

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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EVERY SATURDAY.

Week Ending August 18th, 1934.



The BELLS of GREYFRIARS!

by
DICK PENFOLD.



HEAR the hated rising-bell,
Booming bell!
In the murky winter morning
How we dread the sombre warning
Of its chime!
Falling on our ears like thunder,
Surely Gosling's made a blunder
In the time?
If the porter, sour and surly,
Has awakened us too early
To the day's fierce hurly-burly,
It's a crime!



Hear the horrid lesson-bell,
Beastly bell!
On our spirits it's a damper,
To the Form-room we must scamper
In a throng,
As it tolls its solemn summons
To the gloomy and the glum 'uns,
"Come along!"
We must hurry, we must hustle;
Breakfast bolted, we must bustle
To begin our tedious tussle—
Ding! Dong!



Hear the mellow dinner-bell,
Golden bell!
There is music in its tocsin
As the hungry rabble flocks in
To the hall.
How we love its jolly jingle
As right merrily we mingle,
Large and small.
Billy Bunter's eyes are gleaming,
Of a feast divine he's dreaming,
And his full-moon face is beaming
On us all!



Hear the loud assembly-bell,
Brazen bell!
Bidding us in Hall assemble;
How the culprits quake and tremble,
Moist of brow!
Well they know its message sinister:
The headmaster will administer
Right now
A most painful castigation,
A most fearsome flagellation,
Which will have for termination—
"Ow-ow-ow!"



STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W.H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

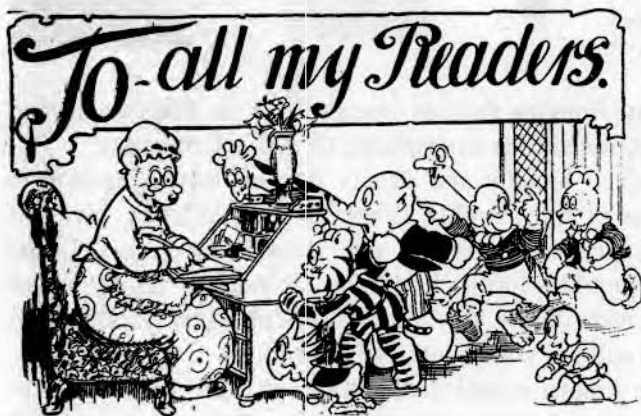
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PRICE £1.50



The Pictures
adorning this
Editorial are to put us
in the right mood –
for it is Annual time
again. Just like the
Editors of our
favourite old papers,
I am – as Autumn
approaches – telling
readers about our
forthcoming big,
bumper, warm and

wonderful Annual! As I have said before, many readers comment that without the C.D. Annual, 'Christmas just would not be Christmas'.

I am happy to offer you what I am sure will be a volume well up to our usual high standards. I have already received several attractive articles and look forward to further contributions soon from readers.

To 'trail' some 'goodies' already received, we have a lively feature on Gerald Campion, the actor who so brilliantly conveyed Bunter on TV and the London stage. This has been written by Brian Sayer who interviewed Gerald during last year's Broadstairs/Frank Richards celebrations. Roger Jenkins shares with us some of his perceptive thoughts about 'Some Minor



Hamiltonian Masters' Ray Hopkins focuses interestingly on Rookwood, and Ted Baldock has provided more of his atmospheric Greyfriars vignettes.

Bill Bradford has delved broadly and deeply into his vast collection to write about a wide range of the monthly Libraries; Des O'Leary gives us insights into the stirring fictional career of the 'durable detective', Dixon Hawke, and Brian Doyle provides further highlights from his – literally – star-studded travels and encounters during his days as a film publicist. And there is a great deal more which I will tell you about next month.

An order form for the Annual is enclosed, and you will see that despite the rising costs of printing, I've tried to keep the price almost the same as last year. It helps me and the printer if we can receive your orders early – so please *do* send your completed forms to me *as soon as you can*.

Happy browsing,

MARY CADOGAN

It helps the C.D. if you advertise your "For Sales" and Wants in it. The rates are: 4p per word, £5 for a quarter page, £10 for a half page and £20 for a whole page.

LEGENDARY GLIMPSES

by Ted Baldock

Sitting in the fork of a tree within a supply of
apples and a copy of the Magnet was very near to
bliss we thought – and I think so still.

M. Mills West. Suffolk Country Schooldays

It might be the declining summer of 1914, or the tumultuous late twenties. Equally it could be the dictator ridden world of the thirties – it does not signify. In the timeless world of Greyfriars it matters not. Little change in manners or customs is perceptible through the passing years at this ancient and revered foundation. To plagiarize Ben Jonson, “It is not of an age, but for all time.”

“Another sossie old fat man.”

“Well if you insist, old chap.”

Bunter beamed. This was something like. This was better than ‘Doorsteps and dish-water’ in hall, or the odd sardine in Peter Todd’s study. This was prime.

“I say Bob, old fellow I might as well finish that last rasher while I’m about it.”

The Owl was in his element. There was a flurry of rain blown against the study window. Outside the grey rain-swept Quad looked anything but inviting in the gathering dusk. All of which tended to make the atmosphere in Study No. I the more congenial. And, of course, there was tea, or rather there had been tea and Billy Bunter had done full justice to the hospitality of Harry Wharton and Co. On the table a few crumbs remained together with a fragment of cake, a very minute fragment, and sundry empty plates – nothing more.

“I say, you fellows, I’m afraid I shall have to be going now; a pressing engagement you know, a fellow’s time is not his own and Mauly was rather insistent.”

“Fat guzzler,” grunted Johnny Bull.

“Fascinating fellow” grinned Frank Nugent.

“There will never be another Bunter” remarked Harry Wharton.

“The neverfullness will be a blessing in disguise” murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

“Life would be dull without our Bunty” said Bob Cherry. “Come on you fellows, let’s get down to the Rag, as I recall we owe dear old Coker a social visit”.

Herbert Vernon Smith was standing on the Remove landing gazing morosely out at the rain-swept quad, his hands driven deep into his pockets, a black scowl on his brow. Billy Bunter, blissfully ignorant of the all too obvious storm – clouds, rolled up.

“I say Smithy old man!”

“Roll away barrel.”

“Oh really Smithy.”

“Shut up and get out you fat idiot.”

“Beast” If looks could have slain there is little doubt that Smithy would have been stretched lifeless on the landing. As it was, he merely turned from the window, drew back his foot and planted it on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars. “Yaroooh!” Bunter flew. The world seemed composed solely of beasts, most of whom wanted to – and did – kick Bunter. Only that morning his trousers had received the most unwelcome attentions of Horace Coker’s foot, appendages of no mean size – and Bunter had hated it. Then Harold

Skinner had made a totally unprovoked (according to Bunter) attack on the same region of his anatomy for no apparent reason other than that Bunter had referred to his features in a distinctly uncomplimentary way. Life was hard.

A whirr of wheels, a cloud of dust, a chattering of cheery voices and the Famous Five swept by and disappeared along Friardale Lane. A minute or so later came the clinking and jungling of what could only have been Billy Bunter's bicycle – and so it proved to be. A grunting and perspiring figure, its little fat legs plunging at the pedals making laborious but determined progress in pursuit. Was not a feed in the offing? Bunter had discovered by methods peculiarly his own that the destination of Harry Wharton and Co was Courtfield. Also he knew, again from the use of his own distinctive methods, that Bob Cherry had that morning received a letter containing a substantial 'tip' from his father, Major Cherry. Thus the deduction was quite simple in the fat Owl's mind. Those beasts were, without inviting their best pal, making hot foot for Chunkleys to celebrate the windfall. Strangely enough this assumption was, in the main, correct.

What Bunter did *not* know, although he might have guessed it where those energetic beasts were concerned, was the fact that the cheery five intended to take a ten mile spin round by Pegg before repairing to Chunkleys and a high tea. Fortunately Bunter began to suspect that some such nonsense was afoot when they by-passed Courtfield and rode cheerily on. By which time Bunter's little fat legs were beginning to tire rapidly and had long since ceased to plunge at the pedals with anything akin to enthusiasm. "Beasts!" The single epithet was all he could manage as he pushed his clinking machine up a mild gradient. Yet all things good and not so good have their terminations.

