

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL.53

No.625

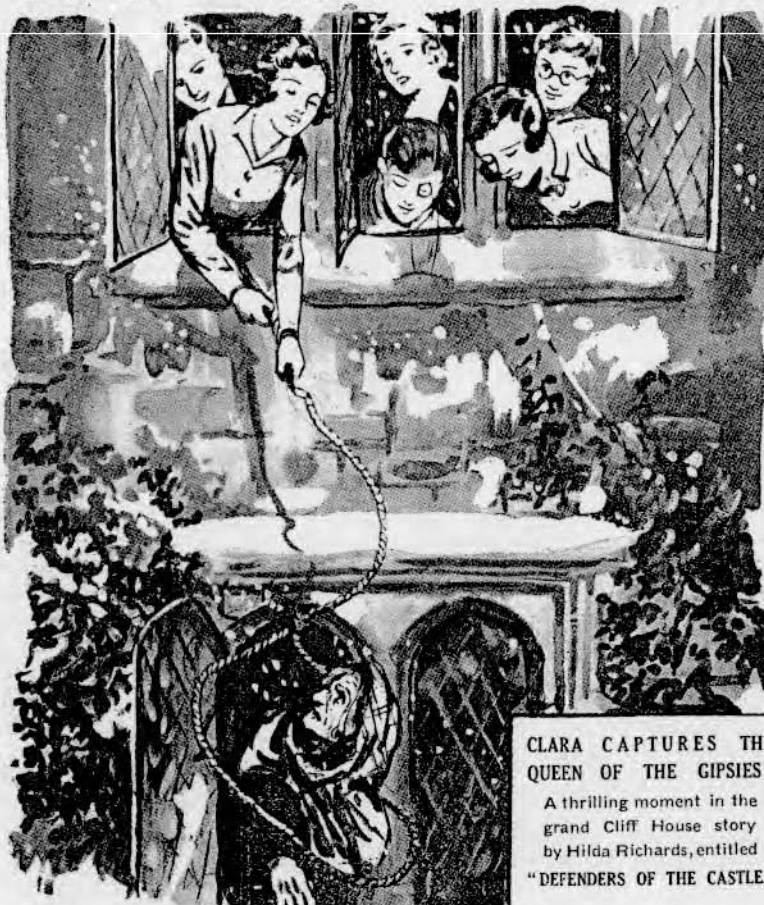
JANUARY 1999

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No. 287. Vol. 12.

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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THE EDITOR'S CHAT



A HAPPY NEW YEAR

This issue of the C.D. marks the start of 1999 and the much talked about lead-up to the new millennium. Whatever that might bring I feel I can promise you that the C.D. will continue to provide its usual high standards of articles, features and pictures. I hope you will agree that with this January number we are starting the New Year in fine style. As your Editor I am grateful that I

continue to receive a steady flow of excellent contributions covering many aspects of the hobby. (Special note for Nelson Lee enthusiasts: don't be too disappointed that your favourite paper is not featured this month. Mark Caldicott's splendid series will soon be resumed.)

I can also promise you all a great Hamiltonian 'scoop' next month, thanks to further fascinating material supplied by Frank Richards's niece, Mrs Una Hamilton Wright, who so regularly supports the C.D.

A BIG THANK YOU

Once again Alex and I were absolutely delighted to receive so many lovely Christmas cards from C.D. readers. These considerably added to the Christmassy atmosphere of our (temporary) home and we would like to thank everyone who so kindly thought of us and sent cards, letters and greetings. By the way, we expect to remain in our temporary accommodation for a few weeks yet. I will give you all ample notice of our return to our permanent home, of course. The refurbishment work is proceeding well, and, as I am sure you will all very much understand, we are longing to return there and to get books and other 'treasures' out of store and back in their proper places again.

YOUR LETTERS

Almost as soon as the November and December C.D.s and the Annual were sent out I began to receive warmly appreciative letters about them. It is always good to know that our magazine has struck the right seasonable note. Your comments and suggestions are always welcome and, as you will see, I have managed to include a fair range of these in this month's FORUM.

With very best wishes for a truly wonderful New Year.

MARY CADOGAN

NEWS OF THE OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUBS

LONDON O.B.B.C. DECEMBER 1998

A good time was had by all as members packed into the Ealing home of Bill Bradford, our traditional Christmas venue, for a cheery festive meeting. Members were treated to the customary readings from the old story papers, as well as a festive quiz, a radio show which evoked happy memories of wartime wireless, and plenty of Christmas cake and mince pies!

The London O.B.B.C. extends friendly greetings and best wishes for the New Year to hobby pals everywhere.

Our next meeting will be the A.G.M. in Loughton in January 1999.

Vic Pratt

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

It was difficult to believe that the time of year had come round once again for us to have our informal Christmas Party. We had fourteen present and were very pleased to welcome Dave Marcus, from Hove, Sussex. Dave was working in the Leeds area for a short period.

As in the past, the study table was almost groaning with delights and even the Fat Owl would have had difficulty disposing of those delicious comestibles without going over the plimsoll line. Dr Jekyll had provided some of his "special brew", Mrs Hudson had contributed some light beverage (suspiciously courtesy of Sainsbury's!) and these and other provender made it a study party well worth attending.

There followed plenty of chat, a superb reading by Geoffrey from *A Christmas Carol*, a short picture quiz and a Bunter Drive. The latter caused much amusement and our guest from the south coast got the highest score.

Geoffrey gave his traditional toast to the Club's future and tribute to founders and members past and present. Our oldest member at the age of 86, Harry Blowers, gave thanks for the pleasure and friendship that the club had given him.

Our programme for 1999 will be ready by the time the January C.D. is available, and a copy may be obtained from our Secretary. We are always pleased to welcome visitors at our meetings on the second Saturday evening of each month.

Johnny Bull Minor

MY BBC SILVER PROPELLING PENCIL (NORTHERN REGION)

by Donald V Campbell

Of course you remember *Children's Hour* but did you ever want to get on the programmes? I did.

I was eleven. An avid listener to BBC Northern Region Children's Hour, I revelled in the serials and the plays.

The wildlife programmes meant much to me because I had won a class prize - the book *The Zoo Man* by David Seth Smith who regularly appeared on air and in the Children's Hour. In his book he wrote about London Zoo animals and the daily round and adventures of the keepers and visitors. As he was the Head Keeper he certainly knew about the workings of the zoo as well as the pleasure the animals gave to young visitors.

Romany and Raq and their walks down country lanes with Doris or Muriel were like a breath of fresh air. I was one of those who never twigged that their trips were often in the pitch dark! The notion that they were studio-bound passed me by.

Toytown of course. I wonder why so many say about those times, "Toytown, of course"? What was it about Denis and Larry and the rotund-sounding Ernest the Policeman that still gave pleasure to a boy who by now was much more Biggles or Percy F. Westerman inclined? That explanation belongs to another day.

Quizzes. They were as much a part of the Children's Hour as Larry and Romany. the Northern Region, so wonderfully marshalled and presented by Nan Macdonald, had its own "Inter-county knockout spelling quiz". Spelling Bees - what would a modern child make of them? What would they make of so much time (at least a twenty minute slot) given over to such an educational business? Well, really I don't much care. Then (1944 or thereabouts) the programme fascinated because there were real children seemingly pulled off the streets and given the chance to show off their English skills. So I wanted to be part of it.

You had to write to Manchester and ask to be considered. You also had to give the name and address of your school. This last baffled me. Why did they want to know that I went to St. Mary's Grammar School in Darlington? But write I did and gave the required information. Nothing happened. I don't remember getting even an acknowledgement of my letter. So much for *Children's Hour*, and I dismissed them from my mind. I might even have given the programme a short-term boycott for their perfidy.

Time passed. Then, one bright morning, Danny Pybus our genial English master wandered in with a letter and some papers and proceeded to tell the other thirty members of the class that I wanted to go on the BBC Children's Hour "Inter-county knockout spelling quiz". The producer had asked for me to be tested in spelling. I preened myself. But then he went on to say that the whole class would be given the test. Groans all round and my popularity sank through the floor. And so the test went on and it was no better or worse than old Pybus's usual lessons.

The answer paper had to be headed and worded in a special way. Our name and address went on it with birthdate and school name. He told us how many words would be tested and how much time each would be given for completion. And it started.

"Handkerchief," he began and then he continued to intone the rest: "Chrysanthemum . . . Mirror . . . Umbrella . . . Choir . . . Chorister . . ." and so on. My later reaction was that

it wasn't fair. They were trick words. Well, of course they were. But until I actually knew that I had not been picked everything was all right. Hope sprang eternal!

The papers would be marked and the results sent to the BBC in Manchester. What emerged from all this was that I was not alone in listening to the programme but I was surprised by the hard core of classmates who did **not** listen to *Children's Hour* or, and how could this possibly be, to the radio. One of these was Paul Lyonette. Not really an acquaintance and certainly no mate of mine; Paul was just not my type. The not-listening-to-radio discovery only confirmed this state of affairs.

I waited for the summons. It came, right enough it came, but not for me. Paul Lyonette had scored highest. He was asked by the BBC to go to Manchester and take part in the new series. I was mortified. My love of the *Children's Hour* had been summarily thrown in my face. A non-listener was going in **my** place. He would get the pleasure and the kudos and I wouldn't. Then it was that I decided that they were nothing but trick questions. In truth I was mortified that I couldn't spell!

