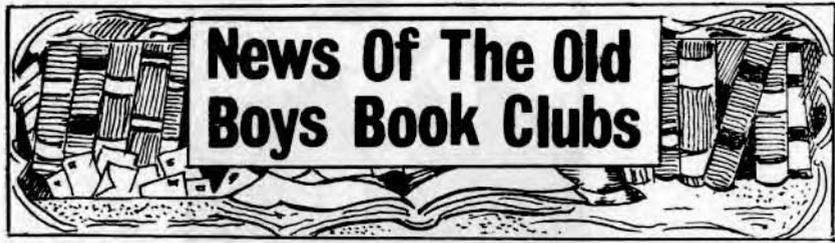
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**J. ASHLEY, 46 NICHOLAS CRESCENT, FAREHAM, HANTS. PO15 5AH**

\*\*\*\*\*



**LONDON O.B.B.C.**

The December meeting took place at our traditional Christmas venue, the home of Bill Bradford in Ealing, on December 14th 1997.

Following much frenzied swapping of Christmas cards, members were treated to seasonal readings from the stories of E.S. Brooks and Charles Hamilton, given by Bill Bradford and Roger Jenkins respectively.

After indulging in liberal helpings of mince-pies and Christmas cake, those present took part in an entertaining quiz provided by Norman Wright.

(continued on page 28)

## EVELYN FLINDERS

Just before Christmas I heard that Miss Flinders had died in hospital on 31st October, after a fall in which she broke her hip. Evelyn, who was almost the only female illustrator of the A.P. girls' papers during the 1930s, occasionally 'stood-in' for both T.E. Laidler and Leonard Shields, respectively illustrating Cliff House stories in the *School Friend Annuals* and Morcove episodes in the weekly *Schoolgirls' Own*. She drew regularly for other A.P. girls' weeklies, and is best remembered for her vivid pictures of the adventures of the schoolgirl secret society, The Silent Three, in the post-war *Schoolfriend*.

I first contacted Evelyn during the 1970s: we met several times and corresponded over many years. She was for a time a member of the London O.B.B.C. and a long-standing subscriber to the *Collectors' Digest*. Although she was a professional illustrator of girls' stories, her favourite paper was the *Gem*, and because of her great love for St. Jim's I am publishing here her own depiction of Gussy.

A fuller appreciation of Evelyn's life and work will appear in a future C.D. together with some of her recollections of her days with the A.P. which she described in various letters to me.

Mary Cadogan

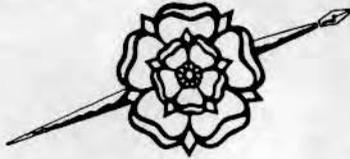


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For Mary with Best Wishes  
from Evelyn Flinders



# YORKSHIRE POST



## Literary Luncheon

at THE CUTLERS' HALL, SHEFFIELD

on THURSDAY, APRIL 19th, 1990

Speakers:

**JAMES BIRDSALL**  
**MARY CADOGAN**  
**FRANK MUIR**

**1989 BOOK OF THE YEAR AND  
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**SIMON SCHAMA:** winner of the Book of the Year Award  
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Presenter of the Awards:

**PROFESSOR DAVID J. JOHNS**  
Vice Chancellor and Principal, University of Bradford

Guests of Honour:

**The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Sheffield**  
**(Councillor and Mrs. Anthony Damms)**  
**The Master and Mistress Cutler**  
**(Mr. and Mrs. J. E. McGee)**  
**The Dowager Countess of Wharnccliffe**

Chairman:

**Bernard Dineen**

*For Mary  
with love -  
Frank Muir*

*Love to meet you -  
James Birdsell*

## FRANK MUIR

The new year has begun with the sad news of the passing of Frank Muir. He was, of course, a household name and face, and C.D. readers will have seen several obituary tributes to him in different newspapers. I especially liked him for his wide-ranging love of books, and was proud to be his fellow-speaker at a *Yorkshire Post* Literary Luncheon a few years ago. (He talked about his *Oxford Book of Humorous Prose* and I spoke about my *William Companion*.) He was a warm and friendly presence at many literary functions which I attended, and often wittily inscribed copies of his books for me.

We shall all miss this great humorist, performer and writer. The photograph below shows Frank Muir with James Birdsall and myself.

Mary Cadogan



(continued from page 23)

The next meeting will be the A.G.M. But come along anyway! It will take place at the Harper household in Loughton on January 11th 1998.