"I say you fellows, shove those meringues over here." Grinning, Bob Cherry complied with the admonition, "Careful Bunt old man, we don't want a burst porpoise on our hands, I don't think Chunkleys would be too happy either." Bunter was champing at a great rate. "Oh don't talk rot you chaps, tuck in you know. I say these meringues are out of this world." Johnny Bull grunted. "They will be in a moment, where do you put it all Bunter?" The Owl's jaws were busy. "Don't be an ass Bull, I have a healthy appetite which requires constant nourishment. You fellows seem able to exist on practically nothing, but we Bunters have always been renowned as good trenchermen – you should see our spreads at Bunter Court."

The meringues finished, Bunter turned his attention to a plate of raspberry tarts. Reaching over a fat hand he selected three to be going on with. He was beaming, his spectacles were flashing with anticipation, he was redolent of pleasure in every fat feature; every stretched seam of his waistcoat expressed quite plainly his delight and approval. Bunter was in his element. This was living. The serving staff at Chunkleys had previous experience of Bunter's gastronomic prowess – lots of experience, they knew him of old, as it were. But even their eyebrows were beginning to rise as they supplied plate after plate of confections to the Greyfriars tables. Bunter was beginning to breathe somewhat heavily but gallantly he carried on, albeit at a slower champing rate. Was not the honour of the Bunters at stake? A stout gentleman sitting at an adjacent table enjoying a cup of tea and a biscuit clucked audibly when he disappointingly surveyed the Owl as he made rapid progress through the tarts. A little girl, tea-ing with her mother close by, had long since fixed a fascinated eye on Bunter, wonder and incredulity writ large upon her face. Here was something entirely new in her short experience.

"Mummy" she piped. "Why is that fat boy eating so much, I am sure he will burst." "Hush my dear, have another sandwich." Mother's thoughts may well have been quite revealing. One small boy, in spite of repeated nudgings from his mother, had for some time been gazing at Bunter with wide-eyes and undisguised admiration, obviously fascinated by, and probably envious of, the rate at which the Owl was disposing of raspberry tarts. Here was a hero-worshipper in embryo, a would-be disciple who viewed Bunter for what he undoubtedly was – a gastronomic phenomenon, perhaps without equal.

There was choleric looking old gentleman, whose complexion seemed to suggest that a good part of his life had been spent in tropical climes where doubtless, an excess of curry in his diet had not improved his liver – or his humour. He was glaring pointedly at Bunter in amazement and disbelief, grunting the while to himself beneath a bristling white military moustache. It is possible that Bunter represented a new experience in his career, elderly though he was. "That boy ..." he broke out at last, unable apparently to contain himself. "That boy, that young rascal will be ill directly – good gad." He grasped ominously at a silver topped Malacca walking cane. Billy Bunter, oblivious of the widespread attention he was attracting, 'soldiered on', maintaining with no small credit the reputation and staying power of a long line of past and gone Bunters. Harry Wharton and Co were doing their best to behave nonchalantly as though nothing untoward was occurring, yet longing devoutly for the moment of settling-up and retiring from the spotlight in the crowded tea room.

"I say you fellows, how about a few more doughnuts and another of those spiffing jam-rolls? Don't worry, you know I am paying – that is, when my postal order arrives." "Hem, don't you think you've eaten enough old fat man," said Bob Cherry. "That fat porpoise is making an exhibition of himself" growled Johnny Bull. "The sooner we leave the better, everyone is staring at us." Perhaps Johnny was exaggerating a little, but a good many eyes *were* directed towards the Greyfriars table. However, Chunkleys was a large concern in every sense and Bunter's gastronomic activities were witnessed only by those few people in the vicinity of the scene of battle.

Thus surrounded by incredulous and critical observers, Bunter translated their interest as an *aura popularis*, and guzzled happily on. So do we remember him, sitting with Harry Wharton and Co round a table at Chunkleys emporium on a long ago summer afternoon. Four fellows are grinning, one is grunting his disapproval. The whole scene is caught and suspended in time.

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. NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, WD1 4JL. Tel: 01923-232383.

PRINCESSES & THE GOTHIC STORY IN SGOL by Dawn Marler

The *SGOL*, both the first and second series, is rich in the Gothic genre; mysteries and suspense set among those wonderful and exciting old castles; abbey and priory ruins with their mysterious crypts; the unopened or forbidden East/West wing or tower in an old house or mansion, or derelict manors. Oak panels behind which are secret passages; an old mill or tythe barn, perhaps, reputed to be haunted; hooded figures and secret societies; cryptic messages; stories with their princesses, heroines or some other benefactors – all are elements of the Gothic settings. Such stories abound in the *SGOLs*, *School Friend*, *Girls' Crystal* and their respective annuals.

Many of the school stories have the perfect Gothic setting. Somewhere in close vicinity of the school are the ruins of an ancient priory with its crypt; a few have, as well as the main entrance, a secret one that leads into a hidden passage or chamber which offers escape; ideal when escaping from a mistress or that formidable prefect out to cause trouble. Such ruins may be forbidden or out of bounds, which gives an added spice to the escape.

“And the mystery girl led the way to the back of the crypt. To the chums' surprise, there was an unexpected opening in the wall, and they stumbled through it and they found themselves in a long tunnel. ‘Great Scott, a hidden passage! gasped Molly.

The Phantom Rebel was busy closing the secret door in the wall. Then, as it swung to, she turned and smiled in the torchlight.

‘Yes, - a secret passage,’ she agreed, “St. Chads is riddled with them’. The girls, Molly and Jean, were even more surprised when they found that the passage they were in led to their own classroom, the entrance being one of the secret oak panels. In this they were able to escape their searchers.”

(*Followers of the Phantom Rebel*; *SGOL* 33, *GC* 1940).

In *The Warning of the Phantom Watcher* (99; *GC* 1945) Beryl Anthony learned that the *Crypt under the ruins*, where she had been summoned by a mysterious hooded figure, was “situated on the edge of the nearby wood which separated the boys' college from the girls' school”. These ruins were out of bounds to both the boys and the girls because the room above the crypt houses a “collection of curios” belonging to the headmaster of the boys' college. But this did not stop Beryl from meeting the mysterious hooded figures that made up a Secret Society.

The secret meeting place in *Her Pact with the Secret Two* (77; *GC* 1943) was an old Tythe Barn “A half-ruined building between High Tor and Moorland College”. It had once formed part of a large estate; it was of a great age, like the two schools themselves; it was also reputed to be haunted. As Beryl Hinton approached “the massive granite structure” it looked bleak and forbidding against the setting sun. There she met the Secret Two.

The hooded figures and Secret Societies strengthen the Gothic genre in the *SGOL* stories, story papers and annuals, such as (beside those I have already mentioned) the very first one in the Second Series, *Secret Leader of the Rebel Four* (No. 1; *GC* 1938); *Daphne's Feud with the Phantom Four* (20); *The Hooded Phantom of St. Kit's* (198); *The*

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Girl Helper OF THE Hooded Four

An Exciting School Story Featuring a Girl who Joined a Boys' Secret Society.

By JANE PRESTON

Secret Society. There are also ruins of a belfry, which stands among the Abbey ruins and there is an Abbot's room.

Old mills, mansions, manors and castles, with the addition of the forbidden west wing, east wing or tower; a few old places like these are often reputed to be haunted, such places are excellent background for the Gothic atmosphere.

The forbidden west wing, with sliding oak panels and secret passages, comes into the story *Vera, The Imps and a Mystery* (68); this story is published in the *SGPL* (no. 4), titled *Vera At Mystery Manor*. Vera Kingsley and her two brothers had been invited by their estranged grandfather to his country manor; while there, they became involved in a mystery which lay behind the closed doors of the west wing, a part of the house that Vera and the boys had been forbidden to enter by their grandfather. What mystery did the west wing hold? Who was Vera's mysterious friend, and who was the hooded figure who lurked in the west wing and the secret passages?