So Paul Lyonette went - more than once. As the "Inter-county knockout spelling quiz" progressed, his team was successful and he kept on visiting Manchester and those magical radio studios. As a memento, when his team was knocked out, he got a silver propelling pencil. **My** silver propelling pencil as I saw it. I did see it, and very nice it was.

I was hurt, as only small boys can be hurt, but I got over this usurper of my air waves. What I did not get over was that he never told me anything about what it was like. Not a word came from him on how he had enjoyed it. Worst of all, there was not a word of thanks for **me** getting **him** his opportunity.

The bitterest pill was that I knew that I had misspelled hankerchief, and mirrow, and crysanthemum along with umberella and corister. I didn't deserve to get on the air at all but I still should have had the BBC Silver Propelling Pencil. Shouldn't I?

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EVEN IN THE BEST FAMILIES OR, SEXTON BLAKE'S SIBLINGS by Derek Hinrich

Part One

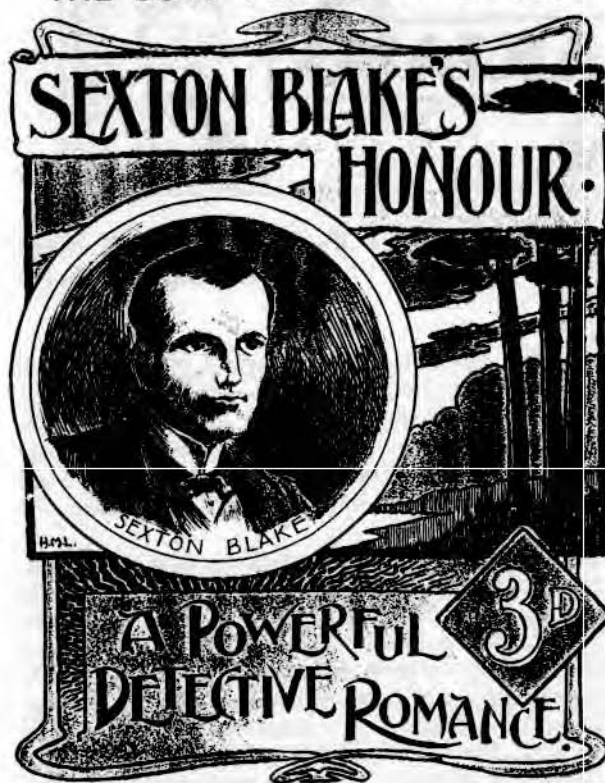
While the life of the First Great Baker Street Detective, Sherlock Holmes, is well documented, that of Sexton Blake (who took up residence in that thoroughfare at about the time - 1903 - that Holmes retired to keep bees on the Sussex Downs), despite the far more numerous published records of his cases, presents far greater problems. Several chronologies of Holmes's cases have been essayed (with relatively only minor differences between them), but an attempt to produce one of Blake's would be a task as herculean and as epic as the man himself.

One problem is, of course, his age. A splendid article from 1975 by John Bridgwater, "A Sexton Blake Scrapbook", was reprinted in the recent volume to celebrate fifty years of *The Collectors' Digest*. This drew together a number of descriptions of Blake by various hands at different times in his long career. The consensus of these - where the matter was mentioned - was that Blake, at all material times, was thirty something. It is a happy knack, less common now, perhaps, than formerly, enjoyed by some heroes of popular fiction never to age. Besides Blake himself, the Saint, Poirot, Sapper's (as distinct from Gerald Fairlie's) Bulldog Drummond, and lately James Bond, have possessed this facility while others - for instance, Holmes, Richard Hannay, Lord Peter Wimsey - have been marked by the passing years, the first group having apparently mastered the secrets of Ayesha or of the Comte de St Germaine. In Blake's case the facility was also enjoyed by the other members of his household, Chief Inspector Coutts and, for a time, sundry master criminals. They all bore their years more manfully than Ahasuerus or Captain Vanderdecken.

Though Sexton Blake is in the main always somewhere in his thirties, not all chroniclers appear to have subscribed to this view. First impressions, too, die hard and mine when I first encountered Blake in 1939 (when I was not quite ten years old), was of someone older, of a father figure in fact (certainly Eric Parker's superb pictures to my mind depict a man in his early to middle forties, rather than one some ten years younger).

I suppose this was a response to Blake's Baker Street *ménage* and his relationship with Tinker. Of the three actors whom I have seen portray Sexton Blake in the cinema, two - George Curzon (though he seemed older) and David Farrar were, at the time of filming, in the authors' age bracket. Geoffrey Toone and Laurence Payne (on TV) were a shade older, as Arthur Wontner certainly was in the thirties' play and in his otherwise admirable performances as Sherlock Holmes in the films which followed his appearance as Blake. Still, every actor who has played Sherlock Holmes in any major production, with the possible exception of John Neville in *A Study in Terror*, has in fact been too old for the part - but how many thirteen-year-old Juliets have graced the West End stage?

"THE BOYS' FRIEND 3^D. LIBRARY.



A Novel for Readers of all Ages.

No. 10.

produced excellent forgeries of high-denomination Bank of England notes, was operating in part under cover of a fashionable gaming club in a house in Park Lane, the residence of man calling himself Prince Larinski. Forged banknotes were passed to the clientele of the establishment as part of their winnings at the tables. Larinski was also uttering forged cheques drawn on the accounts of various clients of the establishment. When Blake on a pretext met the *soi-disant* Prince, he found himself facing a man of thirty-five with iron-grey hair and a drawn face who, though Blake had no recollection of having met him before, was yet strangely familiar to him.

As his investigation proceeded, Blake was on more than one occasion in deadly peril from various members of the gang but each time he escaped with his life through the intercession of a mysterious third party. It was not until a further confrontation with Larinski took place that Blake at last discovered the disturbing truth. It was no wonder Larinski's face seemed familiar to him, but what he had half-recognised was Larinski's resemblance to himself. "Larinski" was his long-lost elder brother, Henry.

Henry Blake had been a harum-scarum youth of fifteen when he had run away from home in reaction to the harsh discipline he had received from a stern and austere father. At

We know nothing of Sherlock Holmes' connections save that he was descended from a family of country gentry and that he had a brother in a position of importance in the higher Civil Service who was twice concerned with cases which Holmes investigated. We are slightly better informed about the family of Sexton Blake.

Sometime in 1907, or perhaps '06, Inspector Spearing sought Sexton Blake's assistance in running to earth a gang of forgers and counterfeiters. Spearing was a very similar type to Coutts, but was not so generally popular with chroniclers of Blake and was possessed of a curiously staccato manner of speech, somewhat after the style of Mr Jingle in *Pickwick*. He played a prominent part, however, in many of Blake's cases at this time.

It was presently established that the gang, which besides coining (we still, of course, had gold currency at this time) also

that time the difference in age between the brothers Blake had, so Henry said, been such (five years?) that Sexton had been no companion for him. Henry also surmised that his brother had no recollection of those times, nor of the type of man their father had been (in view of later events this is passing strange).

By his own account, in the course of the next twenty years, in the struggle to survive, Henry Blake had gradually sunk into the worst kind of company and had become a hardened criminal. He was now a forger and confidence trickster but had so far managed to avoid arrest. With his brother and Scotland Yard upon his track, however, he realised that his days of liberty were numbered; but he could not forbear to save Sexton Blake's life when it was in peril from the hands of his own associates despite the risk to himself.

Sexton Blake is himself stricken to find his brother in such straits and determines to save him both from himself and the law. When Spearing raids the gaming club Blake succeeds in enabling his brother to escape the net but not, however, without arousing some suspicion on Spearing's part.

Henry Blake escapes abroad and makes for Monte Carlo whence Sexton Blake and Inspector Spearing presently pursue him. Sexton Blake is beforehand, once again, in discovering Henry's whereabouts and enables him once more to elude Spearing's clutches but the Inspector is now aware of the Blakes' relationship and, though conscious of the tragic situation, is adamant that he must do his duty, though Sexton Blake points out that he has secretly made good the losses stemming from his brother's forgeries. Blake sadly accepts that Spearing cannot be diverted from his purpose.

The manhunt now returns to London via Paris. Blake is still hopeful that he may be able to find his brother a passage to South America where he might start a new life with an income of £5,000 a year (a far from modest competence in 1907) derived from a portfolio of securities which he, Sexton Blake, will turn over to him.

Let us pause for a moment to consider.

This portfolio must have represented at least part of the proceeds of Sexton Blake's practice, as of course did the substantial sums he had already disbursed to repay the monies obtained by Henry Blake from his forgeries. The principal required to provide an investment income of £5,000 a year could hardly be less than £125,000. This is a very large amount for Sexton Blake to have accumulated if we remember that he was thirty or so and, before commencing to practice, had - as we are told later elsewhere - qualified as both a doctor of medicine and a barrister, a process which must have taken him, at the least, well into his twenties.

It should be remembered, too, that the thousandth issue of *The Union Jack* in December 1922 featured an extra-long story by G.H. Teed "The Thousandth Chance", in which, under the guidance of Prince Wu Ling, most of Teed's repertory of villains plotted, together with the Black Duchess, Leon Kestrel, Zenith the Albino, and Professor Kew, to loot the house in Garwood Square which Sexton Blake used as the repository of the vast collection of *objets d'art et de vertu* he had built up on the profits of twenty years' practice. Plainly Teed's concept of Blake did not conform to the thirty year rule.

