

STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS'

JULY 1988

Vol. 42

No. 499

DIGEST

*Salute to the
detectives*

NELSON

LEE

SEXTON

BLAKE

DIXON

HAWKE

SHERLOCK HOLMES

FERRERS LOCKE

Bob Whiter

59p

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

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VOL. 42

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Price 59p



BETWEEN OURSELVES

SALUTE TO THE SLEUTHS

Sleuthing has always been a very important part of our hobby; charismatic detectives like Sherlock Holmes, Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee never fail to attract a wide circle of admirers, surviving even updating and transposition from one period to another with extraordinary resilience. As you will see from our cover this month, Bob Whiter is celebrating the contribution that some of our favourite

fictional detectives have made to the delights of collecting. Sherlock Holmes is featured in Bob's two articles, which were originally written for 'The Knights of Baskerville Hall' (the Californian Sherlock Holmes Society).

Part of the charm of the Holmes saga is its Victorian atmosphere, which the illustrative items provided by Bob capture so well. You will see that this issue of C.D. also focuses on some pictorial aspects of the Nelson Lee and Sexton Blake canons. As well as the 'greats' of the crime-solving fraternity, of course, there are literally hundreds of lesser but still popular sleuths in our story-papers, magazines, comics and books. Here I must bang the drum for my own favourite from Schoolgirls' Weekly and Schoolgirl, Valerie Drew and her wonderful Alsatian assistant Flash, who adorn the top of this editorial. (I hope to publish a full article on them very soon in the C.D.) And I wish I knew more about Dixon Hawke and, indeed, Ferrers Locke, both of whom are named in Bob's cover, but details of whose careers are perhaps somewhat sketchy to many of us.

One interesting thing about detective fiction is that it so often crosses the divide between juvenile and adult reading. In its heyday, the Union Jack must surely have attracted grown-ups as well as children, and certainly, as adults, our addiction to detective stories seems to grow rather than to decrease. Several publishing houses recognise this, and also the fact that many readers wish to discover, or to renew their acquaintance with, the Golden Age of detective fiction. Reprints of many old favourites are now being issued, and what a 'jolly good read' they provide. Dent's well established series of Classic Thrillers is particularly satisfying; I have just read and thoroughly enjoyed their paperback reprint of Dornford Yates' Fire Below. And Hamish Hamilton are celebrating the centenary of Raymond Chandler's birth by reissuing nine of his classic crime-busting novels in hardback (I've just been dipping again into Farewell My Lovely). Other paperback reprints well worth looking out for are books in the Hogarth Press's Classic Crime series.

LITERARY SLEUTHING

Another aspect of detection which always intrigues me is the ferreting-out of information by researchers into our favourite story-papers. Readers will recall many examples of the investigating zeal of Bill Lofts and Derek Adley, and of course of Jack Adrian, whose uncovering of information about W.E. Johns' early writing made such fascinating reading in last month's C.D. (Jack Adrian's fine compilation of stories Sexton Blake Wins is, I understand, still available in the

Dent Classic Thriller paperback series.) We are all indebted to these and so many other researchers for their patience and indefatigability in opening up new areas of reading for us.

Happy crime-solving!

MARY CADOGAN

The Bradbury.

By
**Bob
Whiter**



These Notes are a Legal Tender
for a payment of any amount.
Issued by the Lords Commissioners
of His Majesty's Treasury
under Authority of Act of Parliament.

Ten Shillings

T 280



These Notes are a Legal Tender
for a payment of any amount.
Issued by the Lords Commissioners
of His Majesty's Treasury
under Authority of Act of Parliament.

One Pound

T NO 02416 D.

John Bull

It is interesting to realize, in our age of paper money, that nowhere in the Sherlock Holmes "canon" does this form of legal tender make an appearance. Even in His Last Bow, when we are told that Von Bork (in the guise of Altamont) pays Holmes 500 for the supposed secret "Naval Signals," it is in the form of a cheque. All this was purported to have taken place on August 2nd of 1914, "the most terrible August in the history of the world".

As most people are probably aware, the golden sovereign was the highest monetary unit in Great Britain, with the half-sovereign as the second denomination until the advent of World War I. Bourses all over the world and the London Stock Exchange closed at the declaration of war, and a panic rendered trading impossible for some time. The bank rate jumped to 10%. Gold hoarding became a national

danger and, but for drastic government action, economic chaos might have supervened. Treasury notes (brown for pounds and red for ten shillings) were immediately issued by the government to replace gold sovereigns. John Bradbury was Secretary to the Treasury, and his signature was on every note. Hence, the new notes were soon known as "Bradburys".

One wonders when Holmes cashed Von Bork's cheque ("I have a cheque for five hundred pounds which should be cashed early, for the drawer is quite capable of stopping it, if he can") whether he was paid in sovereigns or "Bradburys!"

Note: Sir John Swanwick Bradbury, 1st Baron Bradbury
Born September 23, 1872; Died May 3, 1950
Joint Permanent Secretary to His Majesty's Treasury from 1913 to 1919, Knighted in 1925.

The "Victorian Britain" Stamps

by Bob Whiter

On 8th September, 1987, the United Kingdom issued a set of stamps entitled "Victorian Britain". They were designed by Mike Dempsey, FCSD, of Carroll, Dempsey & Thirkell, Ltd. These stamps are of great interest to all those fascinated by the Victorian Age, and especially to the devotees of Sherlock Holmes.

My set is comprised of four denominations. Starting at 18p, the first stamp shows a youthful Victorian against a background of the Crystal Palace with the addition of Landseer's "Monarch of the



1987

Glen** and Grace Darling in her rowboat.** The second stamp, valued at 22p, has a now-crowned Victoria with Albert, the Prince Consort, and the Great Eastern*** providing the background, as it were. Number three, 31p, has the great queen in mourning, the Albert Memorial, Disraeli, and a hand placing a ballot in a ballot box competing the picture. The fourth shows the celebration of the Diamond Jubilee (1837-1897); also a newsboy with a placard announcing the relief of Mafeking, and a hand operating a Morse key.

Of the four stamps, the one to which Sherlockians will no doubt give the most attention is the 22p issue. Alongside the portrait of Prince Albert is an advertisement for Beeton's Household Management. As most admirers of the Holmes canon are aware, the first of the now-famous stories, namely "A Study in Scarlet", appeared in Beeton's Christmas Annual. This publication had been founded in 1860 by Samuel Orohart Beeton and his wife Isabella Mary Beeton. If you look closely at the stamp, you can see her name under the word "management" preceded by "edited by". Our particular issue was the twenty-eighth and was published in late November or early December 1887. It had four engravings, three bearing the initials D.H.F. (D.H. Friston). The price was one shilling. A very rare edition now, one copy was reported to have sold a few years ago for \$1,000. It is interesting to find that, during the Festival of Britain, in spite of a large advertising campaign, no copy of Beeton's could be found for the Sherlock Holmes Exhibition. A man who had brought a copy for sixpence at a London market stall finally came forward and presented it to the exhibition. In 1960, the Baker Street Irregulars and the Sherlock Holmes Society of London jointly published a complete facsimile with multicoloured cover. Today it, too, is a collectors' item.

* "Monarch of the Glen", painted by Sir Edwin Landseer (1802-1873), famous animal painter and sculptor. His lions are at the foot of the Nelson's column in Trafalgar Square. In the U.S.A., the Hartford Insurance Company uses the "Monarch of the Glen" as their logo.