Delia in Mystery House (84) also has secret panels leading into corridors or passages; the forbidden room; a mystery boy calling himself 'Dick'. The *Haunted Mansion* (390) is another story with a good Gothic setting; it involves a ghostly cavalier, a cloaked figure and secret passages. The characters are familiar. They include Kitty Jordan, Steve Wilshaw, Leonora and Co. of Queenscourt Co-Educational College. One other character, who could be termed guest actor, is Jaina, who turns out to be a young terror. An exciting mystery story.

Carol - The last of the Lincolns (35; *GC* 1944) has an old mysterious mill, in territory forbidden by Carol's grandfather who owns the farm and the land. The mill holds the Lincoln Secret, but, to find out what it is, Carol has to disobey her grandfather and break into the mill. There is also someone else after the secret, but who is it?

Phantom Girl of Manor School (209); *The Girl Helper of the Hooded Four* (246); *Girl in the Crimson Cloak* (144' *SF* 1954); and of course, the various adventures of the Silent Three. These all come under the Gothic genre. Under the titles *The Fourth Grey Ghost* (103; *GC* 1948; *SGPL* 9); *The Elusive Grey Ghost* (109; *GC* 1949; *SGPL* 21); and *Again the Grey Ghost* (*SGPL* 25) together, they form a Secret Society known as the "Grey Ghosts"; these too, have wonderful Gothic settings: abbey ruins in close vicinity of the school, where the crypt is used as a meeting place for the

Castle of Secrets (310) is a story of a girl called Pat Cornish, who helped a famous composer with his new symphony at Steinhaus Castle. Pat soon discovered that the castle was a place full of secrets and mystery as well as music. She became likened to a prisoner at the castle. When I read this story I was reminded of another old castle in Anne Redcliffe's classic 1794 novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, a story centred upon a young girl who was imprisoned in a sombre castle in the Appenines, with all the Gothic apparatus of sliding panels and dark dealings; ghosts and haunting sounds...

One other story involving a castle, which I found very exciting, is worth mentioning here. It is *Stella's Castle of Mystery* which ran as a serial in *School Friend*, starting in 444 (November 15, 1958), and ending in 460 (March 7, 1959).

The story is about a girl who became the owner of "Rockcliff Castle", which has all the Gothic ingredients. It was regarded as a place of mystery; the villagers spoke in whispers of the strange legends which surrounded it. The caretakers, Mr. and Mrs. Hursley, believed in those legends. Who was trying to frighten Stella so she would leave the castle? What was their motive? What would be gained? Who was the phantom drummer who played the drum in the castle tower? The castle was certainly "eerie and mysterious..."

Another story I would like to mention here was advertised in the *Schoolgirls' Own* (Dec. 2, 1922; No. 96); it was to appear in the *School Friend* which came out in the same week. It is a story which carries the Gothic genre to its full potential; the story is called *The House of Many Mysteries* by Mildred Gordon. It features Peggy Neall, who, with her father, had charge of this large house; there were over forty rooms in the gloomy mansion, and although Peggy had roamed the corridors and knew her way as well as anyone, there were many rooms she had never been into. The mansion was gabled; it had diamond-paned windows, old oak rafters, wide chimney-pieces, sombre decorations. The house had the reputation in the neighbourhood of being haunted. The slightest wind seemed to cause creaking and weird noises emanating from the two big, ivy-mantled towers which



From *The Fourth Grey Ghost*, June 8
School Friend Picture Library 397

stood frowning down over the main entrance. The village folk shuddered when they passed the mansion at night. Strange lights appeared and disappeared in the windows; doors opened and shut without any warning. Creaking footsteps and rattling chains were often to be heard in the dead of night! There were cold draughts and the touch of clammy hands which roused folks from their sleep! "Such were the tales told in the Kingthorpe cottages of the Willowby ghost."

The *SGPL* included other stories in the Gothic genre, beside those I have already mentioned, such as *Storn Castle* (72), taken from the story *Her Strange Quest at Storn Castle*; *Creepy Castle* (90), from the story *King Arthur's Secret*; *Vera and the Tuckshop Ghost* (112), a story involving Vera Kingsley and her two brothers, whom we have already met. This time they were taking over the tuckshop at Manorhead School for Boys, for an old friend of her mothers. *House of Secrets* (140), from the story *Riddle of Beacon Heights*. There are, of course, many other titles both in the *SGOL* and the *SGPL*.

There is no uniformity in the *SGOL* stories; each one is different and produces its own group of individual characters: Town folk; village folk; fishermen; staff at a country estate, such as game-keepers and gardeners; staff at school; the countryside; a pastoral scene; storms. All these play their part; all represent various Gothic elements. At the centre we may have the Gothic heroine or princess. She may be at school; living in a mansion or manor; owner of a castle. In whatever situation she finds herself, she is, like all Gothic heroines, subjected to repression from those around her; parents, guardians, mistresses, prefects and villains.

A girl wrongfully expelled from school, or a mistress wrongfully dismissed, as in *Followers of the Phantom Rebel* (33); symbolizes the courageous, justified, revolt. Not merely a passive 'feminine' role but an active one to right a terrible wrong. To claim her rightful inheritance she has to contend with villains who are out to rob her of what is rightfully hers. She thus plays the part of a girl victim in a Gothic romance, and, when the wrong has been put right, she becomes the rightful Gothic Princess. This applies to each individual story, whoever the Gothic heroine may be, and whatever the variations. She may be like Stella, who became the owner of the *Castle of Mystery*, or Beryl Hinton, who had her pact with the Secret Two, or Beryl Anthony who became involved with *The Phantom Watcher*, or Carol, *The Last of the Lincolns*, who eventually inherited the farm. She won, although there were those out to stop her. Then, there was *Lynne - Last of the Osbornes* (322). Lynne was similar in a way to Carol. She had come over from Australia to Osborne Manor which was her inheritance, but someone else wanted it and they did all they could to get her to sell it. These were the villains she had to cope with; she won in the end, and was then a Gothic Princess. The *Mystery Girl of Study 13* (279) is another such story, and so we could go on. Such adventures make very exciting reading.

UNBOUND MAGNETS WANTED: 64 91 95 110 204 207 215 217 219 220 221
223 227 229 230 231 253. G. GOOD, Greyfriars, 147 Thornes Road, Wakefield, West
Yorkshire WF2 8QN. Tel: 01924-378273.



SEXTON BLAKE – SPY CATCHER

by Reg Hardinge

Paris, 1917, the fourth winter of World War I. Blake, Tinker, and Pedro were installed at the Hotel Wagram on the Rue de Rivoli. Blake, engaged by a British newspaper magnate, had been despatched to France to ferret out the plans of the Germans to negotiate an armistice with the allied forces before America entered the conflict. This would allow Germany time in which to regroup and then resume hostilities in a much stronger position, in order to deliver a knock-out blow. Blake was working closely with M. Paul Salabert, a powerful banker and newspaper publisher who was devoting all his time to combating German efforts to weaken France. Already a move by a German agent, calling himself M. Fronard, to flood Paris with counterfeit notes had been detected and nipped in the bud by the duo. Blake received a note from M. Salabert saying that he had made an important discovery and asking him to come round immediately to his residence. On arrival there Blake found that M. Salabert had been stabbed to death.

Earlier M. Salabert had gone to the vault at his bank to deposit his wife Josephine's jewel-case there. His partner, Victor Lavigne, was already there examining some papers in a small portmanteau. He slipped behind a partition watching Salabert and then the arrival of Josephine. As the couple were leaving, Salabert tripped over the Portmanteau which opened, and he proceeded to read the papers within it. Lavigne drew his revolver, training it on his partner.

Salabert went straight to his club where he despatched his note to Blake and then went home. He was soon involved in a heated argument with Josephine, who left abruptly for her father's place. Soon afterwards Salabert's body was discovered with a knife in his heart. M. Flamard of the Surete was in charge of the case. All the evidence pointed towards Josephine as having murdered her husband. She was arrested, protesting her innocence, and imprisoned awaiting trial.