To resume, the trail of Henry Blake twists back and forth and Sexton Blake is finally frustrated in his efforts to save his brother from the clutches of the law. Henry Blake is arrested but, as he is being taken back by ship to London, he manages to slip overboard, and by his final sacrifice *à la* Henry Carton, save his illustrious brother's reputation from compromise and disgrace.

But his is not the last trial his siblings inflicted on Sexton Blake.

(To Be Continued)

FROM UNA HAMILTON WRIGHT

Editor's Note: This month Una has provided us with two very different items written for her by "Uncle Charley" (Frank Richards). She says:

Cimberella's New Coat was written when I was three or four. It has a dreadful origin: Uncle told me a bed-time story about a little girl (Cimberella) who had a new coat which she did not like and refused to wear and so she smeared jam all over it so that it had to go away to the cleaners. This story thrilled me so much that I copied Cimberella! I hated my new coat because it was brown, a colour I never liked, and I dealt with it by smearing jam over it after tea one day and felt awfully clever. When my mother discovered what had happened and demanded an explanation I cited Uncle's story. Mother then had Uncle on the carpet as well as me. He humbly admitted that yes, he had told me a story about a little girl who put jam on her new coat. "Oh, Charley, how **could** you? What an example!" And Charley had to eat humble pie for several days after that. Mother made such a scene that it left a permanent impression on me and I never did anything of the sort again.

The name 'Cimberella' I also disliked because it sounded unreal to me. I think it was a combination of Cinderella and 'Bimba', the Italian for little girl, which mother had called me and which became my pet-name in the family, and I hated that, too, thinking it sounded soppy. So there's quite a lot of hate embedded in this story, doubtless a psychiatrist could explain it . . . !

CIMBERELLA'S NEW COAT by Frank Richards (Charles Hamilton)

Once upon a time there was a little girl named Cimberella.

Cimberella lived in a little house with her mummy and her daddy, and every fine day she played in the garden.

There was a gate in the garden, and on the other side of the gate there was a path that was very dusty.

Cimberella's Mummy said "Never go out of the gate, dear: because you might get lost, and you might fall over, and make your coat dusty."

And Cimberella said "Yes, Mummy."

Cimberella was a good little girl, and always did just what her Mummy told her.

One day Cimberella's Uncle came to see her, and he brought her a new coat. It was a brown coat, with brown fur round the neck, and three buttons on each sleeve. Cimberella was very pleased with her new coat, and she said to her Mummy: "Mummy, may I wear my new brown coat to play in the garden?"

Cimberella's Mummy said "Yes, dear; just this once."

So Cimberella's nanny put the new coat on Cimberella, and buttoned up all the buttons, and Cimberella went into the garden.

Now that day the gardener had left the gate open, and Cimberella looked out, and saw the path outside, which went on and on as far as the town.

Then Cimberella forgot what her Mummy had told her, and walked out of the gate, and walked up the dusty path.

Then she fell over a big stone, and fell down on her back in the path, and when she got up, her coat was all dusty down the back.

Then Cimberella said "Oh! Whatever shall I do?"

She ran back to the gate. But the gate was shut, and Cimberella could not get back into the garden.

So she knocked on the gate: knock! knock! knock!

Then Cimberella's Daddy came down to the gate, and he said:

“Who is there?”

And Cimberella said, “It is I, Cimberella.”

And Cimberella’s Daddy said, “No! It cannot be Cimberella, because Cimberella never goes out of the garden.”

And he walked away.

Then Cimberella knocked on the gate again: knock! knock! knock! And the gardener came down to the gate, and said, “Who is there?”

And Cimberella said: “It is I, Cimberella.”

And the gardener said: “No, it cannot be Cimberella, because Cimberella never goes out of the garden.”

And he walked away.

And Cimberella said: “Oh dear! Oh dear! Whatever shall I do?!”

Then the Milkman came up the dusty path, with a milk-can, calling out “Milk-O!” Cimberella’s nanny came down to the gate to take the milk, and Cimberella said:

“Oh, nanny, let me in at the gate, because it is I, Cimberella.”

And Cimberella’s nanny said: “No, it cannot be Cimberella, because Cimberella never goes out of the garden.”

And she took the milk and walked back to the little house.

Then Cimberella cried, and said “Please, Mr Milkman, let me into the garden, because I am Cimberella, and I am sorry I walked out on the path.”

And the milkman opened the gate, and Cimberella went in. And the back of her new coat was all dusty, and Cimberella did not know what to do.

Then Cimberella’s Mummy came into the garden, and Cimberella stood with her face to her Mummy, so that her Mummy should not see the back of her coat, which was all dusty.

And Cimberella’s Mummy said “Fetch the ball out of the garden-house, my dear!”

And Cimberella walked backwards to the garden-house, so that her Mummy should not see the back of her coat, which was dusty.

And Cimberella’s Mummy said: “Why do you walk backwards, Cimberella?”

And Cimberella did not know what to say.

Then Cimberella’s Daddy came into the garden, and he said: “Fetch me the cushion on the garden chair, Cimberella dear.”

And Cimberella walked backwards to the garden chair, so that her Daddy should not see the back of her coat, which was all dusty. And Cimberella’s Daddy said: “Why do you walk backwards, Cimberella?”

And Cimberella did not know what to say.

Then Cimberella’s Uncle came into the garden, and he said: “Cimberella dear, fetch me my pipe!”

And Cimberella walked backwards to fetch the pipe, so that her Uncle should not see the back of her coat, which was all dusty. And Cimberella’s Uncle said: “Why do you walk backwards, Cimberella?”

And Cimberella did not know what to say.

Then Georgy-Porgey came into the garden, and he said “Hello, Cimberella!” And he smacked her on the shoulder.

Then all the dust came flying out of Cimberella’s coat, and the air was all dusty.

Then Cimberella’s Mummy said “Oh, Cimberella, Cimberella: you have been out of the garden on the dusty path.”

And Cimberella’s Daddy said “Oh Cimberella, Cimberella!”

And Cimberella’s Uncle said “Oh Cimberella, Cimberella! Cimberella! Cimberella!”

And Cimberella said “So sorry, Mummy! So sorry, Daddy! So sorry, Uncle!”

And Cimberella's Mummy said "Yes, but the coat must be taken away to be dry-cleaned."

And the coat was taken away to be dry-cleaned, and Cimberella had to wear her old coat for three weeks till the new coat was cleaned; and ever after that Cimberella never went out of the garden without her Mummy holding her hand.

Una's second item is in a very different mood. It is the letter "full of wise advice" that she received from her uncle when she became engaged to Brian in November 1955:

November 1955

My dearest Bimba,

I have just had a letter from Mummy telling me about it. Now, my dear, I know that young people know better than old people, but I was young once upon a time and remember a lot of wisdom from that early period. So I am going to give you some advice.

Don't expect too much of a man. They are not much better than women really. NEVER interfere with a man's work, for any reason. A man who once learns to neglect his work will go on doing so, and that leads to a lot of trouble with tradesmen's bills and so on.

DON'T, my dear love, be extravagant or reckless with money. It is very hard to get.

Don't be exacting. Real men are not like characters in a novel or a radio play. They are just human.

Don't keep late hours except on exceptional occasions. It will spoil your good looks, and it is not good form.

Men, whatever they say, still have the ideas of 1850, and this little weakness should be tolerated and conciliated.

Be unselfish if you can. If you cannot, assume a virtue if you have it not.

Don't be corny to the young man's mother. Every man who is a man is fond of his mother; and a man who learns to let down one woman, will very soon let down another.

Never carry on an argument beyond good-humour. Nothing in the universe is really worth arguing about, and it costs absolutely nothing to concede points that do not matter.

Don't see your fiancé every day if you can help it.

Be extremely circumspect with other men. Remember 1850, and the fact that no man can ever get beyond that date.

Don't think that people "ought" to be this or that, or "ought" to do this or that. If they don't, they won't. Everyone is imperfect: even oneself, when one comes to think of it.

That's the lot, my dear; except that I enclose cheque

With love, my dear,

Mummy

FROM LARRY MORLEY, 76 St. Margaret's Road, Manwell, London W7
2HF. Tel: 0181 579 3143

To the gentleman who telephoned me regarding *Film Pictorials*: I have a number of film magazines of the 1940s entitled *Picture Show and Film Pictorial*. You did not leave your name and telephone number, so please ring me if you are interested.

Round the Year with Cliff House

by Margery Woods

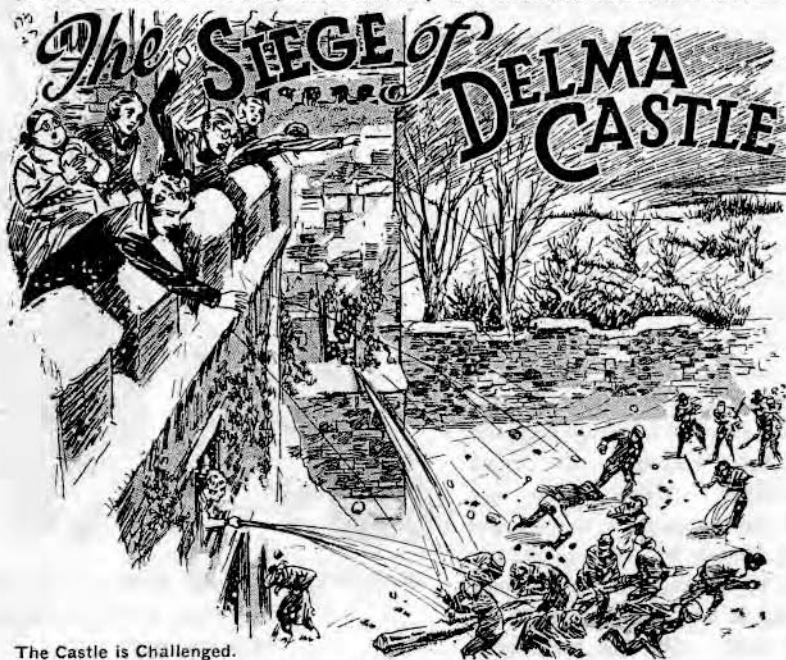
New Year

Ways of celebrating the advent of a new year are many and diverse. It all depends on taste!