**Vic Pratt**

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

A good number turned up for our informal Christmas Party. The tables almost groaned with the weight of the splendid food contributed by members.

We were particularly pleased to have with us once more Donald Campbell, and Cath and Eric Humphrey. A visitor living in Manchester, Greg Taylor, also turned up. He had recently bought and enjoyed his first Jennings book, and searching the internet, he found the Club page and that Anthony Buckeridge is our Vice President. We were informed that Harry Blowers was still in hospital. Keith and Margaret Atkinson were not present as Margaret is having a bad spell of health. We do miss these stalwarts and hope they will be with us very soon. Chris Scholey appeared to come up tops on almost all of our pencil and paper games - must be his legal type mind! Geoffrey read superbly the Oscar Wilde story "The Gentle Giant", and he proposed a toast to the Club and all our Club friends not just in Britain, but throughout the world. We remembered all those keen, departed members of our hobby, especially Eric Fayne and Bill Lofts.

The Northern Club wishes everyone all the very best for 1998. We shall always be delighted to meet those who wish to pay us a visit. We meet on the second Saturday of each month in the centre of Leeds, very convenient for public transport, and we have reserved parking there.

**Johnny Bull Minor**

### **CAMBRIDGE CLUB**

We met in December at the Longstanton home of Tony Cowley and welcomed the presence of Mary Cadogan: members were grateful that Mary had accepted the honorary role of Club President. She paid a very fitting and touching personal tribute to two distinguished members of our hobby who had sadly passed away during the year: Eric Fayne and Bill Lofts. Mary then described her work for the BBC in the mid-1940s. Her reminiscences of people and places inspired a lot of wireless recollections amongst us. Her work involved organising artists and their broadcasting scripts on such programmes as *Workers Playtime* and *Variety Bandbox*. Mary recalled particularly meeting the wonderful comedian Frankie Howerd and the ten-year-old girl singer, Julie Andrews. She then produced a real gem. Extracts from a 1980 audio-taped conversation she had conducted with the great Arthur Askey - in preparation for an article to mark his eightieth birthday for the then-current *Now* magazine. This was absolutely fascinating, as was her next offering - part of a *Does The Team Think* radio show where she had bravely asked the comedians a question concerning our hobby topic!!

Tony continued the entertainment with a musical quiz concerning radio station identification tunes and programme signature tunes. Howard Corn concluded our meeting with a cassette recording of Laurence Olivier and other actors trying to perform Dickens' *Christmas Carol* at a cracking pace - admittedly forty-plus years ago.

**Adrian Perkins**

\*\*\*\*\*

## FORUM

### From Naveed Haque, Ontario, Canada:

In the September issue of the C.D. I enjoyed Margery Woods' continuing saga of the Vernon-Smith chronicles, but I must politely protest about her discussing the substitute stories featuring Vernon-Smith, or indeed any other character in the *Magnet*. For one thing I would question how many *Magnet* or Hamilton readers would be interested in such stories. I would venture to state, very few, if any. Some years ago, Roger Jenkins, the O.B.B.C. librarian, stated that not an awful lot of folks were interested in sub. stories, so none were included in the library.

---

### From R. John Lewis, Uttoxeter, Staffs:

I am surprised . . . to note that Margery Woods has utilized two *Magnets* (932 and 933), written by S. Rossiter Shepherd, to depict the career of the Bounder in the concluding part of her article, "The File on Vernon-Smith". I would have thought that only *Magnets* written by Charles Hamilton were relevant in a review of this nature.

---

### Margery Woods replies:

When I set out to try to analyse the character of the Bounder of Greyfriars I was determined that the File should not become a kind of mini bibliography of title, magazine dates, characters involved and a brief synopsis of the most popular stories in which he featured. I wanted to define what made this character so vital, why he behaved as he did and what made him so appealing to readers down through the years; also to attempt to deduce from information in the stories what the unwritten parts of his life might have been. I also felt that this survey could not be complete (alas this is anything but complete to date) unless it took into account material about him which appeared in print written by other writers. There is quite a lot of it. He featured in at least one radio play in comparatively recent years; he has been the subject of discussions and talks, and several articles in C.D., including a charming and perceptively written pastiche by Les Rowley in the 1988 C.D. Annual. So I decided that three examples by the *Magnet* substitute writers must be included in the File and I chose three which had been written round the same theme.