At the French village of Monbaix, behind the Allied lines was a contingent of fifty girls belonging to the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. One of these was Glory Gale, a reporter from the *London News and Echo* who had joined the W.A.A.C. by arrangement with her firm. Her assignment was to provide a weekly article for her paper on the doings of her unit. Glory, 20, looked dazzlingly attractive in her neatly fitting khaki tunic and skirt. Her violet eyes, charming nose and sunny disposition went well with her wealth of golden-brown hair. She had taken a hand in some of Blake's cases, memorably in the capture and arrest of two criminals, Kathleen (Broadway Kate) Maitland and Aubrey Dexter (*The Case of the International Adventurer*, SBL No 43).

Glory had read about the Salabert murder in her paper, and learned that Josephine had been found guilty at her trial and sentenced to die by the guillotine. She was keen to

help Blake who believed in Josephine's innocence. Surviving a German air-raid on her Army Base, she was granted a trip to Paris in a staff car. On a bridge over the Seine near Versailles the car was blown up by an enemy bomb placed on it. Glory was flung into the river but was rescued unscathed.

Blake was pleased to see glory whom he liked and respected for her coolness and bravery. In fact he owed her his life on one occasion when they had worked together. He had deduced that it was Lavigne who had killed Salabert by throwing a knife through an open window and with Tinker in a French military two-seater plane, Blake shadowed Lavigne's car to a castle in the vicinity of Rouchelle, which proved to be the headquarters of the spies supporting the German cause. In the castle Blake and Tinker found the papers which had been in the portmanteau in the bank vault in Paris. They were lists of enemy agents in France who were planning to overthrow the country. Victor Lavigne was none other than the infamous M. Fronard.

Blake and Tinker were trapped in the castle chamber, but, thankfully, Glory and Pedro who had followed by train were able to rescue them. Finally, Lavigne and an associate, attempting a get-away plane, were pursued by Blake and Tinker in the French army plane. When Lavigne opened fire with a machine-gun, Blake, unarmed, rammed his opponent, bringing the plane down and wrecking it. Blake landed his plane safely, and obtained a signed statement from the badly injured Lavigne before he expired admitting to the murder of Salabert.

Blake's mission was successfully concluded by the wholesale arrests of the spies named in the retrieved documents. Josephine was pardoned by the French President, for which she expressed her deep gratitude to Blake, Tinker, Glory and Pedro.

John William Bobin, the author of this story (*In the Shadow of the Guillotine*, SBL no. 51) was a contributor to *The Union Jack* before the inception of the Sexton Blake Library in September 1915. Glory Gale, created in 1917, did not feature in his *Union Jack* offerings. After 1929 several of his stories were reprinted in the S.B.L. under the nom-de-plume 'Mark Osborne'. IN 1915 he took over the George Marsden Plummer Saga from Norman Goddard, and in the same year wrote an account of the film *The Counterfeiters* featuring Maitland and Broadway Kate, (*UJ* No. 632). Using various pseudonyms he wrote as well for *Detective Weekly*, *Boys Friend* and for several girl's papers.

**DON'T FORGET TO
ORDER YOUR
ANNUAL
SOON**



IRON IN THE SOUTH

by Mark Caldicott

PART TWO – A SUPPORTING CAST AND A CONSULTING DETECTIVE

How many devotees of E.S. Brooks know the answer to the question: "Which was the first detective featured in his work?". The answer is not Nelson Lee or Sexton Blake, or any of the already-established names. In fact it was a detective of Brooks' own invention, as is revealed below.

Philip Graydon (assuming the name of Frank Kingston) and Dolores de las Mercedes achieve a number of early successes in their fight to destroy The Brotherhood of Iron, the criminal organisation against which Frank Kingston has sworn vengeance. At the outset of the battle the two are alone. Soon, however, they begin to recruit allies to the cause.

Kingston begins his work with a campaign against the evil Don Sebastian. This takes Kingston to Rio where he meets Frazer, who is destined to become his man. Frazer was originally a "common members" of the Brotherhood, a petty criminal who, experiencing a change of heart when Kingston saves his life during an early episode, thereafter swears loyalty to Kingston. Frazer is useful not only as Kingston's valet, but also in that he retains his "insider" position in the Brotherhood. Along with Frazer, Kingston also recruits Crawford, a serving member of the Brotherhood who has decided, with Frazer, to assist Kingston.

This army of four meet with considerable success. After defeating Don Sebastian, they manage to bring to justice the Detective Inspector Caine, Sir Robert Gissing and Colonel Marsden, all Inner Councillors of the Brotherhood.

Soon, however, Kingston's team is supplemented again. The Brotherhood own a yacht, the *Night Hawk* which they use to attempt the hold up of a liner called the *Colston*. However, Kingston, their unknown enemy, has a submarine which he uses to attack and sink the *Night Hawk*. On board the yacht is a young lad called Tim Curtis whom Kingston saves, and who then becomes Kingston's ally. Kingston disguises himself as a seaman to get on board the *Colson* where he leaves Tim in what he believes to be safety. Kingston himself sets out for England on his own yacht the *Coronet*.

The problem for Tim is that unknown to Kingston there is a Dr. Charles Anderson on the *Colston*. The doctor, a famous medical man, is an Inner Council member who suspects that Tim knows who blew up the *Night Hawk*. He seizes Tim and, when the liner reaches England, takes him to the brotherhood's council-chamber. The lad is under threat of torture if he does not speak. Kingston's response to this situation relies upon one of the special powers that he has developed through absorbing the power of the Iron Island where he was marooned by the Brotherhood. He visits the Brotherhood's leader, Lord Mount-Fannell, and mesmerises him, causing him under the power of hypnotism to bring the lad to him.

Fast upon the heels of this newest recruit to the cause, Kingston is visited at his home by Mr. Carson Gray, a detective with chambers in Great Portland Street. Thus it is that Carson Gray is almost certainly the first detective featuring in any ESB story, and he is Brooks' own creation. Looking around for a striking name to use as a pseudonym a quarter of a century later, Brooks came up with a rather similar name of Berkeley Gray.

Here, in the 1910 version, the name is probably chosen for its rhythmic equivalence to the detectives of the day, Sherlock Holmes, Sexton Blake, Nelson Lee, etc.

Gray is an astute detective. He is convinced that he has discovered in Kingston the man responsible for the sinking of the *Night Hawk*. He has successfully tracked Kingston down to his own home. However, Gray is not quite as clever as he believes, for, as intended, he has concluded that Kingston is a bit of a buffoon. He is astonished, therefore, to find that Kingston had already made up his mind to take the detective into his confidence and had in fact left a trail for him to follow.

"Upon my soul, Mr. Kingston," [Gray] said, "you have given me a bigger surprise this morning than I have had for months! Really, you would make a first-class investigator. Here have I been priding myself on having tracked you down in a masterful manner, and arrive, only to find that you know I was following the clues you left. And I thought you were without brains, if you'll excuse me saying so!"

"Most people in London are of the same opinion as yourself," drawled Kingston. "Needless to say, my foppish manners are only a blind."

(*Gem* 155, 28-Jan-11)

Kingston explains his situation to Gray, whose admiration for Kingston grows rapidly. "Somehow, Kingston, I admire you as I do no other man", says Gray, to which Kingston responds:

"Come, come, Gray! I am not as marvellous as all that. The Iron Island has made me what I am, and sometimes, now it is all over, I feel glad I spent eight years on its shores. The Brotherhood of Iron, in marooning me there, sealed its own doom."

Later Gray says to Kingston: "You look a perfect fool from head to foot. It's marvellous how you keep up the appearance."

Gray's regard for Kingston leads him to urge the latter to take Scotland Yard into his confidence. The two take a hansom cab – reminding us that this is 1910, and we are still in the London of Sherlock Holmes – to Scotland Yard, where Gray introduces Kingston to a high-ranking police officer. Indeed the man must be of such a rank that, after agreeing that Kingston working secretly can do more to destroy the Brotherhood than the forces of the police, he can provide Kingston with a slip of postcard containing a few words and his signature. He adds: "If, at any time, you find yourself stopped by the police, or want police assistance at a moment's notice, just show any constable this little card. You will find the effect really surprising."