There's the grand tour with snifters all the way. Or a little session of haggis slinging. Or a gentle dunking of one's enemies - or friends - in the town's best fountain, ensuring a clean start to the New Year, so to speak. In the Highlands they eat the haggis and sling the caber; in the north-east they trot around first-footing, which entails more snifters and the staggers on the way home . . . if they get there. Others take a loftier attitude and simply go to bed, leaving the New Year to find its own way home. For real celebrations leading to fun, intrigue and mystery the Cliff House chums could lead the way with the best of roisterers.

One of their most exciting New Years, following the Robin's Roost Christmas party, found Babs and Co. stranded in a snowstorm, one which had brought even a great express

A Thrilling Story Featuring Barbara Redfern & Co., of the Fourth Form at Cliff House, on Holiday on the Snowbound Moors!



The Castle is Challenged.

to a standstill on the Yorkshire moors. Hours later they rescue a half frozen girl as they struggle towards their destination, Delma Castle, home of Jemima Carstairs, and their encounter with the malignant old gipsy crone, Mother Faa and her equally menacing son, Blake Jake, is the prelude to one of the strangest and most arduous of New Years.

Because of the ferocious weather the staff have been unable to reach the castle; only Colonel Carstairs, and M'Lizi, and Parker the butler have got through to help the chums defend the castle against the fierce siege staged by Mother Faa and her hundred strong tribe, who demand the return of the girl Babs & Co. have rescued, against whose father the gipsies are waging a vendetta. Eventually the girl leaves voluntarily to try to make her way to Moorland because she doesn't wish to bring more trouble to her rescuers. Somehow she slips through the ring of gipsies, to their great fury, and they deliver a threatening message to the beleaguered chums.

John Wheway ends the first story with a wonderfully atmospheric paragraph:

Wide-eyed and a-tremble with sudden fear, the chums stared at each other. Their charge gone; the boys lost on the storm-ridden moor; themselves besieged with food running short; cut off from the outside world as surely as if they were on some deserted island in the lonely polar seas. Outside - the gipsies waiting, watching, a hundred strong ready to pounce.

There were three more stories to complete that adventure, with the redoubtable M'Lizi, the little African girl who was one of Wheway's most vivid characters, turning the tables on the gipsies when she managed to capture Old Mother Faa, whose turn it now was to become the hostage in a situation of her own making. Alas for the cleverness of M'Lizi, the frantic need for sustenance drives the hungry Bessie down to the kitchen, there to be surprised by old Mother Faa, who had her own escape and plan of fresh attack worked out.

The action sways back and forth between the chums and the gipsies and the three boys, Ralph Lawrence, Jimmy Richards and Douglas Coutts, who had set off through the blizzard to try to get help and once more encountered the mystery girl in distress. But the gipsies succeed in recapturing the girl and eventually the chums themselves. Wheway does not spare the squeamish in the sick girl being beaten by the gipsies, nor does he restrain the half-savage M'Lizi in the vivid climax of the third story. She has no qualms



FOOTNOTE: A great deal of window action and rope strain happened in this series!

about setting one of the gipsy caravans on fire and her great triumph comes with the lions. For in the days when these stories were written a large contingent of gipsies often meant a circus in the area. This circus had a dozen lions, and the king of the beasts had always been M'Lizi's special friend. She had already proved her magical power over them during the African series. Now, to the horror of the chums, she releases the lot, causing pandemonium among the gipsies, and harnesses two of the lions to a sledge to carry the sick girl.

But the relief of the chums is shortlived for on their return to the castle they find Black Jake and some of his henchmen in possession. It takes another eighteen pages to bring Colonel Carstairs and help and banish Mother Faa and her tribe once and for all, when at last the sick girl is safe and reunited with her father. This must have been the most eventful New Year in Cliff House's history!

The chums seemed to make a habit of getting stranded, this being an infallible method of being where they shouldn't be, and thus meeting up with the fateful stranger and situation which would lead to their next great mystery. In the "Victorian" holiday Christmas Castle series they got stranded again, with another unfortunate youngster who was the heiress to the castle estate, in descent from the last owner one hundred years ago. The estate is in the hands of the National Trustees and leased for Christmas by Clara Trevlyn's father. There was no risk of any more centuries passing before the chums found the mysterious cryptogram left by the last known owner. It tells of his will, which was in four separate documents, each hidden in one of the four turrets of the castle.

The chums had a wonderful time solving the cryptogram and tracking down the hiding places. By New Year only one remained to be discovered. But the villains, also descendants of the original owner a century ago, were determined to get the will and make their claim, and they had no compunction regarding their methods. Tricked by them into a journey by the castle coach, the girls are stranded in the snow, the horse gone, and a cold,



"HALLO, what's this?" a voice asked. Clara darted forward. "Daddy!" she cried happily. Her father and Mr. Redfern had landed in the aeroplane at sight of the burning coach. Would the girls now get back to Christmas Castle in time to find the last page of the missing will?

very hungry Bessie to contend with. For when Bessie was cold she grumbled, when she was hungry she grumbled, and when she was both she wasn't much fun to have around. At least she gets warmed up when they manage to set the coach on fire, accidentally, it must be admitted, but what vandalism to such a precious antique. Fortunately, besides warming them up a bit, the blaze acts as a beacon to the plane approaching with the fathers of Babs and Clara who have been consulting lawyers about this mysterious will in four pieces. So rescue comes. Meanwhile, back at the castle, the rest of the chums are solving the last part of the cryptogram and dealing with the plotters, Jemima being particularly brainy, as usual. A jolly good New Year adventure, well up to expectations of exciting holiday reading.

Those certainly were the days. Far better than the hectically coloured computerised wonders operated by a mouse! For choice, who wants a mouse wearing one's finger out flashing cyberspace images on a small screen when a cosy fireside beckons, with a box of chocolates, a glass of whatever turns you on, and a great Christmassy read with your favourite old chums?

Sadly, many youngsters today would scorn our choice. But then they never knew those grand Christmases and New Years with the chums of Cliff House, Greyfriars, Morcove and St. Jim's . . . Happy New Year to you all!

(*The Schoolgirl* 284, 285, 286, 287 Jan 1935, 232 Jan 1934. Pictures by T.E. Laidler.)

FROM VIC PRATT:

I write in response to Larry Morley's letter in the October C.D. I agree with him that the Americans produced many great comic strips in the first half of this century, although I would not accept that they were superior to British product of the same era. Different, certainly; better, certainly not. There has always been greater potential for adult expression in the U.S. comic strip, as it was not perceived to be the exclusive domain of children's entertainment as it has always been in Great Britain.

American newspapers, once upon a time, used to be sold on the quality of their comic strips. This led to an era of quality comics that has sadly long since ended. Thus it was possible for the political satire of Al Capp's *L'il Abner* or the surreal sophistication of George Herrmann's *Krazy Kat* to be created within the confines of the mainstream media. No syndicate would take a chance on material like this today. Other quality comics of those halcyon days specifically produced with the adult in mind were Segar's Popeye in *Thimble Theater* and McCay's *Dreams of the Rarebit Fiend* which, in 1907, was used to experiment with the comic form employing revolutionary graphic techniques that modern cartoonists have long since forgotten.

The Americans have produced many fine comics for juvenile consumption, too; many of these have a strong adult appeal. My favourites would include Carl Barks' *Donald Duck* and Floyd Gottfredson's *Mickey Mouse*, both of which exhibit humour and characterisation that Disney would never have dreamed of. Even Mickey Mouse, that blandest of corporate ciphers, comes alive as a funny and oddly likeable character through the deftness of Gottfredson's scripting and drawing. Barks, for his part, created characters so real that you forget his main protagonist is a duck in an absurd sailor suit. Barks' comics are fascinating

and imaginative, with strong strands of adventure and charming screwball humour that is genuinely funny.

Like Larry, I have no time for Superman, or any of the other dreadful costumed bullyboys he heralded. They were all too perfect, too wholesome, too serious, too tough, too unbelievable. Except, of course, for *Captain Marvel*, which began as a rip-off and then developed into a brilliant parody of the square-jawed bore from Krypton. The Captain Marvel stories featured imaginative, witty scripts and absurdly memorable characters. These included Mr. Mind, the tiny bespectacled worm criminal genius, Dr. Thaddeus Bodogg Sivana, the self-proclaimed World's Maddest Scientist, and Tawky Tawny, the talking tiger who wears a suit and works as a museum guide. The stories featured magic instead of boring science, and a hero with faults, doubts and failings, and a sense of humour. Superman had none of these qualities.

While I would urge C.D. readers not to write off U.S. comics, I would also urge them not to neglect home-produced material, of which there is a rich and varied selection, hampered only by the context in which society has habitually placed them: as a medium designed exclusively for children. This view is, I think, as patently absurd as suggesting that the school stories of *The Magnet* and *The Gem* should be read exclusively by schoolboys. As it is with the story-papers, there is a lot more to enjoy in comics that just nostalgia.