** Grace Horsley Darling (1815-1842) lived with her father, the lighthouse keeper, at the Longstone Lighthouse situated on one of the Farne Islands. The steamer Forfarshire was wrecked on 7 September 1838. Although the storm was still raging, Grace and her father rowed to the rescue of several people. Grace had spotted them clinging to a rock with the aid of a telescope. Both Grace and her father were awarded gold medals. She was born in Bamborough, Northumberland.

*** The Great Eastern, a British steamship completed in 1858, weighed 18,915 gross tons. She was, at the time, the largest ship afloat. Too underpowered for the Atlantic run, she was used to lay the Atlantic Cable.

ALWAYS WANTED BY YOUR EDITOR:

GIRLS CRYSTAL ANNUAL 1940, and MISTRESS MARINER

by DORITA FAIRLIE BRUCE



HOW TO FOLLOW CLUES AND CATCH MURDERERS!

by Ray Hopkins

Edward Oswald is so incensed by Nelson Lee's apparent disinterest in bringing the murderer of Colonel Clinto to book that he decides to do it himself. First of all he reads the Riot Act to Church and McClure who sigh deeply and wish he'd leave them to get on with their reading. They finally close their books and put on their caps and follow their leader in search of clues.

And there, suddenly, after a despondent twenty minutes, close to a wall, between two stone buttresses, not often entered by the juniors, a clue materializes. It is a piece of crumpled black cloth which, when opened up, is seen to have strings attached and contains two eye holes. Undoubtedly a mask! Obviously dropped, Handy explains to his two henchmen, by the murderer as he was escaping from the building through.... He looks up and points to a small window above. His glance upward catches sight of a torn piece of paper caught between the sash and the window frame. Church and McClure give Handy a leg up and he retrieves the paper. The faded words thereon thrill them all: "The job has been done.... C is no more.... Will wait three days in woodcutter's hut in Bellton Wood.... Don't fail me".

Handforth tells them whoever wrote the message must still be there as three days have not gone by since the murder. He is all for racing off to the wood to collar the murderer but the other two demur saying Nelson Lee should be informed. Handy talks them round by saying they'll be three to one so there will be no problem and, besides, the glory will be all theirs.

They approach the woodcutter's hut quietly, and carefully survey it, looking down through trees to where it stands in a hollow. They all catch their breath in sudden shock as a man appears in the doorway and looks around, but luckily not in their direction. He is short and

thickset with a dark complexion and black beard and clutches a cudgel. They know they are looking at the murderer because at the inquest on Colonel Clinton there was evidence that he had been killed by a bearded foreigner!

The scoundrel's appearance and his dangerous weapon cause Handforth a change of heart and they hurry back to Nelson Lee. The Housemaster is vastly surprised by the report of the sighting of the assassin in the wood and accuses Handforth of playing a joke on him. However, he and Nipper return with them to the wood. Handy is surprised when Nelson Lee tells Handy and Nipper to approach the hut. It sounds as though he is sending them to certain death but the Schoolmaster Detective tells them he will be close behind to aid them.

Handforth wonders why Nipper is grinning as they near the hut, but is too scared to look any way but worried himself. There is no movement as they gain the hut and step inside. The hut is empty! However, a dark shadow stretches on the floor in front of them, and Handy whirls around to find the bearded stranger menacing them from the doorway.

The man behind the beard is so very foreign that he can't make up his mind which nationally he's supposed to be for he intersperses his violent threats in a deep rumbling voice with not only "Caramba!" and "Himmel!" but "Mon Dieu!" as well.

Nelson Lee steps into the hut and the bearded man's deep, threatening voice changes to a much lighter, boyish one, filled with dismay. Nelson Lee addresses him as "Christine" and after receiving his apology the Housemaster tells him he is quite amused by his performance and congratulates him on the excellence of his disguise

WHO'S WHO AT ST. FRANK'S.



NELSON LEE.

The popular Housemaster of the Ancient House at St. Frank's, and he is also the guardian of Nipper. He was formerly a world-famous private detective. Just the man to have in the time of a crisis. Amazingly clever; a born leader of men.

and the authentic appearance of the "clues" left for Handforth to find. And Handy realizes why Nipper was grinning.

So Handforth's great chance to prove himself an astute detective falls flat and the whole episode gains fame as a clever joke against the Ancient House by Christine and Co. Even the Ancient House cannot fail to see the funny side of it. Only Handy is not amused!

(From Nelson Lee, Old Series 193: 15 Feb. 1919).



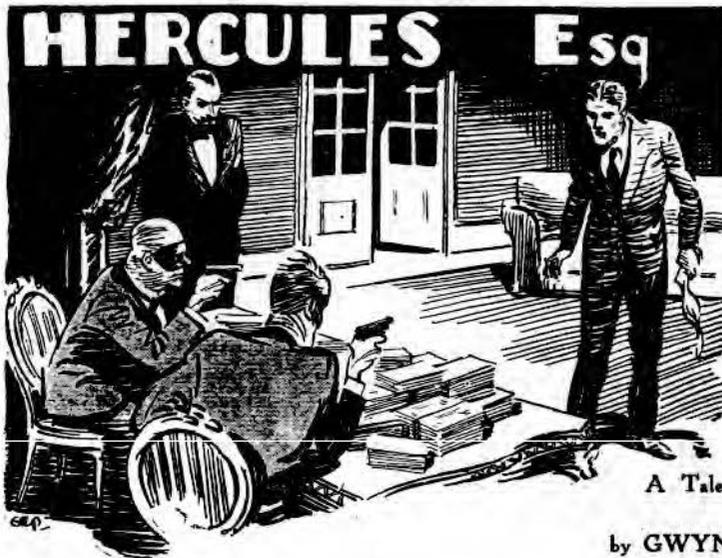
"EXCITING NEW EPISODE EACH WEEK" - but the same illustration!

by J.E.M.

An exasperated editor of the Detective Weekly once accused his readers of suffering from "E.R.P. Mania". This awful-sounding affliction simply meant that most Blakians preferred the Saga to be illustrated by the brilliant Eric R. Parker; and the "disease" was nothing new. Readers of the old Union Jack had been high-temperature enthusiasts of Parker's work from the early 1920s and had regularly complained when other artists took over.

To satisfy readers' craving for ERP's drawings this hard-working (over-worked?) graphic genius was often pressed into service far beyond the call of Blakian duty. A number of well-remembered non-Blake serial stories in both the UJ and DW were enlivened by Parker's graphics, but because even artists need a rest sometimes, it was simply not possible to have a fresh illustration for each weekly episode in addition to the drawings for the main Sexton Blake story. Thus, many of those notable serials carried exactly the same illustration, used as a heading or logo, for their whole run.

Examples of this practice in the UJ included ERP's drawing for Hercules Esq. by Gwen Evans (1928). Over many weeks, two masked men pointed pistols across a desk piled with bank-notes at a startled young man who has just torn off a blind-fold. In the



You can
begin this
brilliant
yarn here
and now.