Kingston soon has the opportunity to bring Dr. Anderson to justice. Whilst having the reputation of being "a clever and upright member of the medical profession" Anderson is in fact intending to organise the demise of Sir Christopher Rowe, the death of whom would lead to a significant financial benefit to the Brotherhood. Anderson is staying at Sir Christopher's house supposedly in order to safeguard his health and

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administer treatment for his recovery. In reality, of course, it is in order to ensure that there is no hitch to his plan.

Kingston visits the house, and does so at night in order that he can enter the building unseen and investigate the situation. His exceptional powers, the result of the years spent on the Iron Island, allow him to see his way through the grounds.

An ordinary man would hardly have seen which way to go, for the darkness under the trees was almost absolute. Kingston's eyesight, however, was wonderful, and he had no difficulty at all in finding his way. Not that he could see in the dark; no man can do that. But what an ordinary man would call darkness, Kingston would consider only partial darkness.

Once inside the house he sees, silently moving along the corridor, "an object which would have sent the average person white with fear and terror – a spirit from another world – a horrible, nightmare-like apparition, awful to behold." Kingston is not fooled. He is convinced that "ghost" is none other than Anderson and that the plan is to induce a heart attack in Sir Christopher Rowe. The "ghost" vanishes through the wall. Kingston is convinced that there is a secret panel but cannot find it, so hammers loudly on the panels with his gun before hiding himself to see what happens. As Kingston expected, this has startling results. There are footsteps, a click, and one of the panels opens and, making a great deal of noise, the "ghost" blunders into the corridor. It is Anderson himself, shouting for his associate Simpson, whom he believes to have been the source of the knocking. While Anderson goes in search of Simpson, Kingston enters the opening revealed in the passage in order to determine where it connects with Rowe's own quarters. He hears Anderson say that in view of the mysterious knocking he is postponing his ghost appearance to Rowe until midnight the next day.

The creation of a ghostly appearance by use of a luminous costume is one of Brooks' regularly recurring ideas. Here it is not presented as the source of a mystery: its nature is known from the outset. So often, in later stories, the ghostly appearance remains unexplained until the use of this costume is revealed as the solution to the mystery.

Returning to London, Kingston is able to seek out the assistance of his new ally Carson Gray in getting a look at Rowe's will, confirming his opinion that there is a fortune at stake. Posing as a representative of Rowe's solicitor, Kingston seeks an interview with Rowe. Anderson, acting as Rowe's doctor, tells Kingston that Rowe is too ill to see him, but relents when Kingston informs him that Rowe's fortune (which Anderson is out to get hold of) is in jeopardy unless he acquires Rowe's signature on a document. Once admitted to see Rowe, Kingston uses the opportunity to place in front of him a piece of paper saying: "Take no notice of what I am saying..." The paper goes on to warn him not to take any sleeping draft but to await Kingston's return that night.

Kingston indeed returns, and is accompanied by Gray, who keeps Anderson occupied while Kingston meets Rowe, convincing him of Anderson's evil plans. Kingston takes Rowe's place and is able to foil the Brotherhood's scheme, bringing Anderson to justice in the process, but continuing to remain unknown to the Brotherhood.

Gray, however, is not so lucky since he is soon marked out as an enemy of the Brotherhood. Gray has been commissioned to investigate the murder of Philip Whyte and is on the track of William Haverfield. Kingston knows Haverfield is in the Brotherhood's Inner Circle but rather than tell Gray this, he sets Tim Curtis to follow Gray. At



"The police-boat!" gasped Carson Gray. "Call out—they will hear! Help! Help!" (See page 22.)

Haverfield's house, Gray is captured, tied up and thrown through a trap door into a sewer. Tim follows him into the water and keeps him alive while they are swept into the Thames where they are picked up by the river police. The police are able to raid Haverfield's house and gain convicting evidence, but Gray's identity is discovered. He is at risk of his life, since the Brotherhood believe, mistakenly, that Gray is aware of Haverfield's connections with the Brotherhood. Kingston, of course, is determined to make sure Gray is protected, but does not know that the means by which this is made possible turns upon a fortunate event in the future...

A CHAMPION ANNUAL

by Alan Pratt

By the 1940s, The Champion had become firmly established as the paper for sport stories.

Each week there would be tales of soccer or cricket (depending on the season) and, perhaps, ice-hockey, speedway, motor racing or athletics. With approximately five stories in each issue, priority was obviously given to what might be termed "mainstream" sports. When the annual came around the mix changed somewhat. The publishers clearly ignored the temptation to simply double up (two soccer stories, two cricket stories etc.) and opted, instead, to cover the widest possible sporting spectrum. The Champion Annual of 1948 is an excellent example of this and worthy of consideration in more detail.

It must be said at the outset that, unlike the painfully skimpy volumes that masquerade as annuals today, Champion Annuals were solid and chunky. 192 pages, packed with stories and features with barely an inch of space wasted. Indeed, the 1948 annual contains no less than 16 stories, 13 of which are sports related yet, amazingly, not one sport is duplicated.

The proceedings get off to a flying start with "Hands Off Our Skipper!", a football story by Edward Home Gall. "Tuffy" Tufton, the popular captain and centre forward of the "Roving Rovers", determines that his team should concentrate on a short-passing game if they are to have any chance of beating crack Continental team, the Courier Rapides. "It's no good playing the open, long-passing game," he tells his team-mates. "The Continentals are far too quick on the ball." I'm sure that readers who, like me, were disappointed at England's failure to progress in Euro 2000, might agree that Tuffy's comments in 1948 would be equally valid today. We still can't catch 'em!

A terrific opening story this one, packed with incident from start to finish and pace never flags. Ingredients include an 18 stone goalie who wears a kilt and plays the bagpipes, a bogus manager out to steal the club's gate money, a mass pitch invasion and a thrilling climax in which a message is dropped onto the pitch from an aircraft during the last minute of a vital game. At one point a player is encouraged to disguise himself as "a foreigner" using a wig and false beard and succeeds in completely fooling the club's directors. Of course, we all recognise that, with the huge influx of foreign players into our Premiership, that wheeze would not be successful in the year 2000, but I digress. The ultimate point of the story is that the Rovers must win their match against the Rapides



"The captain's up to his tricks again," grinned a scanian as Captain Dick whizzed along the deck, spinning a revolving barrel with his bare feet. Even though on the trail of buried treasure, the Wrestling Buccaneer meant to keep fit.

The **COWBOY** WITH THE **K.O. PUNCH**



By Harry Belfield

because failure will mean that Tuffy is banned from the club for life and this is a recurring theme to be found in many of their other stories in the book.

In "Buster's High Speed Bitser", Buster Martin and his pals must win the Devil's Elbow hill-climb in their home-made racing car or they will be "broke to the wide" and Buster's dream of forming a professional racing team will be smashed. "Fleetfoot - the Redskin Running Wonder" must win the one mile race at the gathering of the tribes in order to be made chief for a year and Lon Baker in "Vulcan of the Great Snows" knows that only by winning the two hundred mile Alaskan dog derby can he save his father's fur trading post from a crooked rival.



"This will tell us if our new manager is an impostor!" cried Tuffy, pointing to the dropping message-container. Now Tuffy hoped to clear his own name and get his place back in the Rovers!

Many of the stories are wonderfully over the top and all the more entertaining for that. In "Champion of Crocodile River", Parda, the jungle boy, teaches crocodiles to play water polo and Bill Brody, a boxing westerner described as "The Cowboy with the K.O. Punch" has sparring bouts with his horse, Pard, who wears boxing gloves on his two front hoofs. Captain Dick, "The Wrestling Buccaneer", keeps himself fit at sea by whizzing along the deck on a revolving barrel and I hesitate to imagine what today's educationalists would make of a character like "Fireworks Flynn – The Wizard Sports Master" who uses bangers and squibs to frighten the "slackers" who stand in the way of his winning a vital cycle-polo match. As an added bonus, this story carries a wonderful illustration of a sinister masked cracksman whose chances of keeping his identity a secret must be seriously reduced by virtue of the fact that he has seemingly forgotten to remove his mortar board!