BOB CHERRY

by Peter Mahony

"Hallo! Hallo! Hallo!"

Did Bob Cherry always **bellow** that greeting? Or did he sometimes vary it with a Dixon of Dock Green intonation? Knowing Bob's sense of humour, I should think the latter was likely. His 'catch-phrase' probably palled with his form-mates after a week or two; but then, as is the habit with catch-phrases, it became expected and Bob was saddled with it for evermore.

This third member of the Famous Five to arrive at Greyfriars (*Magnet* No. 3) seemed, on the surface, to be an amiable buffoon. He was big, hefty and boisterous; had an unruly mop of flaxen hair; was untidy in dress; noisy and clumsy with big feet; not too bright in class; and rather an 'innocent' when compared with the likes of Bunter, Fish, Skinner or even Harry Wharton. His cheerful good nature could be imposed upon and he had a gullible streak which got him into difficulties on several occasions.

Nevertheless, there was rather more to Bob than a 'cheerful buffoon'. To begin with, he was an accomplished sportsman. Wharton and Vernon-Smith may have been more brilliant players, but for downright consistency Cherry's name should have been first on the team sheet. A stalwart half-back, he was the driving force in the Remove soccer team - usually at right-half (a position now described as mid field) - though I have often thought his better place would have been at centre half. (It is difficult to imagine Peter Todd, for all his wiry strength, being equal to man-to-man tussles with the likes of Tom Merry, Frank Courtenay and Gordon Kay. Cherry's robust play would have given those redoubtable

GREYFRIARS CELEBRITIES.

Here's another snappy poem dealing with the popular schoolboy characters of Greyfriars.

No. 2.—BOB CHERRY.



BOB CHERRY, of the laughing eyes
And sunny disposition,
Would surely take the premier prize
In any competition
Between the boys of Greyfriars School,
To test their popularity;
For Bob is bursting, as a rule,
With joy and jocularity!

"A merry heart goes all the day,"
Is Bob's unfailing maxim;
He drives the Imps of Care away,
And troubles rarely tax him.
For when the skies are drear and dark
And Fortune's frowns are riling,
Bob shows the blitheness of a lark—
Gaily he comes up smiling!

Some fellows seem to squeal and squirm
For scarcely any reason;
Thus making every Greyfriars term
A sort of "grousing" season!
Discussing school-life's ups and downs
They say "Our luck is chronic!"
But Cherry's face is free from frowns,
His sunny smile's a tonic!

Cold mornings he's the first to rise,
Heedless of frost and icicle;
And round and round the Close he flies
Breathless, upon his bicycle.
For Bob believes in exercise,
Physical jerks and fitness;
His rosy cheeks, his sparkling eyes,
To Bob's good health bear witness.

Never a schoolboy, I declare,
Could love a jape more dearly;
He makes his victims tear their hair
And burst with wrath—or nearly!
And when Bob's called before the Head
For "handlers" or for "benders,"
No yells are heard, no tears are shed;
His courage ne'er surrenders!

Greyfriars a gloomier place would be
Without Bob's cheery presence;
Of happy, healthy schoolboy glea
Bob is the soul and essence!
No finer fellow could be found,
For he's not merely skittish;
But through the Empire is renowned
As brave, true-blue, and British!

centre forwards a lot more to think about.) Still, Bob's feeding of the forwards and his exceptional powers of recovery in defence stood Greyfriars in good stead on innumerable occasions.

At cricket, Cherry was an attacking opening bat. His readiness to hit from the opening over was a potent factor in the Remove's success. A briskly hammered 20 or 30 frequently paved the way for bigger - but slower - innings by Wharton, Vernon-Smith, Field & Co. In addition, Cherry's fielding in the deep was a source of inspiration to others. A very quick mover, with safe hands and a 'bullet' throw, he was much more of an 'Australian' fielder than his team-mates.

Bob was also a sprinter of renown. He could match Wharton over 100 yards - they once dead-heated in this event at the annual Sports Day. He could swim strongly and was adept at gymnastics - but, if there was one sport at which he excelled, it was the noble art of fisticuffs. No one in the Remove could beat him and several older adversaries found him too tough to handle.

Like most top-notch boxers, Bob was good-tempered, easy-going and not very aggressive. He much preferred to lower tension by a humorous quip, but when conflict was inevitable he had much more 'bottle' than most of his contemporaries. George Bulstrode, Herbert Vernon-Smith, Harry Wharton and even the redoubtable Percy Bolsover all lowered their colours to the happy-go-lucky Bob. Unlike Tom Merry, who had several successful scraps in the 'pro' ring, Bob rarely fought outside school. Beyond Greyfriars the obnoxious Cecil Ponsonby was his chief aversion and 'Pon' generally contrived to exit running.

For all his sporting prowess, which made him a popular member of the Remove, Bob was too conscious of his limited academic ability to push for the leadership of the form. On a couple of occasions, when Wharton was out of favour, Cherry took on the captaincy and made a reasonably good job of it - on the field. When it came to the less pleasant chores of captaincy - such as driving Bunter and the other slackers to games practice - Bob was too easy-going and discipline began to suffer. Nevertheless, he would probably have learned to deal with the unpleasant side of the job, given time; but the easier solution was to

resign in favour of a reinstated Harry Wharton.

Scholastically, Bob was not one of Henry Samuel Quelch's brightest. His probably below-average attainments were disconcerting enough to Quelch. When his fidgetiness was added (I wonder how many lines Cherry got for shuffling those outsize feet?), it can be seen that Bob was not going to be a favoured pupil. On one occasion he had to swot for a scholarship - and the process was painful for all concerned. Quelch liked Bob - everyone did - but he found him a bit of a trial.

Another trait of Bob's character was his susceptibility to the opposite sex. Girls were treated with great consideration - even Bessie Bunter was 'squired' by Bob at ice-skating with disastrous results. Like George Figgins with Ethel Cleveland, Bob was a willing slave to Marjorie Hazeldene. He was sadly convinced that she preferred Harry Wharton - possibly she didn't - and he suffered adolescent torment as a result. Marjorie, a gentle manipulator, was quite ready to rely on Bob's devotion to her when occasion demanded. His loyalty to her plunged him into bad odour with Dr. Locke and Mr. Quelch at least once. In addition, his 'crush' made him fair game for the teasing of Clara Trevlyn - a treatment that the self-conscious Bob was quite unable to counter.

Occasionally, Bob's innate 'goodness' dominated events. In a couple of the foreign trips, he came out strongly when courage and endurance were required. In that respect, he was a 'chip off the old block'. Major Cherry, a serving soldier, was involved in some dangerous escapades which drew the Famous Five into their web. Bob, particularly with his father in peril, became a formidable force for justice and fair play. A 'straight to the point' lad, he often resolved a problem while others were still debating the best course of action.

Finally, Cherry's 'good-heartedness' gave the Greyfriars stories a considerable 'lift'. The shenanigans of Bunter, Coker, Skinner, Smithy etc. always seemed less fraught once Bob had taken a hand. While Wharton and Bull, in particular, took a serious view of matters, Bob Cherry could always be relied on to see the 'funny side'. Greyfriars was much richer for his presence.

This introductory summary paves the way for an 'in-depth' appraisal of Bob Cherry's career. Watch this space!

Inevitably in a hobby as broad as boys' papers there are still discoveries to be made, and although unearthing new titles nowadays is a little rare, they do still turn up. The mysterious *Dolphin* is a good example. Until a few weeks ago it was a mythical title, as far as I was concerned, mentioned in passing by artist Don Lawrence as one of the comics he had illustrated in his early career. It didn't seem to exist anywhere, was unlisted in any reference work or at the British Library, and if any copies existed, it wasn't in this dimension.



"Ron" is Bill McCall

So it was a nice surprise to hear from Dutch Don Lawrence collector and publisher Rob Van Bavel recently, who told me Don had managed to find copies of some issues, although on close examination they pose as many questions as they answer.

Subtitled "The Magazine for Young People", *Dolphin* was published by Nine-Star Press Ltd., 37 Maida Vale, London W9. A phone-call to the local library elicited the news that the address now belonged to Wainwright & Co., Solicitors. The printer, A.M. Archer & Co., 22 High Street, Slough, Bucks., also proved a dead end, although a search through the British Library Catalogue turned up one title they had published, *Portrait for a Grandson* by E.P. Thompson in 1947.

So much for the trivia. Now to the hard facts. Rob had five copies in his possession, three unnumbered, and the

others numbered Vol. 1 No. 12 and Vol. 2 No. 1, so there were at least 13 issues. Each issue had 16 pages and was the size of contemporary American reprint comic books (8¾" x 9¼"). It was published monthly, and only one issue was priced, the last, at 6d.

Don's recall of the title was that it was published by a local tailor, a Mr. Feldman, who used to give the magazine away to the children of his clients. Don, who lived in Ruislip at the time, was just starting his career as a freelance artist, and becoming a regular contributor to Mick Anglo's *Marvelman* published by Len Miller, which dates the magazine around 1954-55. Don went on to draw most of the covers, illustrations and strips

for the magazine, although some artwork was signed "by Ron" - the prolific William McCail, better known for countless strips and illustrations in Gerald Swan's comics and magazines.

One later oddity was a strip reprint from Odhams' *Wonder Book of Comics*, and you have to wonder if Mr. Feldman was perhaps trying to upgrade his giveaway and turn it into a commercial venture; the sixpenny price on the last known issue also hints at that.