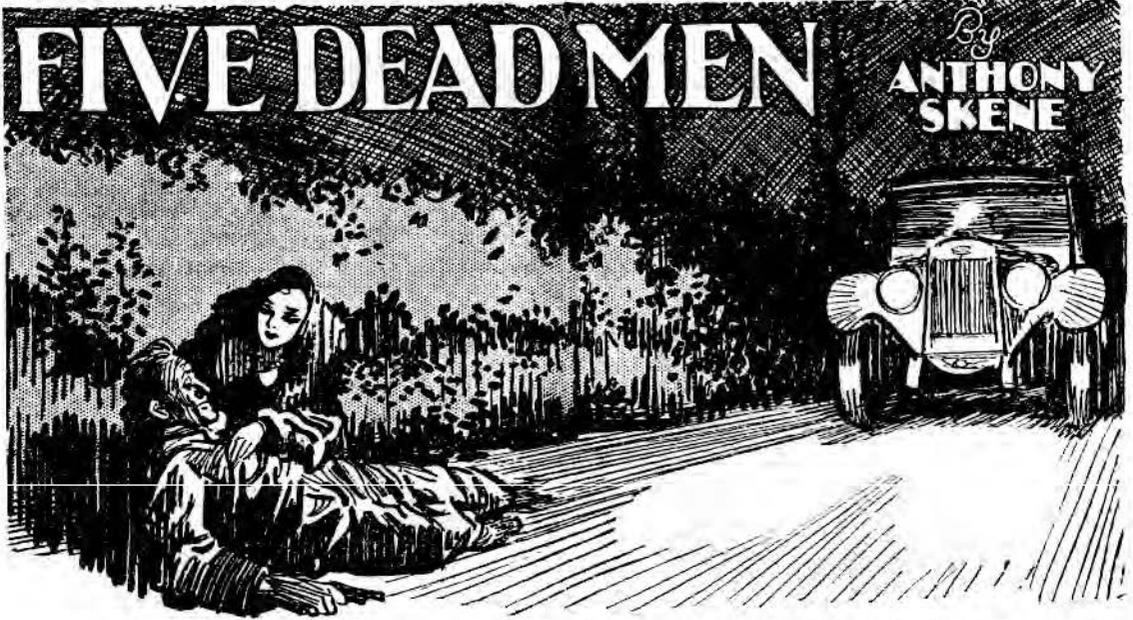
A Tale of Mystery—
and Millions!
by GWYN EVANS.

same year, the serialisation of a West End play, The Silent House by John G. Brandon, also carried a single "stock" illustration by ERP. Executed, unusually, in wash, this showed a Chinese mandarin in full Oriental dress, a suppliant white girl kneeling at his feet and a rather thuggish white manservant standing behind him: an effective if melodramatic tableau!

Another serialised London play, The Crooked Billet, which appeared in the UJ in 1930, did carry more than one ERP offering but this was very much an exception. Later serials from 1931 and 1932, like The Adventures of Ralph Rashleigh, The Lives Between by Phyllis Lewis and Five Dead Men by Anthony Skene all carried a single identical ERP drawing throughout their runs. It says much for the appeal of Parker's work that readers were presumably happy to accept the same graphics for weeks on end. Of course, it was a practice that saved the publishers money, but the point is that readers would probably have been far less content with repeated work by any other artist. One particularly interesting stock illustration for a UJ serial was that for The Next Move (1932), written by a team of leading Blakian authors, each developing the story from the point where the previous writer left off. Parker's drawing depicted Robert Murray, Anthony Skene, G.H. Teed and Gwyn Evans, the last two playing chess with the editor looking on.

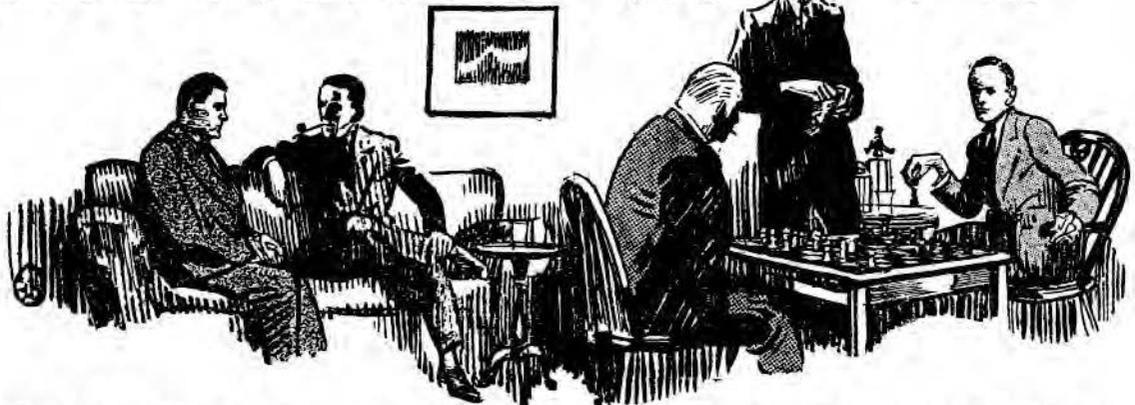
FIVE DEAD MEN

By
**ANTHONY
SKENE**



Now's the Time, Here's the Place, to Begin this First-class Serial of Underworld
Mystery and Intrigue.

The NEXT MOVE



By . . . Robert Murray, Anthony Skene, . . . G. H. Teed . . . and . . . Gwyn Evans.
With, as referee of the match, The Editor.

SHOUTS OF SILENCE!



Among Parker's non-Blakian work for the *Detective Weekly* was a fine pair of drawings for a two-part American story called Shouts of Silence (October 1933). The first illustration dramatically showed a group of gangsters brutally forcing their innocent victim to sign a "confession", the second - a beautiful contrast - a squad of New York detectives interrogating the poor victim's wife. This was superb work and is all too easy to undervalue. In 1933, the DW also serialised an Arsene Lupin story by Maurice Leblanc as well as Anthony Skene's novel, The Book of Fate. Unusually, both stories were given a new ERP drawing each week but this was no doubt made possible by a lighter work-load elsewhere.

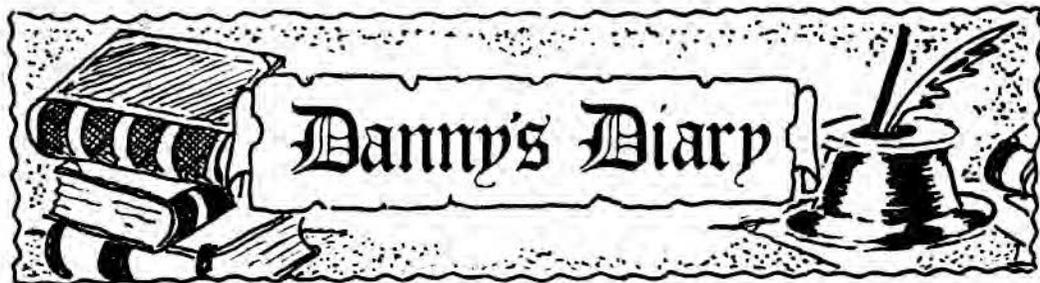
Not all the UJ and DW serials embellished by Parker were conventional crime stories The Adventures of Ralph Rashleigh, already referred to, was the account of a 19th century convict transported to Botany Bay, while Five Years of France (DW, 1934) was the autobiography of an ex-member of the French Foreign Legion. Parker's illustration for the opening episode had all the vigour and authenticity we always found in the more familiar detective stories. What a remarkable man ERP was, and how easy - and pleasurable - to succumb to ERP mania!

(All bracketed figures are, of course, dates, not issue numbers)





SHERLOCK HOLMES
THE GREAT
CRIME-FIGHTER
OF
STRANGE
MYSTERIES!



July 1938

An absolutely tip-top month in the Fourpenny Libraries. The best ever, methinks.

The Greyfriars Schoolboys' Own Library is "Nobody's Pal" which brings to an end the lovely long tale of Wharton as a Rebel. Wharton has lost every one of his former friends. "Stay clear of Wharton - he's a rotter and an outsider!" is Frank Nugent's warning to his young brother Dicky. But Frank is making the biggest mistake of his life, as it is Wharton who saves Nugent minor from expulsion and disgrace. And so the sun shines again and the Famous Five are back as they used to be.