There are old favourites here as well. Colwyn Dane, the ace detective, solves "The Riddle of the Vanished Ice-Skater", an exciting story of a "monster" living in the Fens and "Rockfist Rogan – The Boxing Airman" proves more than a match for the unfortunate Hun in World War II. And what of "Bulldog Blade – Sporting Legionnaire" who uses his kite to quell an Arab uprising.

And, just in case these action packed stories are not enough for the thrill seeking reader, there are some fascinating (and now charmingly nostalgic) features on football skills, great sporting achievements and "the ice-hockey craze" that was sweeping the country at the time.

When talking books, I usually resist the temptation to use superlatives (and after all, one man's meat etc. etc.) but I would say, without reservation, that this is one of the very best annuals that I have been fortunate enough to read. It is almost, I would suggest, the perfect boys' annual. The text is complemented by some excellent artwork and, as in all Champion Annuals, the print is beautifully clear. It may not contain the finest writing, the stories may have some pretty obvious loop-holes and, one thing is for sure, it's not politically correct. But for sheer zest and the joy of living this collection is just about unbeatable.

For this reader, at least, the Champion, like "Bimbo – The Racing Clown" is always first past the post.

THE UNFINISHED MAGNET SERIES – ONE OF THE BEST?

by Andrew Miles

Conclusion

What might have followed this series! It would probably have lasted until the Summer hols. The yarns would have returned to the Nazi spy theme – perhaps with Ogilvie's Scottish home as the setting for the thrilling capture of a Nazi parachutist? A more exotic tale might take the Co. with Smithy (and, of course, Bunter) to America in a perilous sea voyage packed with dangers from German subs. Only the powerful Mr. Vernon-Smith would have the influence to transport his son and his pals across the Atlantic in wartime! Or, in a possible if far-fetched alternative, they might follow

Redwing to France, after he has gone there to look for his father who disappeared at Dunkirk. They cross to France in a small boat and join the Underground – like Cub Peters of the *Gimlet* books. Having the Co. with Redwing and Smithy spending the hols in occupied France and finding John Redwing is certainly appealing. Bunter, of course, would be with them, having stowed away, thinking there was to be a picnic at Pegg. He might even be instrumental in rescuing the reckless Bounder from the Gestapo. Some readers would no doubt prefer to see them in America, perhaps in a morale-boosting rehash of the *Hollywood* series. Fish could stow away with them; he and his pop might feature, still uncommitted “nootrals”. Perhaps the sinking of their ship and their exciting escape change Fish’s mind. There might then be adventures on a deserted isle which turns out to be a secret Nazi submarine base.

After returning to school, the chums might then face unparalleled upheaval – the decision to evacuate the Redcliffe/Courtfield/Friardale area to allow an expansion of the Lantham Military area for coastal defence, troop training and top-secret RAF projects. Mr. Watkins¹, Headmaster of Courtfield Council School, Dr. Locke, Dr. Voysey and Miss Primrose, facing closure of their schools as a result, decide to merge them for the duration. Lord Mauleverer offers Mauleverer Towers as a school site and our favourite *Magnet* yarns characters troop off to Hampshire. Such a series would offer a fascinating range of unusual scenarios. There would be a new dynamic in the reconstituted Remove: Smithy and Skinner and Co. would be allied with Pon and Co. The snobbish elements of Greyfriars and Highcliffe would try to make things hot for the Courtfield lads. The new Soccer XI would be awesome: Wharton, Courtenay, Caterpillar, Cherry, Trumper, Lazarus, Toddy, Bull, Inky, Squiff, Smithy. If the Bounder’s shady association with Pon lured him from games, Brown (from Courtfield), Penfold and Smithson (of Highcliffe) would tussle for the last berth. In Summer Tom Brown would be needed as wicket keeper. Linley, generally a shadowy figure in the later *Magnets*, would disappear completely. Feeling that he is not helping the war effort at Greyfriars, he elects to return to Lancashire to work with his father in a munitions factory. His departure would be recorded with a blaze of patriotic fervour in a number with a title like “*His Country’s Call*”.

Matters would be further complicated by the presence of the Cliff House girls and teachers. Classes would have to be more orderly than in *Magnet* 68ff when Quelch was overwhelmed by constant threats of tears! Marjorie, Clare and Co. would have toughened up somewhat and be determined to match the boys in class, in the allotments and even on the playing field. Mobby and Quelch would share the teaching duties of the Remove, each giving of his spare time to ARP duties. Quelch would make the slackers grind and at long last have the chance to give Pon a well-deserved six on the bags. Mobby would, as usual, toady to the titled elements and be as hard as steel on Wharton and Co. He would become deeply unpopular and clash frequently with Quelch over the handling of the new Remove. When Bunter plays his ventriloquial tricks on the unsuspecting Mobby and gets Ponsonby caned, even Mauleverer does not object! Maully would despise Mobby’s snobbishness (“that fellow is a complete outsider, by gad”) and insist on sleeping with his Form fellows in Spartan conditions in his own castle. Miss Bellew would teach Domestic Science to all Forms – even the Fifth, to the horror of Coker! Pon, Skinner and Co would writhe under the vigorous, daily drill and physical training

imposed by the formidable Miss Bullivant Lascelles would, of course, have joined up. The Remove studies would now be plundered by two Bunters and Bessie would show in class that she is at least as dense as Billy, but without his guile.

There would be interesting developments elsewhere. Dr. Locke would provide sound leadership, strongly supported by Quelch and the Bull. Dr. Voysey would be happy to leave the tough decisions to others. Prout would be like a steed before battle, cleaning his hunting rifles and taking a commission in the Home Guard. Pompous and fat like Captain Mainwaring as in the "Dad's Army" TV series, he would never fail to demand a salute from the Remove Scouts. Among the domestic staff, there would be havoc! Would Mrs. Mimble be prepared to share the tuck shop? Or Gosling the lodge? Mimble would clash with the Head Gardener of the Towers, while Mrs. Kebble and the stately Porson would not see eye to eye over many domestic arrangements. Mr. Lodgey and the frowsty crew from the Three Fishers and the Cross Keys would put up in a disreputable pub near the Towers. They would still be happy to help the bad hats lose their shirts as they try to spot that ever-elusive winner during the restricted war-time racing programme.

And what then? Whatever might have come from the pen of Frank Richards in a longer-lived *Magnet* would have been as entertaining as what went before, until we reached the delightful world of post-war Greyfriars in the Skilton and Cassell's editions. *floreat Greyfriars!*

Footnote

1. I cannot recall that this person was ever created in any yarn. I would be delighted if anyone can enlighten me. Meanwhile, I have taken a liberty. Watkins seems an appropriate name for a gentleman who would not have the same majestic stature as the stately Dr. Locke (with apologies to any reader named Watkins!).

ROCKET

(Editor's Note: Brian Doyle's mention of *Rocket* in the March CD has inspired two readers, Ron Gillatt and Ray Hopkins, to send features about this paper.

Ron writes:

In *DID YOU KNOW* (*Collectors Digest* No. 639 page 29) Brian Doyle commented that Sir Douglas Bader was rumoured to have edited the *Rocket* boys' paper in the 1950s but he could find no confirmation of this and wondered if "someone has a run of this paper and can solve the mystery."

As I have not noticed any reference to anyone solving this mystery I am writing from the antipodes with real evidence. I possess only issues 1 and 2 of the *Rocket* and I don't know how long a run it had.

However, I enclose photocopies of:

1. The masthead for issue No. 1 of 21 April 1956.
(The box alongside *Rocket* highlights "Edited by Douglas Bader")
2. The top half of page 5 comprising an editorial "Why I am Editing *Rocket*" incorporating a photograph of Douglas Bader and his signature.