If so, it was unsuccessful (6d for 16 pages was hardly a bargain when *Eagle* cost only 4½d!), and *Dolphin*, I thought, folded and disappeared from history. But an odd twist to the tail can be added; when I mentioned the title to Phil Clarke of Nostalgia & Comics, he

said he remembered receiving copies of a comic giveaway from Days Shoes in Birmingham in the late 1950s, and that he pestered his parents to buy from them just so he could read the comic. Whether this was a continuation of the *Dolphin* I don't know, but perhaps others will recall seeing this title, or similar publications.



Contents of Known Issues

nn (cover illo: boys playing cricket: by Don Lawrence)

The Talisman (strip) by Don Lawrence; 4pp

Fred & Co - Trouble Afloat (story) 4 illus by Don Lawrence; 4pp

How to Make a Tractor (illustrated feature); 2pp

Kid McBride Pays His Debt (strip with libretto); 4pp

nn (cover illo: boys swimming: by Don Lawrence)

Little Eagle Remembers (strip) by Don Lawrence; 4pp

Fred & Co - Trouble on the Line (story) 4 illus by Don Lawrence; 6pp

Sammy Smart - The Schoolboy 'Tec (strip with libretto); 2pp

Friends of Robin Hood (strip with libretto); 3pp

nn (cover illo: boys playing rugby: by Don Lawrence)

Nature's Gifts (illustrated feature) by Ron; 1pp

The Terry Twins (strip) by Don Lawrence; 4pp

Another Secret Writing Method for Dolphinites (feature) illus by Don Lawrence; 1pp

Setanta - Hound at the Door (strip) by Don Lawrence; 4pp

Fred & Co - Detectives in Training (story) 3 illus by Don Lawrence; 3pp
 Crossword Puzzle (puzzle) illus by Don Lawrence; 1pp

Vol. 1 No. 12 (cover by Don Lawrence)

Mysteries of Exploration (illustrated feature) by Ron; 1pp

DOLPHIN
 THE MAGAZINE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



Cover illustration by Don Lawrence

Fred & Co - The Rescue Adventure (story) 3
 illus by Don Lawrence; 3pp

Mysteries of Exploration (illustrated feature) by
 Ron; 1pp

Setanta (strip) by Don Lawrence; 4pp

How to Make a Ferry-Boat (feature); 1pp

An Unexpected Fortune (strip with libretto);
 3pp; ["reproduced from the *Wonder Book of
 Comics*, Odhams Press Ltd., London, Jun
 1950]

It's Fun to Use Secret Messages (feature) illus
 by Don Lawrence; 1pp

Vol. 2 No. 1 (priced 6d) (cover by Don
 Lawrence)

Sea Fighters of Seven Seas 'The Battle of
 Lepanto' (strip); 4pp

Fred & Co - Rescue in the Gorge (story) 3 illus
 by Don Lawrence; 4pp

How to Make a Sailboat (feature); 2pp

Lost in the Lighthouse (puzzle); 1pp

The Terry Twins (strip) by Don Lawrence; 4pp

**RANDOM THOUGHTS ON THE CAPTAIN VOLUME 1, APRIL TO
 SEPTEMBER 1899**
 by Brian Bunker

A little while ago, I acquired quite a few of the bound six-monthly volumes of *The Captain*. I knew of *The Captain* but had never seen one either single or bound, though I knew it to have within its pages some school stories by writers of considerable quality such as P.G. Wodehouse, but as I looked through/read through the pages of volume one I became more interested in two aspects of these pages, firstly what "creed" *The Captain* was trying to inculcate and secondly to what type of readership it was aimed. Another thought struck me at the same time; how similar it was in layout to the bound volumes of the *B.O.P.* which I have; both must have been successful as *The Captain* lasted for twenty-five years and the *B.O.P.* sixty years.

It is interesting to note that at least in the bound volume the text started without any editorial at all, as if its aims were so obvious that there was no need to sound a clarion call

to "arms" to the prospective readership. What were its aims? Pretty obvious, I think - to endear itself to a readership of late Victorian youth by producing stories and articles that trumpeted the values covered by the outward triumphs of a century of "Empire". The very first page commences an interview with that great contributor to the pride of Empire, G.A. Henty. His books were popular with youth at that time, quite rightly so for they were filled with adventure, excitement and heroism to leave an imaginative boy with dreams of himself one day riding into battle and performing similar deeds. But the background to these books, as stated by the titles *With Wolfe at Quebec*, *Fighting the Zulus*, was glorification of Empire and the spreading of British ideas and control across the globe to the benefit of both the countries concerned and Britain itself. These ideals so derided now were personified once a year by saluting the flag on the "Empire Day" which my matter remembers so well. Henty was followed in *The Captain* by W.G. Grace, a live hero of the sporting life which so many boys loved and enjoyed so much; and this was followed a couple of months later by an interview with another sporting hero, another cricketer K.S. Ranjitsinhiji. The very next month a "chat" with Lord Hawke about cricket in the colonies brought two major themes together. Another author brought the six-month period to an end with a chat with Max Pemberton, almost unknown today but the writer of sea adventures like *The Iron Pirate* and *The Sea Wolves*. Those of you who are still awake will notice that there are only five to be shared between six months; the missing one was Tom Browne, a person whom I had never heard of ("ignorant you", you say) but was a fine illustrator of books, his illustrations often having a humorous aspect. What quality does he stand for? Surely the quality of the grit and determination to succeed to be at the top of his profession.

It is clear what the main audience for *The Captain* was expected to be: the Public School Boy. In each of the first six editions a page of photographs of the Head Boys of various Public Schools appeared and what a grim looking lot they were, hardly a smile, but perhaps this was because of their wing collars, I wouldn't be smiling either. These "gods" judging by the expressions on their faces must have ruled their schools with rods of iron. There was, of course, no allowance made for the reading abilities of the reader, Public School boys could read, Grammar School boys could read and the working class boy would not have either the financial means nor the inclination, nor the reading ability, in any case, to read *The Captain*. This lack of allowance for the reading abilities of the potential reader continues through the *B.O.P.*, the *Magnet* and *Gem* and the Thomson "reading comics" *Wizard*, *Hotspur*, *Adventure* and *Rover* right up to the Second World War and through it until the strip cartoon of "bif, bot, bang" quality carried all before it.

The Public School boy obviously liked to read of Public Schools, the Grammar School boy was equally able and desirous to read about the Public School, perhaps a little sad with jealousy but enjoying it all the same. There are three major school stories in volume one of the Greyhouse stories. In "The Storming of Greyhouse" by R.S. Warren Bell the Headmaster of Greyhouse allows the local magnate to shelter in the Greyhouse to avoid being lynched by the workers of his factory. Though he is sympathetic to the ills being caused by the strike on the lives of the men and their families, particularly the privations caused by no pay for months, he feels he cannot allow the drunken rabble to break the law so he allows refuge to be taken in Greyhouse. The division is clear, the drunk crazed yobs on the one hand and the brave boys of Greyhouse led by their Masters, Prefects and School Captain on the other. The story ends with the storming by the mob of the school gates and

SCHOOL CAPTAINS



Highgate
J.H. Garrett.



Westminster F.T. Barrington-Ward.



Leys D. Green.



Loretto C.W. Wordsworth.



Rugby Duncan Campbell.



Bedford C.T. Williams.



Repton
G.F. Mortimer



Bath
E.F. Watermeyer.

Blundell's School
Tiverton
Herbert W.S. Francis.

(SECOND SERIES.)

its subsequent recapture by the school Cadet Corps, with fixed bayonets, and the rescue of their beaten School Captain. Clearly the victory of good over ill and British steel ("they don't like it up 'em" as Corporal Jones would have said) against stones and empty beer bottles. No doubt some of those boys did the same later on in life against the enemies of the Crown in foreign lands. The second story, "The Red Ram" is best forgotten. It is, in my judgement, one of the poorest school stories I have ever read, and the basic tenet that a Headmaster would import a young professional footballer to enable him to win a victory in a game against a local Grammar School (but this is a poor school and the teller leaves for a better school at the end) is unacceptable. The third story, "The Two Fags" by Albert Lee, is far better. In many ways it has the standard format: the two brave, resourceful fags (cf Wharton and Co.), the Sixth Form bully who drinks smokes and gambles (cf Loder) and the reliable, playing hero of a School or House Captain (cf Wingate). The volume contains six collections of poems entitled "Gentlemen", "Truth and Honour", "Perseverance", "Friendship", "Courage" and "Honesty". All of these are personified in "The Two Fags". Gentlemen is the person of the House Captain, perseverance is the search for who stole the money, friendship is the persons of the two fags, courage is getting out of the locked study and honesty is accepting the blame for misdeeds. One main quality is that it shows forgiveness and sympathy, for at the end the bully and the Captain are seen walking and talking together, the Captain having lent the bully money to clear his gambling debts despite his behaviour, including sending a false telegram concerning the illness of the Captain's mother, to clear the scene for the thieving activity of the villains. Incidentally, is it impossible for a Sixth Form bully not only to be a bully but to have the sins of smoking, drinking and gambling as well?