The 2nd S.O.L. is a Rookwood yarn "On Fighting Terms". Raby of the Fistical Four is accused of cowardice, and so there is a big split among these once great pals.

The St. Frank's S.O.L. is "The Demon Cricketer". He is Jerry Dodd, the boy from Australia. He is a cricket marvel, yet when he comes to the school he seems as though he has never handled a bat in his life. Why? Ah, that's the mystery.

There is a magnificent new Pierre Quiroule "The Hated Eight" in the Sexton Blake Library. Of course it features Granite Grant and Mlle. Julie, and it also brings back Dr. Erasmus Baily, an old friend of Sexton Blake's. Bang up to date, and full of thrills amid the Nazis and Fascists, and even Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini play their parts in it. It held me spellbound. Another S.B.L. is "The Case of the Kidnapped Specialists" by Rex Hardinge. This one is largely set in Africa. And while I am on the subject of Sexton Blake I must make a note that the film "Sexton Blake and the Hooded Terror" is being shown this month at Poole, Doncaster, Burslem, Tunstall, Guildford, Leicester, Salford, and Paisley. How do I know? The editor told me so in the S.B.L.

In the Boys' Friend Library there is a Captain Justice story "The Ocean Robot", and in another B.F.L. there is "Biggles Flies Again" by Capt. Johns. Also worth reading this month in the B.F.L. is one called "Allison of Avonshire" by John Brearley, all about young Allison who goes straight from school into the county side, and finds he has a rival who is anxious to oust him from the team.

A sad month in the film world. Two of the famous old stars of silent days have died. One is Pearl White. She used to be known as "the serial queen". Mum remembers her in "The Exploits of Elaine", when, for a while, she was the

world's most popular film star, even surpassing Mary Pickford. Pearl was wonderful in serials, they say, but her shine dulled when she made a few ordinary full-length films. She has died in Paris, where it seems she has made one or two French films. The other star who has passed over is Warner Oland. He was often typecast as a villainous oriental. In the past few years he has made a number of Charlie Chan films.

The first Modern Boy of the month brought the start of a new series of King of the Island with "Hurricane Salvage". Three dagoes have stolen the Dawn's boat and put out to sea. Ken wondered why, till he sighted the drifting derelict. This was followed next week by "Mystery of the Grampus". The 3 dagoes beat Ken in the race to the derelict, and then shots rang out from the ship. So perhaps it was not a derelict after all. Then, yet another new adventure, brought "Head-Hunter's Gold" in which a Frenchman shows Ken King some gold that he had brought from the Island of Gulu. And then Dandy Peter kidnaps the Frenchman. The sequel to this was "Phantom Fortune". The chums have paid £500 for it before they discover it is a phantom fortune. Then, in the last tale of the month "The Cooking-Pots of Gulu", Ken and his pal find that not only have they lost their £500, but they are also surrounded by a band of cannibals. And the savages attack as the month ends.

Also in Modern Boy is a new Biggles serial, "Biggles Flies North". With the last issue of the month, the editor has made a surprising announcement. The large-sheeted Modern Boy has not proved popular. They said it was too big for comfortable handling. So, starting with the next issue - the first one of August - it will be something between the present large size and its previous size. So the large-sheeted M.B. has lasted under 6 months. I wonder what the new one will be like.

A British train has set up a new speed record, and the honour goes to the London and North Eastern. A train, running from Grantham to Peterborough did 125 miles per hour.

There have been five Saturdays in this month of July - and that has meant five Magnets. The first four of them did not form exactly a series, but all the stories are linked with one another. And they are the Magnet on top form. In "Five in a Fix", Loder has been waiting for a long time to land the Famous Five in trouble. An unfortunate accident gives him the opportunity, and he lands the five in a prefects' beating. But then, one afternoon, a group of fellows waylay Loder, put a sack over his head, and dump him in a ditch. He hasn't seen them, but as they call one another Bob and Harry and Frankie and Inky, he thinks he knows who they are. In the next tale "Up For The Sack", the Five find themselves just that - facing expulsion. But Lord Mauleverer takes a hand - and he causes Ponsonby of Highcliffe to go to Dr. Locke and confess that it was Pon and his gang who set upon Loder. Next came "Punishing Ponsonby", and in this tale Wibley plays a big part, and makes Pon squirm for his wicked deed. And then "Loder's Unlucky Day", the final tale in this lovely foursome. Loder tries to get the Famous Five a beating from Sir Hilton Popper for trespassing - but it is Loder who gets the whacking from Sir Hilton.

Then the fifth tale of the month and - surprise, surprise - it is the start of yet another overseas holiday series. The opening tale is "South Seas Adventurers", and the chums sail for Kalua as the guests of Mauleverer, in search

of Mauly's cousin Brian who has disappeared. Brian Mauleverer appeared in one or two Magnet tales a long time ago. I enjoyed this opening travel story, but it is only a few weeks since the chums came back from a long holiday in Texas. Two foreign holiday series in one year is just one too many, but I daresay I shall enjoy it.

A fairly good month in the local cinemas. I started off with James Cagney in "Something to Sing About" which was pretty ordinary. George Formby was mildly funny in "Keep Your Seats, Please", about an heir seeking a fortune hidden in one of six chairs. A good one, with a terrific typhoon towards the end, was "The Hurricane" starring Dorothy Lamour in her sarong. Very third-rate was "You're a Sweetheart", though it starred one of my favourites, Alice Faye. Lastly, and one of the best, was a British picture "Vessel of Wrath" where a missionary's sister falls in love with a boozy beachcomber. It stars Charles Laughton and Elsa Lanchester, and the backgrounds, but not the story, reminded me of King of the Islands in Modern Boy.

And now, last but not least, the wonderful Gem has taken on yet another new lease of life. The early Greyfriars stories, which have formed the supporting programme for a long time now, have ended with a story entitled "Rolling in Money". In this tale Bunter gets from his father a cheque for £50 - but not to cash - just to swank with.

Then, starting in the third issue of the month, came two new sets of tales. The Cedar Creek stories by Martin Clifford, telling the tale of Frank Richards's schooldays and the Benbow stories by Owen Conquest. Both are absolutely tip-top, and make a splendid supporting programme for the St. Jim's stories. In the first of the western stories, "A Tenderfoot in Canada", Frank Richards has had to leave his English public school of St. Kit's, owing to his father losing his money, so Frank is on his way to Canada to his uncle, the owner of the Lawless Ranch. He is met by his cousin Bob Lawless, a chap rather of the Bob Cherry type, and they have all sorts of adventures on the way across Canada. The second tale is "An Innocent in the Backwoods" when Frank Richards, in shining topper and smart Etons, presents himself at the backwoods school of Cedar Creek. I love these tales.

The Benbow stories are also first-chop. This series starts off in the same way as the Cedar Creek lot. A rich boy loses his wealth, and, though he can go back to his school, he will go as a poor boy who has to work for a scholarship. Jack Drake is the former rich boy. In the first tale "The 'Bucks' of the Benbow", Drake has been one of the "bucks", in a group of wealthy fellows led by Daubeny. His parents tell him, during the holidays, about the change in his fortunes. In the second tale "The Floating School", Jack Drake goes back to school, but now St. Winifred's has been transferred to an old ship (something like the Warspite in the Thames or the Mercury near Southampton, I expect) owing to the fact that there has been trouble with the foundations of the original pile. Drake, who is a weak character, in a way, decided not to tell his pals, Daubeny and the other bucks, that he is now poverty-stricken. In the train, on the way to the Benbow, Drake meets a new boy, Dick Rodney, and the two become friendly. I look forward to plenty more Cedar Creek and Benbow stories.