Serial picture stories

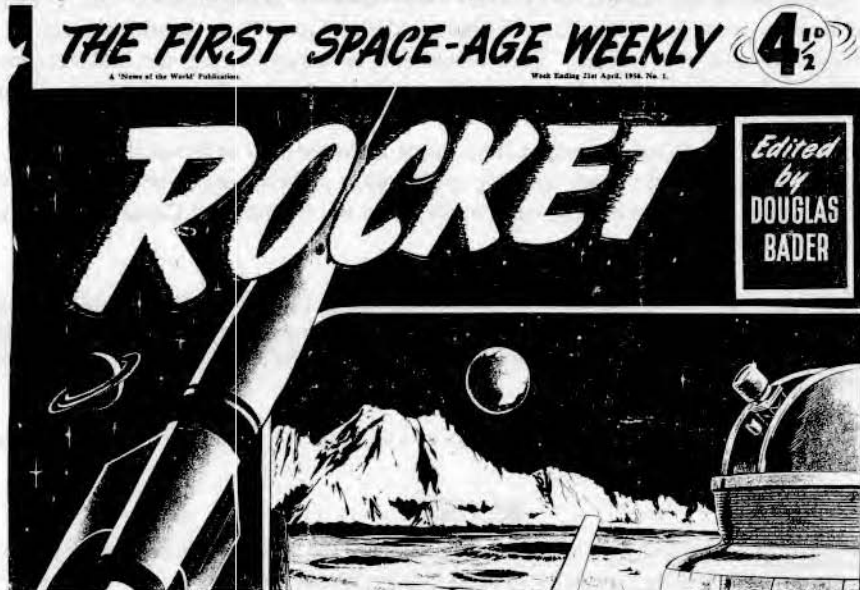
Captain Falcon in Moon-base Patrol. Escape from Earth. John Storm in Tarmac Base. Flash Gordon. Brick Bradford by Clarence Gray. The Seabed Citadel by Ley Kenyon.

Textual serial stories

The Jungle of Space by Conrad Frost. St. Rockets – The Science College of Tomorrow.

Additionally, there were factual items concerning science, space humour, and science fiction.

Rocket was to be a weekly, printed and published every Monday for the Proprietors *News of the World* by Eric Bemrose Ltd., Long Lane, Liverpool.



THE FIRST SPACE-AGE WEEKLY

by Ray Hopkins

The above banner headline, in black on yellow, was printed on the cover of a new boys' weekly paper/comic dated 21 April 1956. Beside its title *ROCKET* the buyer was induced to part with his 4½d by a white on red block stating "Edited by Douglas Bader." Page 5 contains the Editor's photo, teeth clenched on large pipe. He explains that his editing venture and the purpose of the new publication is to provide "all the space-age factual information, entertainment and exciting adventure." However, it sounds as though the Editor was not going to be present at his desk on a daily basis as he remarks at his delight upon hearing from his readers but, "do not write to me personally. All letters should be addressed to the Editor." One suspects that a lesser person may perhaps be in the Editorial chair more frequently than Bader himself.

In a column headed "From the Editor's Observatory" there are no less than seven letters from readers. How possible when this issue is number one? It seems the

Why I am Editing **ROCKET**

I AM editing *ROCKET* because to me it is an adventure in which all Space-Agers can share.

Like you, my age group is best described as Space-Age and in *ROCKET* we hope to give you all the Space-Age factual information together with entertainment and exciting adventure.

The new Elizabethan Age has found horizons wider than the first Elizabethans visaged. And for you who belong to it there are adventures ahead, more exciting and more perilous than ever faced Raleigh and Drake or even Columbus.

Since their day almost the whole

terrestrial world has been discovered and explored. The top has been reached with the glorious Everest achievement.

The Arctic and Antarctic hold some secrets still, but these are within our grasp. But the depths below the sea and the space round our planet form the immediate horizons which man is straining to cross.

I welcome to our team of experts Commander Yunge-Bateman who after being camouflage expert to the Admiralty, is now specialising in the realms of Space travel and guided missiles. He is a skilled artist as his series each week proves.

Ley Kenyon, too, is a first-class artist and a practising Aqua Lung Diver. He recently worked on the Crete Dives examining the wrecked Greek galleon. He is one of Cousteau's team and will be operating with him this summer. His own book on Aqua Lung Diving will be published by Collins next month.

Mr. John Carnell, Editor of New World Science Fiction, is the Chairman of the committee of inter-planetary and science experts who meet each week to check on all information that comes into our Editorial Observatory.

And so with a weekly that is full of entertainment you can rest assured that the technical details are accurate.

And for the imaginative there are all the Space Aces—world wide in their appeal—Captain Falcon, Flash Gordon, Brick Bradford, Johnny Hazard, John Storm and Professor Jack Ransom.

Then there will be the *ROCKET* SPACE CLUB, appealing to both sexes. Space Observer and Space Nurse Badges, especially designed (See Page 8) will be available to members. They can later qualify for the double-winged Space Pilot and Space Hostess Badge. I will give more details of our *ROCKET* Space Club next week. You will want to show that you belong to the Space-Age by



Commander J. Yunge-Bateman, R.N. and Ley Kenyon—two experts in space—outer space—and sub-marine space.

wearing these attractive badges. But more about this next week. And keep the coupon at the foot of Page 4.

I shall always be delighted to receive letters from readers saying what they want in our Space Age Magazine. All letters should be addressed to The Editor, *ROCKET*, 30 Bouverie Street, London, E.C.4, and not to me personally. For any letters used special prizes will be given.

Douglas Baker

publishers, the *News of the World*, allowed fifty prospective readers a preview of the first edition. By far the most entertaining was one from "Grandpa" printed after his grandson's "I like most of your weekly", writes the lad, "especially Captain Falcon – but I don't like Johnny Hazard though my father says it's the best. When Grandpa looked at your magazine he 'blue' his top good and hearty. He sat down and wrote a letter for you which I enclose – but he would not let me read it. Alan S. London, age 10." Grandpa writes, "What poppycock to fill a child's head with. The youngsters have enough to do to keep up with this planet without living in the world of space. Please send your magazine to my club (address below) in plain wrapper. I enclose P.O." The Editor writes: "Thanks Alan. We like the colorful bit "When grandpa blue his top." When he sees we've printed his letter I bet his face is 'read' – as you would say."

ROCKET contained three British strip stories featuring Captain Falcon, John Storm and Professor Jack Ransom and the possibly more celebrated American space explorers Flash Gordon, Johnny Hazard and Brick Bradford (no relation to our Bill!). There are also two stories to read, both serials. *The Jungle of Space* by Conrad Frost, where a "nuclear physicist who has specialized in Geiger-counter detectors undertakes a top secret security investigation of a strange cosmic ray phenomenon in the heart of the African Jungle." The inevitable school story is *St. Rockets, the Science College of Tomorrow* where anything can happen. This story has a comical flavour and is written by William Temple. The illustrator, not usually an artist one thinks of in connection with humorous stories, is none other than our old Sexton Blake friend, Eric Parker.

A further British strip entitled *Escape from Earth* goes back to the 1939 war and presupposes "secret weapon developments going on in the heart of the Black Forest which will enable General Von Krump and his crew to escape to outer space when Berlin falls to the enemy."

A page of cartoon space jokes (sample: "I told them all along there were men on the earth." Space creature, hand outstretched in welcome, to two startled astronauts). *Your Guide to Guided Missiles*, by Commander J. Yunge-Bateman, R.N. and, *News of Other Worlds*, by Herbert O. Johansen, two factual articles with photos, complete the contents of *ROCKET* number one. The sixteen page issue is printed on what we used to call Photogravure newsprint. The paper's size is 10½" by 12½".

ST. ROCKETS (Continued).
Illustration by
Eric Parker



Both the Amalgamated Press and D.C. Thomson were inserting strip stories in their juvenile periodicals by the early 1950s, thus hoping to wean youthful readers away from

all-stories-to-read weeklies. But the attractive set of features detailed above and the splendid colour throughout, comparable to that appearing in the *EAGLE* since its first appearance in April 1950, did not ensure *ROCKET* a long run. According to the *Lofts/Adley Old Boys Book Catalogue* (1969) it survived for only thirty-two weeks, closing on 24 Nov 1956. It was incorporated with *EXPRESS WEEKLY* which itself amalgamated with *T.V. COMIC* in 1962.

FORUM

From BILL LEWIS: I enjoy so much your magazine, and look forward to receiving it every month.