Another quality of Public School stories is loyalty to House and School, and after School to Country and Regiment. As it happens I have almost finished reading volume two of the Howard Baker *Magnet* reprints "The Rebellion of Harry Wharton", and in the last aspect loyalty, his loyalty to the Remove, seems to have been temporarily lost with regard to inter-school football by his activities concerning making himself available to play and later when he regains the Captaincy in paying back old scores, some imagined. Incidentally, while I think that Frank Richards does a magnificent job in descriptive writing, particularly in the case of facial expressions, I feel that the story went on too long and to me the end was a get-out in that the writer was unable to see a way out and so slammed the train into the buffers or in this case Quelch into a cliff face. While the moods of Harry Wharton and the anger and hostility of Quelch towards him are beautifully written, I cannot believe myself that a boy would be so devious as to score over his Form Master continually, nor an experienced Form Master so inept as to continually fall for the ploys. While on the subject, if I can count "whacks" correctly surely twenty blows on a boy only wearing pyjamas would reach the ears of authority and some investigation would be launched, even if it failed to come to a successful conclusion. However I do remember in my own teaching career a father complaining to the Headmaster about me in that his boy had been going home telling lies about me day after day. Obviously I had upset him in some way but I still to this day do not know how!

Another subject touched on to quite an extent was "Public School Mutinies". Here the writer explains how these were caused by lack of sympathy with the boys' lot by a distant, rather uncaring school staff. These mutinies despite the sympathy expressed by the writer

always ended, as it is stated they always must, in victory for the authorities and the subsequent floggings and expulsions; the action of parents in sending their boys back to be flogged when they had fled home showed their attitude. Two full page pictures show the bad old days when Wackford Squeers is leading a "victim" forward with one hand around the boy's ear and a cane in the other, to be compared with the modern (1899) ideas when we see a teacher talking sympathetically to a presumably recalcitrant youth without a "weapon" in sight. This it seems to me was taking the situation a good few years further on from 1899 and some would say to a less disciplined, and worse for boy and teacher, situation. The floggings of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were of course with a birch on the bare buttocks. I would dearly like to know, but we never shall, the last birching in an English Public School and the last time that bare buttocks were seen waiting for punishment. I would have guessed around the First World War but Roald Dahl in *Boy* seems to indicate, though he doesn't make it absolutely clear, that the punishment of Michael was of that sort in the thirties at Repton, though by then the implement was a cane, not a birch.

The main story throughout Volume One is the "King's Red Coat" in which Will Mortimer, a pupil of 16 at Westminster School, persuades his father to purchase him a cornetcy in the cavalry so he can fight for Britain and prove himself to be a man. D.H. Parry writes the story in true "Henty" style and Will shows that he has the right stuff in him and that his Public School education has stood him in good stead for a career in the army. Mind you, he has a lot to learn before he appears on the field of Waterloo, he had to didn't he? Wellington is supposed to have said that "the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton" and certainly many of the officers of the nineteenth century were ex-Public School boys and promotion from the ranks was rare, but one shouldn't forget that the squares which held at Waterloo were formed by the "scum of the earth", another Wellington quotation, even if led by Public School officers. Wasn't it also Wellington who said concerning his Scottish troops, "I don't know if they frighten the French but by God, they frighten me"? Just in passing one might look at the number of Old Etonians in both Labour and Conservative Governments of the post First World War period and consider that General Montgomery was an ex St. Paul's boy.

I hope that I have proved in my own rambling way, but that's the way I write, that *The Captain* combined the qualities as listed under the poem headings. I now must nail my colours to the mast, I am not an ex-Public School boy but an ex-Grammar School boy who went to a Grammar School in Kingston-upon-Thames which was run to a certain extent on Public School lines, Prefects wearing gowns and having authority to slipper boys for such minor matters as wearing the wrong colour socks for instance, as a line outside the Prefects' room would indicate. That's all gone now of course, is that good? Well, all I can say is it's a different world. I owe a great deal to that school and I think it's correct to say that it takes much credit or discredit for making me what I am today, to use a hackneyed phrase. One prayer which was heard often in the morning assembly was supposedly Sir Francis Drake's favourite prayer, my favourite, "It is the continuing of the same until it be thoroughly finished that yieldeth the true glory". I would like to think that I've tried to follow that, though not always successfully.

Perhaps two quotations from *The Captain's* pages would sum up the whole philosophy. Under poems, beneath the heading "Truth and Honour" the last poem printed was from Browning's pen:-

"One who never turned his back but marched breast forward
Never doubted clouds would break
Never dreamed though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better, sleep or wake."

And a few pages further on the last paragraph under the heading "The Aim of Education":-

"A perfect education would mean a perfect man,
Since it would follow that the man would be perfectly developed in proper proportions. Mind, Body and Soul would act, think and feel in unison."

Possibly so if you understand it, I don't!

THE CAPTAIN

A MAGAZINE
FOR BOYS & "OLD BOYS"



The Captain issued its last pages in 1924. Why had it closed down? Well, if the records of George Newnes still exist, you would probably find that the numbers reading had fallen to an uneconomic level. But why? If I am correct in believing that *The Captain*

illustrated Public School standards then perhaps those standards were out of date by 1924. I cannot honestly give you a certain answer except to say that the First World War may be the answer. Thousands volunteered to fight for "King and Country" in the first few months of the war, so many that they couldn't be handled at times. Among those volunteering, and falsifying his date of birth into the bargain, was my uncle, as he said later he thought it would be a good adventure and so exciting. He didn't think that two years later. Now he wasn't a Public School boy or a Grammar School boy but had he "breathed in" the values of the Public School? I think that would be an exaggeration but even so, I do feel that war weariness was such by November 1918 that those standards of *The Captain* had passed into history in the blood and gore of the fields of Flanders.

The Captain had passed into history but the Public Schools and a few Grammar Schools haven't, they still give a first-rate education to a privileged few (no, I didn't teach at either type of school) and long may they do so but do they still give the same standards to their readers? I don't think so but I have said before it's a different world, which is a

pity in some ways where decency, honour and loyalty have for so many joined *The Captain* in the rubbish dumps!

P.S. From my mother's 98-year-old memory, the words of the Empire Day song which illustrates, to my way of thinking, the philosophy of the World of Empire and the Imperial dream:

Verse One "What is the meaning of Empire Day?"

Why do the cannons roar?

Why does the cry "God Save the King"

Echo from shore to shore?

Why do our kinsmen gladly hail

Our Glorious Empire Day?

Chorus

On our Nation's deeds of glory,

With their deeds of daring told,

There is writ the story of our heroes bold

In the days of old.

So to keep their deeds before us,

Every year with homage pay,

To our banner proud

That has never bowed

That's the meaning of Empire Day.

Verse Two

What is the watchword of Empire Day?

Responsibility, self-sacrifice and duty stern,

Blended with sympathy.

True to the flag that we all adore,

Proud of its mighty fame,

England expects that every man

Will duty's call obey

On glorious Empire Day.

Chorus again

Of course, I'm not sure of the end and the beginning of lines.

DAVID D. BALL, 9 BROOKFIELD RISE, MIDDLE LANE, WHITLEY, MELKSHAM, WILTS. SN12 8QP. Tel: 01225-707237.

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COLIN MORGAN WRITES:


One of the highlights to me of the current C.D. Annual is the piece on 'Smith of the Lower Third' by Brian Bunker. As one of my all-time Thomson heroes, Tom Smith has been subjected recently to the most intense research as part of my work on the Index for *The Wizard* currently being compiled by Derek Marsden and myself. I, like Brian, thought that the total sum of the 'Smith of the Lower Third' stories ran to 162, and it wasn't until I began to analyse all the printed repeats that I came across very unexpectedly a three-episode series that had never appeared before. When I say that this three-part tale kicked off a series of repeats in 1955 you'll understand just why it has lain hidden all these years. Mind you, the paper's editor advised the existence of a new Tom Smith story both in the preview in 1538 and on the cover of 1539, but we've heard that one before on many occasions with repeats so, when No. 1539 arrived through my door in August 1955 I ignored the Smith instalment as I had ignored all the previous repeats, thus totally failing to

find that this one, plus the continuations in 1540 and 1541, were actually new as the Editor had stated! Much self reproach was felt when this fact came to light, along with the genuine pleasure of discovering I actually had a 'new' Tom Smith story to read after forty years. The setting for the story comes when the boys are evacuated to Manning's House following the discovery of an unexploded bomb near Clay's House - this scenario had been written about in issues

numbered 1219 - 1241 in 1949, and it poses the question as to whether this three-parter had been written at that time and not used, or was in fact new in the 1955 sense. But it was definitely a fascinating find. Perhaps I should mention that the remainder of the series (1542 - 1553) was made up of repeats but there is still something worthy of note here. The two original tales in 1238 and 1239 were joined and repeated in full in 1551. Thomsons were known to shorten stories when re-using them on many occasions but to date this is the only time we've come across where two complete stories were joined and printed later in just one issue.

On another topic, Brian Bunker writes that the Christian names of A.P.E. Carew, the Senior for whom Tom fagged, were never revealed. In the very first episode of 'Smith of the Fourth Form' (1295) Carew says "Then we'll say nothing. But if certain persons get to

LOOK FOR THIS PICTURE OF HIM DISHING OUT AN UPPERCUT IN "THE WIZARD" NEXT TUESDAY.



YES, IT'S BRITAIN'S BEST-KNOWN SCHOOLBOY—
"SMITH OF THE LOWER THIRD"
There will be a big rush to read a smashing new story of his adventures at Lipstone.
PLACE AN ORDER FOR YOUR "WIZARD" WITH YOUR NEWSAGENT RIGHT NOW!

Wizard 1538 dated 6 August 1955

know about this, then they'll use it to kick up trouble or my name isn't Adolphus Percival Ethelbert Carew". Fact or a joke? You must draw your own conclusions.