Now to the "first feature" on the programme, as it were - St. Jim's. A mixed bag, ranging from the fairly awful to the simply glorious. The first tale "The

Mystery Cricket Coach" is rather a weird affair. Late one night, Tom Merry & Co. take a taxi back to the school, and they are stopped by a man who asks their help, as his enemies are after him. He claims to be Bob Bradshaw, a one-time great county cricketer. The boys install the man in Taggles' shed for the night. Next day the Head engages Bradshaw as a cricket coach, but his methods are odd, as he orders everybody to bat and bowl left-handed like he does. At the end it turns out he has escaped from a lunatic asylum, and the real Bradshaw has a pub in Wayland. Next came two camping stories, very obviously not by the real Martin Clifford. The Headmasters of St. Jim's and Rookwood decide to transfer their schools to camps under canvas, so that the school buildings can be repaired and re-decorated. (As if any Head would do anything so daft.) The two tales are "St. Jim's Under Canvas" and "Rival Campers", mainly about japes between St. Jim's and Rookwood under canvas. Then oddly - but delightfully - enough, comes the start of a new caravanning holiday - and it is just lovely, even if it is odd planning. The opening tale is "Where's Our Caravan Rested?". Tom Merry & Co. are going caravanning, but Figgins and Co. pinch their caravan. Then comes "Seven in the Soup" with the trail of their stolen caravan leading Tom Merry and his pals into plenty trouble.

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

(ERIC FAYNE Comments on this month's DANNY'S DIARY)

For over two years, since May 1936, the Gem had been reprinting the early Greyfriars tales from the halfpenny Magnet. These Greyfriars reprints ended, as recorded by Danny, in early July 1938, with a story entitled "Rolling in Money". I cannot trace this one in the Red Magnet, though the theme of Bunter receiving a cheque for £50 to swank with, but not to cash, is familiar. I fancy it came from a much later period. Anybody know?

The Cedar Creek stories, purporting to tell of Frank Richards's schooldays, had been immensely popular in their day. They had originally run in the Boys' Friend for exactly 4 years, from August 1917 till July 1921. Charles Hamilton wrote them all with just one exception. It says something for the stamina of the author. It also explains why sub writers were all too prominent in the Magnet and Gem in those years - especially as, from late in 1919, he wrote all the Benbow series in the Greyfriars Herald. The entire Cedar Creek series, with the exception of the opening story, had been reprinted in the Popular. Now, for an entirely new group of schoolboys, the series turned up again in the Gem, and, once again, the opening story was omitted for some reason. In fact the opening story was only reprinted once - in a Boys' Friend Library of the early twenties. The two stories which appeared in the Gem in July 1938 - "A Tenderfoot in Canada" and "An Innocent in the Backwoods" had been entitled respectively "Westward Ho" and "The School in the Backwoods" in the high summer of 1917 in the Boys' Friend. The Cedar Creek tales were superb and original, their quality just slightly fading later on with the introduction of Mr. Peckover's rival school nearby, with the rivalry between Miss Meadows' youngsters and those of Mr. Peckover smacking just a trifle too much of the rivalry between the Houses at St. Jim's.

And now to the Benbow. The original Greyfriars Herald, which ran as a

separate entity as a halfpenny paper, for 18 weeks from late November 1915 was not only a delight. It was unique, and Hamilton wrote nearly all of it. It is rarely, if ever, mentioned to-day. It really gave the perfect illusion of being an actual school magazine. I have all 18 of them, bound in a lovely book. If wonder how many more copies are still in existence now. If anyone else has the complete run, or even a few of them, it would be fascinating to know. The paper shortage in 1916 brought down the curtain. But in November 1919, the Greyfriars Herald, as a separate entity, was back on the market, now priced at 1½d. It was a pleasant enough periodical, and I have them all bound in my collection, but now there was but faint illusion that it was a real school mag. The Benbow series which ran from No. 1 (new series) did not help the illusion. Good though they were to read, it was unlikely that Owen Conquest would have written a series for any school magazine. The Benbow stories were typical Hamilton material, the only originality being the setting of a school on a ship. They were deservedly popular for some 50 weeks, but they lost their charm when the Benbow put to sea and the series became just another travel series. When they returned from that voyage, Jack Drake and Rodney were transferred to Greyfriars for a spell in stories in the Herald - stories written by Hamilton.

The Benbow series turned up in the Gem in July 1938, just on 20 years after their initial appearance. To the best of my recollection, this was their only reprinting. "The Bucks of the Benbow" had been "Jack Drake's Resolve" in 1919. "The Floating School" had been "The Boys of the Benbow" in 1919.

And now to the St. Jim's tales in Danny's Gem of July 1938. The first three were sub tales, all from 1926, which was a mighty jump forward in the Tom Merry reprints. "The Mystery Cricket Coach" had been "The Mystery Cricketer" in 1926. Then the publishing of two sub camping stories at this stage was astonishing. The basic plot was absurd that the Heads of St. Jim's and Rookwood would put their schools under canvas by the sea, in the middle of term, so that the buildings could be redecorated, was preposterous. The two stories "St. Jim's Under Canvas" and "Rival Campers" had been, respectively, "Chums Under Canvas" and "Honours Even" in the summer of 1926. And now, following the two sub camping tales, the Gem editor in 1938 went back to the summer of 1919 for a magnificent caravanning series; probably Hamilton's first caravanning series and the best he ever written. This was a long series in 1919, running to 11 weeks. Now in 1938 they left out two of this series, probably because the year was getting old. They had published two dreary sub stories of camping, and now they had to omit two of the tip-top genuine caravanning series. It seems beyond belief. "Where's Our Caravan Rested?" in 1938 had been "The Schoolboy Caravanners" in 1919. "Seven in the Soup" had been "Rivals of the Road" in 1919.

S.O.L. No. 340 "Nobody's Pal" comprised 2½ stories of the Rebel series in the Magnet of late 1932, and this fourth S.O.L. brought the long Rebel story to a close. It is all, of course, immensely readable, but it was not too well handled in the S.O.L. For one thing it was badly placed seasonally. It had originally been an autumn series, ending at Christmas. Earlier one tale had been omitted entirely, and now the final tale of the series was omitted. There had actually been a natural end to the series in the penultimate story of the series in the Magnet, and the S.O.L. now ended with it. I once commented that the final tale of the series had been slightly irritating and was something of an anticlimax,

and Charles Hamilton took me to task. He asserted that he had never written an anticlimax in his life. He may have been right, but it was, in any case, a device to extend the series by a week.

S.O.L. No. 341 "On Fighting Terms" comprised a series of 4 stories from the Boys' Friend of early 1923. It slotted beautifully into the new medium, and is the perfect S.O.L.

"The Hated Eight" in the S.B.L. was one of a few brand new tales which Pierre Quiroule wrote on his return to the A.P. as a result of my own campaigning.

Some time in the mid-twenties, Pearl White appeared in person on the London stage in "The London Revue", either at the Palladium or the Lyceum - I forget which. She was no revue actress, but it was a joy to see in the flesh the serial queen who had thrilled us in our childhood or beyond.

Remembering Smithy

by Edward Rake

There is a certain fascination in reading about bounders, especially when they are likeable bounders with many good qualities to their credit. Such a one was Herbert Tudor Vernon-Smith - Smithy, the bouncer of Greyfriars.