I was naturally most delighted with the article *More Prunes? Food in the Jennings Books* in your August issue, and feel I would so like to make a comment regarding the experience of the author, Jonathan Cooper, when he was teaching at Summer Fields prep school. You might, indeed, be somewhat amused by a prep school experience of mine more than forty years ago.

I was teaching at the time at a school in the south-east. I must not name it, as it has now become a first-class establishment; but then, although excellent academically, it was still in the building stage. In order, at the time, for the food to get to the boys' dining room, it had to be wheeled on a trolley for a short distance from the kitchen. We were all astonished, one cold winter's morning, to see trays of recently cooked sausages coming in, covered by a considerable blanket of SNOW!

From COLIN PARTIS: I would like to mention how much I enjoyed Tony Cook's articles on *The Thirty-Nine Steps* and *The Broadstairs Connection*. I would, however, like to point out that their were five Richard Hannay novels by John Buchan, not four as he states in his article. The last one was *The Island of Sheep*.

From DENIS BIRD: Tony Cook's two excellent and well-researched articles (CD 643 and 644) revived my interest in one of the best adventure stories of the early 20th century: John Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. It is still so vivid that it is hard to realise it was written almost a century ago.

For lovers of the tale, the various film versions were a disappointment – even if Buchan himself enjoyed the 1935 adaptation directed by Sir Alfred Hitchcock. A major defect of that and of the 1959 and 1978 re-makes was that they all distorted the meaning of the title. Hitchcock, for instance, had his (invented) “Mr. Memory” character say that the 39 steps were a gang. More exciting, I suppose, than a staircase in Kent – but a complete distortion. And the idea that “Mr. Memory” could commit to his (obviously computer-like) brain the secrets of the design of an aero-engine is just absurd. The film is a good example of Hitchcockian suspense, but as Mr. Cook says, it is best “if one forgets about the book.”

Of course, Buchan's own narrative has some absurdities. As I pointed out in CD Annual 1991, the novel contains one of the most incredible “substitutions” in all the adventure-story literature. There is a crucial meeting of the British Chiefs of Staff, attended by the First Sea Lord, Admiral Lord Alloa (based on Earl Mountbatten's father, Admiral Prince Louis of Battenberg). This unconvincing episode has Hannay seeing “Lord Alloa” leaving the meeting and realising he is an impostor. Buchan asks his

readers to believe that the other Service chiefs, who had probably known the real Lord Alloa from their schooldays, had sat round the table with him and not recognised the disguise.

Thanks to Mr. Cook, we now have a convincing identification of the actual steps Buchan had in mind when he was recuperating at Broadstairs. One of the appealing features of the book is that its various locations exist in real life. Portland Place in London, where Franklin P. Scudder was murdered, is of course well known, and in *The Independent* newspaper on August 19 Christina Hardyntz gave details of the Dumfries/Galloway/Peebles sites of such incidents as the Parliamentary election meeting which Hannay addressed. Christina, who founded the Arthur Ransome Society, has written a book for the National Trust called *Literary Trails*, which explores the geographical settings of various authors' work; it is due out in October 2000. She advances the theory that although there are actually 101 steps at Broadstairs, John Buchan adopted the lesser number because he "wrote the novel during the month of his 39th birthday" in August 1914.

Mr. Cook mentions the books which feature Major-General Sir Richard Hannay: *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, *Greenmantle*, *Mr. Standfast* (not *Steadfast*), and *The Three Hostages*. He also has a peripheral part in *The Island of Sheep*.

From FRED RICH: I immediately 'sat up' when I saw Brian Doyle's 'top ten' list on page 28 of the August CD. The item which aroused my curiosity was *The Reasedale School Mystery* by David L. Smith – a book which, until now, I've never even heard of. But David L. Smith? Surely the name cannot be a coincidence?

I have read five excellent books by David L. Smith, all of them non-fiction. He was a celebrated railway historian, his particular subject being the erstwhile Glasgow & South Western Railway and especially the ordinary working men who served that old company. He had a marvellous style of his very own and I have heard his work described, more than once, as "the best railway book I've ever read".

'My' Davie Smith was born about the year 1900 and was a child of delicate health; and yet he lived until about 1983 or '84. He was a much respected librarian in the county town of Ayr; and yet he wrote with an intimate knowledge of life on the railway, leaving the very strong impression that he was himself a railwayman. His books were alive with racy anecdote and he wrote some of his dialogue in the vernacular – eg "We a' ken whaur yin anither are!" (We all know where one another are!)

I should very much like to know if this is the same David L. Smith who wrote *The Reasedale School Mystery*; but how do we find out? One good clue would be the setting for this story. Was it in South-west Scotland? If so, then a confirmation could lie in the style of writing. Does Brian recognise the style in this final paragraph of Davie's book *Tales of the Glasgow & South Western Railway*?

I last saw Tammy in the month of August 1914. He was standing in the goods yard at Dalmellington superintending the loading of his luggage, for he was emigrating to Australia with his family. And there were tears in his old eyes as he looked down the line at his old [signal] box, and the crossing beyond, and Minnevey Brig and the scene he knew so well. But he would recover 'out there', and many a time an Australian hostelry would ring with mirth at Tammy's tall stories, and at his recounting of his days on the railway, and the fun we had on the Auld Sou'-West.



NEWS OF THE OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUBS

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

As we knew many of our members would not be able to attend in August owing to the holiday period, a small group of us organised a pre-theatre meal at "Shear's Yard" restaurant in the centre of Leeds where we had an excellent meal.

Then, to Leeds' "Grand Theatre and Opera House" to see the last night of the final play in the theatre's "Crime Season". A group of ten was booked to see *Deadly Nightcap* by Francis Durbridge. An excellent play with a surprise ending. A very enjoyable relaxing evening was held by all.

Our normal venue for Saturday, 9th September, with Don and Timothy Campbell.

We still have places available for our Golden Jubilee Luncheon on Saturday, 14th October. See advertisement in the C.D.!

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

LONDON O.B.B.C.

The Maidstone August meeting opened with drinks on the patio in the summer sunshine with our genial host and President. A sumptuous buffet lunch was served in the refectory by John's able assistant Gail Root. After the last plum and crumb had been disposed of members were whisked off to the lecture room where amidst vertebrae and other assorted bones, Roger Jenkins then read from *Gem* No. 557 (October 1918) an hilarious sequence in which Gussie sets the chimney on fire whilst cooking a ham in the study. Mr. Swoozer the sweep brings with him a new "apprentice" who, under the soot and grime, is actually Grammarian Gordon Gay, bent on ragging the St. Jim's juniors. A fine reading, as always, from Roger.

We were then given the rare opportunity to examine the vast collection of Hamiltonia in the Museum, old manuscripts, beautiful original artwork – you name it, it was there! There was even a chance to sit in the Great Man's chair. Films of club outings to Margate and Folkestone evoked happy and nostalgic memories for many members and there was footage not only of Hamilton at Rose Lawn but also Chapman at work. This was followed by the Pathé Pictorial sequence in which Hamilton is visited at home by young admirers, and two television interviews with John Wernham speaking about the hobby. Thus ended John's show but Mary had brought family movies, filmed when Mary was twelve, and the video of the television programme *Noel Edmonds' Addicts* in which Mary spoke about school stories for girls. Part of the programme was a testing quiz and Mary scored a full 12 out of 12, no mean feat. Gail then provided us with tea and some delicious cake, and we were given a further opportunity to examine the treasures of the Museum. Mary extended a hearty vote of thanks to John and Gail for their kind hospitality. As we were leaving, Marie Scofield commented: "What a lovely meeting!". I am absolutely sure that everyone present shared that sentiment.

Next month is the annual luncheon on Sunday 17th September (the third Sunday in the month, NOT the second). As last year, it will be at the Brentham Sports Club, 38a Meadvale Road, Perivale. Our special guests this year are Anthony Buckeridge, author of the excellent Jennings stories, and his wife Eileen. Bill Bradford has kindly invited members back to his house for a cuppa and a cake after the meal.

ALAN PRATT

"THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3^D. LIBRARY.

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HONOUR.**

H.M.L. **SEXTON BLAKE**

**A POWERFUL
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A Novel for Readers of all Ages.

No. 10.

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