FORUM

From Terry Jones:

May I take this opportunity to congratulate you on the continual appearance each month of the "Collectors' Digest". It is like a bright little jewel arriving through my letter-box every month, such a bright contrast to the misery and violence in the newspapers and on T.V. How fortunate we all are to have a good lady to see we get our regular helping of all the old papers and comics. I don't know what we would do without your dedicated work keeping the little magazine alive.

Around 4pm when the dreary long evenings draw in I now make myself a cup of tea and get out a Howard Baker "Greyfriars" volume and read for a while. Such a wonderful therapy and a sure cure for loneliness and stress. I'm laughing out loud in no time. What wonderful yarns they all are!

From Naveed Haque:

In the CD Annual this year, I particularly enjoyed Una Hamilton Wright's reminiscences of her Uncle, and the "Silverwings" fairy story by Frank Richards that followed. I think it would be a good idea if all these fairy stories were collected together and published in book form. May I also take the opportunity to ask Mrs Hamilton Wright if she will consider publishing the Jack of All Trades Manuscripts still in existence? There are a number of fans who are eager to know what happened to Jack after he was kidnapped on board that Dutch ship (in the 1950's book 'Jack of the Circus').

From Horace Dilley:

What a splendid "Collectors' Digest" issue November 1998 is! I am not one who systematically reads through every item in a magazine but there was little in the November issue that I missed (and I must confess that there were one or two items I read a second time!)

The front cover particularly caught my attention. "The Head is requested to go and eat coke". That expression "go and eat coke" appears quite a lot in the old school stories. In my old school days, the *Magnet* and *Gem* etc. were read quite extensively, but hardly ever did you hear the expression "go and eat coke". I recall "go to Jericho", "go to blazes", "slinger off", "sling your hook", "go and fry your face" etc. but "go and eat coke" hardly ever. It would be interesting to hear of other readers' experiences.

From Des O'Leary:

What a smashing cover for the November C.D.! Backed up by Margery Woods' amusing article on 'The Great Guys of Greyfriars' and Bob Whiter's 'Autumn Memories' this is a worthy celebration of Guy Fawkes Day. Plus Reg Hardinge.

Bob Whiter's article reminded me of our first Guy Fawkes Day in Illinois in 1966. No-one had heard of bonfires or fireworks (outside July 4th) so we had to apply for a licence from the Fire Chief to have, not a bonfire (our kids were small and bonfires could certainly be a hazard in a place where many houses were made of wood) but for the few sparklers which we let off! People shook their heads about our application since fireworks were illegal. But when we phoned the Fire Chief, there was no problem. His name was O'Brian and he was very ready to oblige an O'Leary!

I enjoyed particularly this month the appreciative and informative reviews by Donald Campbell and Brian Doyle. They both always urge one to read the objects of their reviews, surely the main purpose of a critic. Betty Hopton, too, picked out an aspect of E.S. Brooks worthy of much further discussion. Always a pleasure to see Bill Lofts' name in C.D. How he is missed!

From J.E.M.:

Browsing through some old Digests recently, I came across a letter written by yourself about 15 years ago, in which you argued for a comprehensive detectives feature rather than one dealing only with Sexton Blake. Though Blakiana survives (I've written quite a few pieces for it myself in the past 15 years!), I still think your original idea has much merit. The present 'Other Favourite Detectives' section is very good, though largely dominated by Bill Lofts. A comprehensive feature entitled (say) 'The World of Detectives' might encourage Blakians to deal with other sleuths whose adventures they have enjoyed. Such a feature could also cover fictional criminals.

From Margery Woods:

The December issue of C.D. is always - well - Christmassy, and this one is especially so, one of the best I can remember for ages. It is difficult to single out which feature I liked best: Ted Baldock's delightful recapturing of Wharton Lodge at the festive season and the eternal unwanted guest, (no need to mention names!), and his tribute to Christmas numbers of *Magnet* and *Gem*; or the two evocative features on Sexton Blake at Christmas by Derek Ford and Reg Hardinge; or Mark Caldicott's clever analysis of one of E.S.B.'s great characters at St. Frank's. Then there was the intriguing conclusion of Anthony Cook's three-parter on 'The Mystery at Carrington Grange', and Ray Hopkin's very welcome feature on one of Morcove's early Christmas adventures. All great stuff as well as erudite and affectionate tributes reviving happy memories for devotees of the subjects.

For me, one contribution in particular stood out and cheered my breakfast-time on a dark, dismal morning. During that day I chuckled every time I thought of John Burslem's hilarious piece on 'Legs for Christmas', as it recalled memories of my own theatre days. It is so true. Tights, the prevention of wrinkling of! Many and involved were the methods of keeping the legs as smooth as a second skin. Wool? Hopeless, as well as itchy. Cotton or lisle? The last word in designer sag. Silk? Positively invited you to put a finger through at the last minute before curtain-rise. Nylon promised the answer but could still stretch round one's joints. Body tights were another answer - as long as one's legs were a matching length to theirs! Opera hose? Don't even think of them. Braces over the shoulders sometimes worked, as did the tightest of jock belts (worn over not under!), and of course there was the ancient method, the semi-strangulatory cat-cradle of pennies and elastic (these occasionally got out of control and ended up in the oddest places!). Happy days - if not actually at the time. Today's high-tech stretchies do appear to work, even if lighting up legs like technicolor tree ornaments. Thanks, John, for a super giggle at old memories.

Finally, a tribute to our Editor for her careful - and caring - compilation of Christmas themes. I'm sure Mary is well aware of that old saying, so true, regarding pleasing some of the people all of the time, or pleasing all of the people some of the time, but never all of the people all of the time. I'm sure our C.D. readers will agree that she has made a valiant attempt at that last achievement in the December 1998 issue of 'Collectors' Digest'.

From Colin Partis:

On going through some old press cuttings the other day, I came across an article from 'The Daily Mail', Monday April 28 1997. It was titled 'Why we should all welcome back this beastly fat boy' and was by Allan Massie. A small white-on-black headline across the page above the main title has 'As Billy Bunter is set to return to British television'. The article, to quote Allan Massie, states "A thirteen part series is to start on British television next year and there are intentions to open a chain of theme restaurants".

It is now the end of 1998 and I've heard no more about Bunter on television, nor of the opening of theme restaurants. I wondered if any C.D. reader knows if either of both of these projects fell through? It would certainly be a pity if it is so.

From Andy Boot:

Thanks for the November C.D., which as always never ceases to enthral: I've even dipped my toe into ESB waters by buying a copy of the HB Press 'The Barring Out At St. Frank's'.

Laurence Price's Blakiana piece was particularly interesting to me as I came to Blake via the fifth series, and despite delving back further, I still find these volumes my favourites. Perhaps that's why I disagree with him . . . It seems to me that Blake had always kept pace with the times in which any particular story was written, and 'The Mini Skirt Murders' only reinforces the contemporary angle to Blake that separates him from 'arch-rival' Holmes, who is forever locked in his never-never land of late Victoriana (even though I love Conan Doyle!).

Despite the brickbats thrown at him, I feel that Bill Baker did the right thing in trying to keep Blake in tune with the changing mores of the era, and was doing no more than any paperback or pulp editor worth his salt would have done. What killed Blake in the end was the very attitudes evinced by Laurence Price - the 'supernatural' element utilised by Martin Thomas led to the successful and much reprinted Guardians series, while the tougher crime elements were utilised to much success for the Richard Quintain books. It was the 'cosy' view of Blake that led to his disappearance from the bookshelves. Not that this image is necessarily wrong - one just cannot have it both ways.

On the subject of Martin Thomas, certainly his fifth series titles are the most 'way out', and his supernatural forays under the Peter Saxon pen name are amongst the better using that nomenclature. Under his own name, his 'The Hands of Cain' is certainly a nasty psychothriller that still reads tough today. I find it interesting that his more straightforward crime-works such as 'Death and a Dark Horse' are actually quite tedious, whereas the likes of 'Cain' are driven narratives . . . if nothing else, I suspect Laurence Price may have been correct in his musings about Thomas Martin's personality!

So ultimately, for me Blake had no nadir in the sense that Laurence means, because I respect the way he moved with the times: although I suspect that if I had come to him via an earlier SBL series, or had read him at that earlier time, I may actually share Laurence's views!

From Steve Holland:

Although I never met Thomas H. Martin, I did correspond with him towards the end of his life (he died in 1985). Bill Lofts often implied that THM was a gloomy fellow, and this was reflected in his novels which were dark and dense and the most difficult for Bill Baker's team to edit. I suspect that this depression stemmed from Martin's eyesight problems which he suffered with for many years (at least as early as 1954) and which eventually led to blindness. Although best remembered for his SBL writing, Martin told me that he had also written some romantic novels for Baker's Press Editorial Syndicate, and where you would imagine they would be bleak, gothic melodramas, one was a doctor/nurse romance set aboard a cruise ship - 'The Quest for Doctor Mallory' (Mayflower, 1967).

The Blackshirt comic strip adaptations appeared in *Super Detective Library* from A.P., 15 adventures between No. 81 'Blackshirt and the Golden Horse', July 1956 and No. 155 'Marked for Murder', July 1959. The first was drawn by Selby Donnison, but 13 of the remaining 14 were the work of Bill Lacey. Complete details (and reprints of the cover) can be found in Bryon Whitworth's colour index, 'Super Detective Library: An Illustrated Guide' by David Ashford & Steve Holland, available from 17 Hill Street, Colne, Lancs. BB8 0DH.

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