Now Smithy had a very complex nature. He was not an easy fellow to know. And there were times when it was hard to like him. Smithy - the reckless, cynical, daredevil son of a millionaire who turned up on his first day at Greyfriars - drunk! And Smithy was an individualist. He hated authority and discipline, and, especially in his early days at Greyfriars, his rebellious nature caused him to clash severely many times with the masters and prefects, and the leader of his own form, Harry Wharton.

The bouncer had his own way, often questionable, of settling scores and getting even with his enemies. His creed was "an eye for an eye". A hard creed for a hard person!

But there was a light as well as a dark side to his nature. And we have Smithy the ace sportsman, always in demand on the playing field as a goal-scorer or a run maker.

Brave, loyal to the traditions of the old school, with a keen sense of justice and rightness, and often offering a helping hand for the lame dog, he also had a very sharp brain, and sometimes an intuitive sense of other people's motives. Even Mr. Quelch once said that Smithy was the most interesting character in the Remove. And the colossal nerve of the fellow! The breath-taking chances he would often take! Smithy didn't know the meaning of fear. His nerves were iron strong.

Aeons ago - that's what it seems like - when I was a school-boy, I was a shy and timorous creature. I often used to wish I had

some of Smithy's tremendous nerve and supreme self-assurance to help me cope with the cads and bullies, and the rough and tumble of school life.

As the years passed Smithy reformed somewhat. The subtle, civilising influence of the old school, with its antiquity and traditions, and the examples of good sportsmanship set by Wharton & Co., and other stalwarts of Greyfriars, all had their effect on him, smoothing the jagged edges of his character and making him more amenable to discipline.

But from time to time the old Bounder would stir, and then Smithy, his eyes gleaming with that daredevil light, and smiling sardonically, would risk expulsion or a severe flogging (not a sound ever escaped his lips when he was "whopped") by breaking bounds and visiting his old cronies at The Three Fishers for a smoke, a game of billiards and perhaps a wager on the "gee-gees".

Smithy shared a study with Tom Redwing, who was one of the steadiest, most honest-to-goodness fellows at Greyfriars. Over the years he got to know most of Smithy's vices, faults and failings. Yet he still found enough worth in the Bounder's character to establish a long and lasting friendship with him.

Didn't someone once say that a friend is a person who knows all about us - and still likes us? And Smithy, at his best, could be very, very likeable.

Good old Smithy!





MIDLAND O.B.B.C.

Nine members turned up for our May A.G.M. and the business was quickly done, with our officials elected 'en bloc'.

An Amusing and difficult quiz from Christine Brettell got the entertainment off to a fine start and Vin Loveday, the winner, received a lovely box of chocolates. Refreshments were provided as usual by the Lovedays, Betty Hopton, Win Brown and Ivan Webster. Your correspondent then provided a quiz with the Museum Press's GEM volume as the prize. Joint winners (who already had copies of this book) were Christine Brettell and Vin Loveday, so the prize passed to Betty Hopton with the next highest score. Ivan Webster gave an interesting reading from Magnet disguising himself as Prout but being discovered by Coker's rascally cousin Coffyn.

Next meeting: Tuesday, 28th June

JACK BELLFIELD

LONDON O.B.B.C.

If we were few in number it was, nevertheless, a happy group that met at the home of Eric and Betty Lawrence in the beautiful leafy shades of Wokingham on Sunday, 12th June. It was especially good to see Eric Fayne at the meeting - his first, he told me, for four years. Let us hope that we shall not have to wait another four before he attends his next one.

Formal business was nominal due to the absence of the Treasurer and two of the Librarians. We then settled down to a reading from "Just William's Luck" contributed by Mark Taha. This was followed by a form of a quiz called "Consequences", which showed that Eric Fayne had not lost his touch in facing us with something different. More by accident than design, your correspondent won.

During tea we joined in a novel hunt for titles on Eric Lawrence's extensive bookshelves that matched the clues he had given us. Winners were Phil Griffiths (1) Roger Jenkins (2) and Don Webster (3). Phil Griffiths' musical quiz had us racking our brains.

Before we voice our thanks to our kind hosts, the question of the next meeting arose. Bill Bradford has informed me that he hopes he will be well enough for it to be at his home, 5 Queen Anne's Grove, Ealing, London, W5 3XP (telephone 01 579 4670). Please notify Bill in good time if attending. Full tea will be provided, and the date is July 10th.

LESLIE ROWLEY

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Despite holiday absences of at least 8 members, it was a very happy group of 15 who attended the June meeting. We were delighted to see Bill Williamson, back with us after a spell in hospital. An extremely welcome unexpected guest was Tony Potts from the London Club. A past member of the Northern Club, Tony was on holiday with his wife in the picturesque Yorkshire Dales village of Grassington.

In the absence of our Chairman and Vice-Chairman, Darrell took the chair. Several interesting items of correspondence were to hand, and it seemed that all members had seen the William film on Channel Four TV that morning. Joan Colman presented her beautifully prepared Literary Quiz of twenty questions on children's literature from Kipling to Shakespeare, to Paddington Bear. William Hirst also provided some questions on Frank Richards and W.E. Johns. Geraldine, John and James Lamb were the winners. Geoffrey Good then entertained us with some of his superb Magnet readings. Bunter's form-room escapade with a wasp and Quelch's remonstrations were hilarious. Other readings from Geoffrey revealed the pathos and political aspects of Frank Richards's writings.

Next meeting: July 9th at our Secretary's home in Wakefield, with Catherine and Eric Humphrie speaking on Jennings, and a barbecue to follow. Visitors and new members are always welcome.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

CHARLES KEEPING

by E. G. HAMMOND

In May, this country lost one of its most talented and prolific illustrators when Charles Keeping died at the age of 63.

He started his working life before the war, in the printing business. As a lad, he was sent out with blocks, metal engravings, to deliver to publishers and printers all over the City of London. This added further to his interest and knowledge of all things to do with the City and the East End. His interest in London, especially Victorian London, was later put to excellent use in his drawings.

He was chosen by the Folio Society to illustrate the entire work of Dickens. Surely an inspired choice. A task never before achieved by any other artist. This great work, in volume as well as content, stands proudly beside the previous efforts of "Phiz", George Cruikshank, John Leech and many others.

He had a love of horses, harking back to his youth, when he used to help in mucking out brewery dray horses. I am pleased that the pencil sketch I have of his is of a coster-monger's horse from "Dombey and Son". I left the choice to him and I think his interest is reflected in the picture. He stated that his original work for the Folio Society's Dickens was 'not for sale until the entire work was published. I believe this will be in the Autumn.

As well as an illustrator, he was also a writer of children's books. His output was enormous. I think it will be his Dickens work that will stand as a fitting epitaph to a great illustrator.

* * * * *

WANTED: Bunter's Postal Order; Bunter's Christmas Party, firsts, dust-wrappers. Any others. Richmal Crompton's William The Lawless; any others. Books by Elsie Oxenham, E.M. Brent-Dyer, Dorita F. Bruce. FOR SALE: Greyfriars Holiday Annuals (originals), Magnets, Gems, Nelson Lees, S.O.L.s, Boys' Friends; also Williams with dust-wrappers. James Gall, 49 Anderson Avenue, Aberdeen, Scotland. Tel: Aberdeen 0224 - 491716.

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GREAT GRANDMAMA'S WEEKLY

by Wendy Forrester

A Celebration of The Girls Own Paper 1880-1901
published Lutterworth Press. (Paperback reprint, £8.95)

Reviewed by MARGERY WOODS.