These stories were printed, and read by regular readers of the *Magnet*. That they liked or disliked them is beside the point. Anyone who writes, composes or performs for money derived from public payment has to be prepared to accept criticism, heeding it when constructive, ignoring it when it is merely destructive. It is impossible to surmise, given the rapid changeover of a growing junior readership of a commercially issued magazine, how many readers had their first introduction to the Bounder in the week of one of those substitute writers' stories.

It has been discussed many times, the controversy over these authors, but one thing seems certain: they were needed. Would the present day critics of the subs really prefer the risk of the magazine fading out when Frank Richards was unable to get his material to the publishers during his absences abroad? Fleetway could so easily have decided to introduce a new school, written by a team of their authors, for it seems inhuman to expect the massive volume of work to continue week in, week out, from one man. Anyone who has worked professionally in the world of publishing knows it is a tough and ruthless business, where the sentiment of its fiction is not always found in its working reality. It is quite possible that without the subs we could have been left with a small heritage of Greyfriars instead of the several-decade treasury we enjoy today.

I respect, revere and love Frank Richards but recognise that in one respect Greyfriars has passed into public domain (by this I do not mean the copyright angle) and so for me the attempt at a study of one of Frank Richards' greatest characters has to include the other glimpses of Vernon-Smith as pictured by other writers. Any material appearing in print is part of his story, and of all the Greyfriars characters the Bounder, arguably, was the most manipulated, by his own creator as well as others, making him an endlessly fascinating character study. Whatever is written about him by other writers, nothing can take away the fact that Richards created a character who is indestructible, who will always shine through whatever else may be written about him by authors other than his creator.

It is likely that much else may be written, including pastiches and stories for amusement only, but it seems these will run the risk of being deemed unworthy of being read or not appealing to many readers. However, C.D. is fortunate in having a wise and fully professional editor who will judge carefully the likely worth and appeal of any such submissions. Should these prove lacking in interest, she has the right of rejection, and she will use this right.

---

**From D. Ford, Macclesfield, Cheshire:**

A recent question in Telegraph Magazine "The Quiz" was: Hastings is to Poirot as who is to Sexton Blake? It is so many, many years since I saw a reference to the Baker Street pair, outside C.D., that I thought it worthy of record.

\*\*\*\*\*



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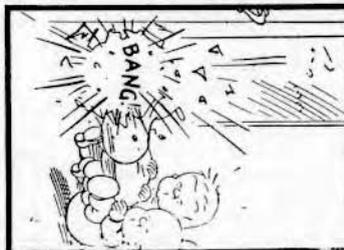
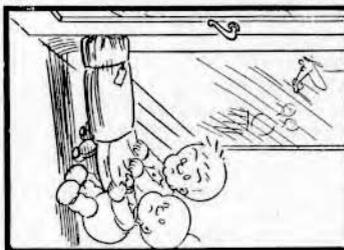
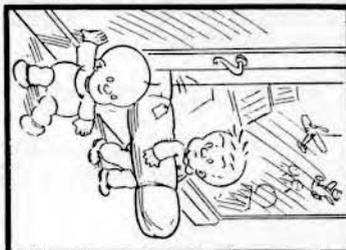
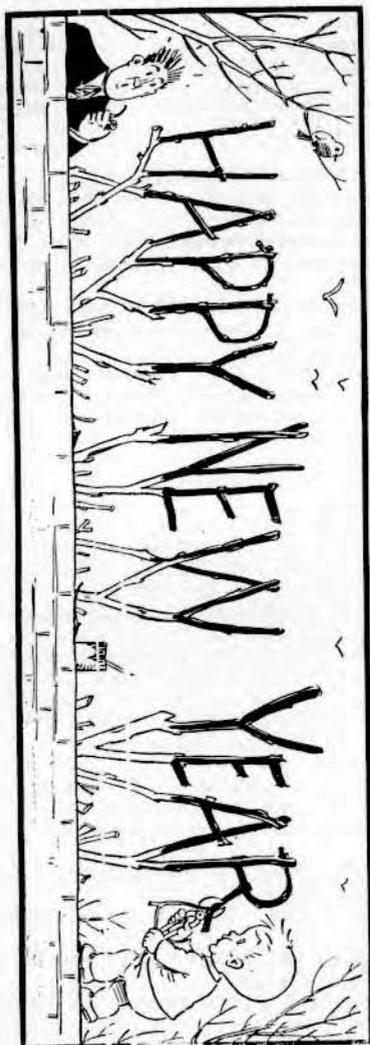
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