Anyone interested in the history and development of girls' magazines should not miss **GREAT GRANDMAMA'S WEEKLY**, a fascinating delve into the archives of the **GIRL'S OWN PAPER**, perhaps the most important forerunner of the feminine interest magazine as we know it today.

Wendy Forrester has selected a feast of extracts to entertain, amuse and give us pause for thought. She does not fall into the trap of drawing comparisons with today's publications, nor does she bog us down with weighty analyses of the sociological issues of the day. She selects the more telling quotes and guides the narrative along, allowing us to make our own discoveries as we dip into the various sections that survive still in today's magazines. Fiction, health and beauty, fashion, careers and cooking, not forgetting the agony column—Great Grandmama had her girlish problems and they did not seem to differ so much from today's. Only the replies were much more autocratic, and one quickly becomes aware of a paradox in that Victorian girls were expected to grow up immediately into moral, worthy, young women as soon as they left the schoolroom, while ignorance of their sexuality was strictly fostered.

On the health page, by one Medicus, gynaecology seemed to be the first taboo. Even corns were unmentionable. A certain Lady Clarissa is thanked for her recipe for certain troubles connected with the wearing of ill-fitting shoes. Whatever else you wanted to know, the G.O.P. would tell you. How to manage a Band of Hope...how to look well in the morning...how to live on £100 per year. Inevitably, if read from today's standpoint, there are some wickedly amusing extracts.

To A.R. Lewis, who apparently desires a job on telecommunications: "Naturally the constant use of the telephone is injurious...tends to overstrain..." One can't help reflecting on how many husbands, when opening the telephone bill, would welcome a spot of G.O.P. advice to loquacious wives and garrulous teenagers. One hapless lady is told brusquely: "We cannot give you a recipe for



"DON'T LOOK SO SAD, MY DEAR, ANOTHER VOLUME IS ABOUT TO COMMENCE."

darkening your hair, nor for getting rid of a double chin. Be thankful you have got any hair or chin at all and that the hair you complain of doesn't grow on your chin". However, occasionally, the advisers met their Waterloo. Tease of Stretford enquired whether she should, at sixteen, "be cold and proud, or ponder and screw". To read their reply you must buy the book.

Don't miss it. The captured appeal of this delightful anthology ranges from the frankly hilarious to sheer, heartwarming worth. Only one quibble: a lack of colour. A colour section, no matter how brief, would have lightened the uniform greyness of the illustrations. For although the paper began in the stark black and white of Victorian Journals it did venture occasional highlights of colour plates, and in its later years its covers became as bright and attractive as any youngster could wish. That said, GREAT GRANDMAMA'S WEEKLY makes an informative and entertaining addition to the collector's bookshelf.

FRANK RICHARDS ON "MASTERMIND" ON T.V. by Simon Garrett

"Mr. Foss, you have two minutes on the life and works of Frank Richards, starting now..."

It happened on May 5th. The grim inquisitor was, of course, Magnus Magnusson. And the victim was Alan Foss, a jovial actor who, Tim Salisbury tells me, had a part in the last television Sexton Blake series. In an earlier round of Mastermind, Mr. Foss had chosen P.G. Wodehouse as his special subject, so he sounds very much one of us, and should be a C.D. subscriber if he isn't already! I didn't catch the programme's credits, and was wondering who researched and set the questions - surely not someone from beyond our own ranks?

Anyway, for those who missed the show, here is an abbreviated version of the questions. As always, I found those I knew insultingly simple, those I didn't know impossibly obscure. Mr. Foss had ten of them right. How would you have done?

1. What was the derivation of the name "Frank"?
2. Who was the first Magnet editor?
3. Who quoted such proverbs as "Esteemed punctuality is the procrastination of princes"?
4. What was Jessie Mimble's important job?
5. In "Bunter keeps it Dark", what heroic but accidental deed saved Bunter from punishment?
6. In "Bunter out of Bounds", what was the name of the bungalow where Bunter took refuge to avoid a flogging?
7. Whose voice resembled that of "the great huge bear"?
8. Who was the Greyfriars porter?
9. Which artist introduced Bunter's check trousers?
10. Where in Pegg did Bunter stay while his double impersonated him at Greyfriars?
11. Who played Bunter on TV in 1952?
12. In "Bunter Keeps it Dark", what fate was Bunter trying to avoid when he took the identity of "Sam Ram Jam"?
13. What unusual skill did Bunter use when hard-pressed and had an entire story devoted to it in 1961?

14. For which publisher, from 1899, did Richards write thousands of stories for such publications as "Funny Cuts"?
15. What was the full name of the Remove Australian nick-named "Squiff"?
16. Who was "Shylock of the Remove"?
17. What was Mr. Quelch's uncompleted book?
18. What was the only item retrieved by Bunter from Father John's treasure on Popper's Island?

Answers (Mr. Foss's incorrect answers in brackets)

1. Scott's Frank Osbaldistone.
2. Griffith.
3. Hurree Singh (Alonzo Todd).
4. Tuck Shop proprietor.
5. Saved Dr. Locke from drowning (saved Quelch from foot-pad).
6. The Begunias (pass).
7. Johnny Bull (Coker).
8. Gosling.
9. Chapman (Shields).
10. Mrs. Smallburn's boarding house (Tom Redwing's house).
11. Gerald Campion.
12. Becoming an errand-boy (a flogging).
13. Ventriloquism.
14. Trapps Holmes.
15. Samson Quincey Iffley Field.
16. Fisher T. Fish.
17. History of Greyfriars.
18. A gold coin (pass).



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FURTHER THOUGHTS ON AMELIA EARHART

by T.B. Johnston

Following up Barrie Stark's interesting article in the April C.D., the book to which he refers is number one on the list below. This is set out in descending order of detail (apart from the radio programme). Personally I have always subscribed to the gallant and poignant image of Amelia running out of fuel and being lost in the Pacific, rather than the 'captured by Japanese' theory. Goerner, in his excellent book, had to rely mainly on tales from elderly natives' memories, and, being an elderly native myself, I am aware that a little embroidery does enhance the narrative at times! Nothing really concrete emerged from his investigations. I feel confident that if there was any truth in rumours that she was on a secret mission for the U.S.A. government they would have released details (not having a 30 year limitation, as we do) after the war, and made her a national heroine, after their horrified numbness at her loss.

1. THE SEARCH FOR AMELIA EARHART original U.K. publication, October 13th, 1966. By Bodley Head at 30/=, Fred Goerner, author.
2. WINGED LEGEND by John Burke, pub. Arthur Barker £2.00 in 1970.
3. Condensed parts of 1. in UNSOLVED (with pictures) in vol. 8(?) of a part work, pub. Orbis 1984.
4. UNSOLVED CASES pages 174-181, a reprint of 3. pub. by Orbis for Marks and Spencer in softback, 1986 at £4.95.
5. Time-Life book series EPIC OF FLIGHT (WOMEN PILOTS individual title) undated probably 1983 at £12.95.
6. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE (U.S.) vol. early 1938. REPORT OF DISAPPEARANCE.
7. Radio 4 programme, based on 1. April, 14th 1976.
8. WOMEN OF THE AIR by Judy Lomax, £11.50, pub. July 1986 by John Murray.

MORCOVE MINIATURES



PAM WILLOUGHBY

By TOMMY KEEN



This series of 'Morcove Miniatures' would certainly not be complete without the inclusion of possibly one of the most popular Morcove characters, Pam Willoughby. With the exception of Jemima Carstairs, who, in any case was not a Horace Phillips (Marjorie Stanton) creation, Pam was the first of the then new type of modern schoolgirl which was to become more frequent in subsequent series. Pam arrived at Morcove in the early part of 1928, when the Study 12 coterie - Betty, Polly, Paula, Madge, Tess, Naomer, Helen, and Dolly - were a very closely knit batch of chums. Although Betty Barton & Co. were anxious to meet the new girl for the Fourth, things, at the beginning, did not seem to go too well.

In an aura of grandeur, by chauffeur driven car, draped in a fur motoring coat, Pamela Willoughby immediately makes an impression on the girls awaiting her arrival. Rather haughty, rather distant, and Betty & Co. are not particularly impressed. But there are two visitors at Morcove, Jack Linton and Dave Lawder from Grangemoor School, to whom Pam is most charming. The two boys, especially Jack, are captivated at once, but Madge Minden (Jack's particular girl chum) is not at all amused. Madge is also less than pleased when she learns that Pam is to be placed in the study which Madge shares with Tess Trelawney. Oddly enough, it is stated that the study next door is empty. The girls soon realise that Pam is quite brilliant at almost anything; games, classwork, art (she condescends to say that Tess Trelawney's paintings are 'quite good'), but most of all at music, and this was to be the cause of much friction between Pam and Madge, friction mainly caused by Ursula Wade, the sneak of the Fourth.

Pam Willoughby's favourite expression, "Yes...well", became irritating to the girls, and at times was greatly overdone. (It always irritated me, but of course, so did Pam - she was never my favourite character). Deciding that she would rather have a study to herself, Pam phones to her home, a country residence called "Swanlake", some twenty miles from Morcove, for furniture, carpets, curtains etc. and, without asking permission from the Headmistress, or even Miss Redgrave, moves into the empty study. However, she is allowed to remain there.

Animosity becomes so intense between Madge and Pam, that in SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN No. 373, Pam storms at Madge "Don't ever speak to me again". However, all misunderstandings are cleared up, and Betty & Co. come to realise that Pam is a most attractive girl of sterling qualities, later becoming affectionately known as 'The Little Lady of Swanlake'. Madge and Pam become great friends, and, at a later date, Helen Craig moves into Pam's study. The first series is much too long, running for ten weeks, and an elder sister of Ursula Wade is introduced (but quite different from Ursula in Nature). From regular intervals then, until the end of the S.O., Pam is featured prominently.

In one series, a boy cousin is introduced - Billy Charters - a real cad, who becomes a scholar at Grangemoor School, and promptly causes trouble between Polly and Jack Linton, and Pam. Pam sides with Billy, and of course Polly and her chums stand by Jack, but Billy reforms, and Pam apologises to Study 12. Billy then rather faded from the scene, and later Pam had a boy chum, Lionel Derwent (but not from Grangemoor), followed by another boy-friend, Jimmy Cherrol.

Another new girl of the modern type arrives, Pat Lawrence, who dislikes the Study 12 set on sight, especially Betty Barton. But Pat would rather like to have Pam as a friend, and, to a certain extent, Pam was drawn to Pat. However, when the final choice comes, between Pat Lawrence and Betty Barton, Pam decides that Study 12 is tops.

Pam became involved in the many trips to North Africa, and in one of these series she and Naomer, became prisoners of the Susahlah. Although only a recent addition to the Fourth, she was one of the six bridesmaids at Miss Redgrave's wedding.

Leonard Shields at least made Pam look different from the rest of the girls, her dark hair smartly shingled, but with a fringe. The other girls (excluding Naomer and Madge) were merely shingled. I have read that she was one of Horace

Philips' favourite characters, and am sure she must have been as he featured her in so many stories. Although in time she was accepted as a staunch member of the Study 12 crowd, I still preferred my special 'chum' - Madge Minden.

WHEN PAM CAME TO MORCOVE



*A Story
of the early
adventures of*
BETTY BARTON & CO
OF MORCOVE SCHOOL

by
MARJORIE STANTON

4^p

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LAUGHTER AND THRILLS: No. 3.

by NORMAN WRIGHT

"Thriller Comics" Nov. 1951 to May 1963:Part I: "Old Masters"

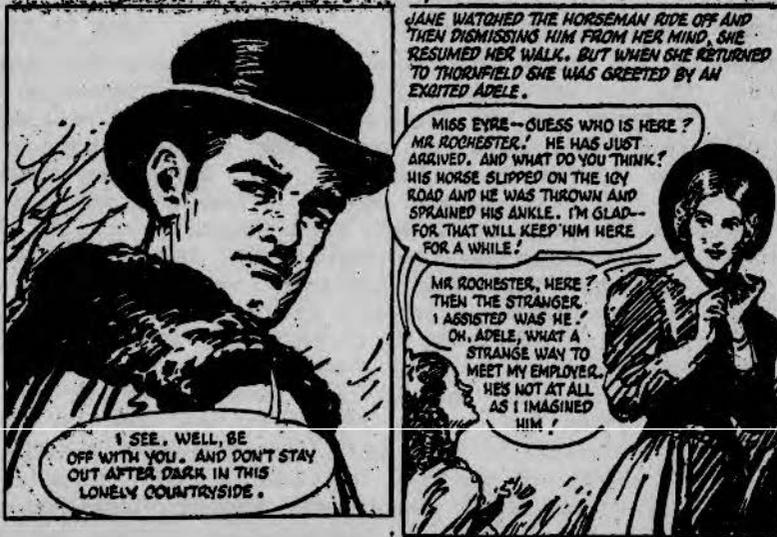
The appeal of the Aldine 'swashbucklers' lay in their full colour Robert Prowse covers. The eye could not pass them without some desire to savour the saga of daring do inside. By and large they were reasonably well written, but there can be no doubt that it was the covers that persuaded boys to part with their pennies. When Aldine began reprinting their Robin Hood Library in the early 1930's, those glowing covers were dropped in favour of inferior two colour jobs, and the reprinting stopped after only eight issues.

Newnes had the right idea when they employed R.H. Brock to paint the covers for their "Black Bess" and "Dick Turpin" libraries in the 1920s.

When "Thriller Comics" began in the early 1950's, it carried on the tradition of the Aldine and Newnes publications in picture strip form. The comics editor realised the importance of well drawn, atmospheric covers. He was fortunate to have on hand an artist whose work at least rivalled, if not surpassed, the covers painted for Aldine and Newnes. The artist was Septimus Edwin Scott. Scott was born in Sunderland in March 1879. He studied at the Royal College of Art, and became a member of the Royal Institute in 1927. His work for comics began late in life. He was almost seventy when "Captain Flame" began appearing in "Knockout". Scott drew all seven "Captain Flame" strips for "Knockout". They were all scripted by the indefatigable Leonard Matthews. Two of the "Captain Flame" strips were reprinted in "Thriller Comics" numbers 13 and 28. Scott's work was the very antithesis of Eric Parker's. His frames were detailed and atmospheric, but the figures rather static. Yet he captured the feel of pirates and blue water better than any other comic artist. He painted a large number of covers for the comic, from the early issues until the early 1960s. They had the feel and quality of old masters, and if the adventure inside the comic was disappointing, as it occasionally was, the Sep Scott cover alone was almost worth the cost of the comic.

His other work for the comic included strip versions of well known classics - "Jane Eyre", "Pride of the Ring", "Dark Eyes of London" and "Secret Operator". Two other full length strips for the comic were "The Man Who Stole The Crown Jewels" and "The Cavalier and the Crown", reprinted from "Comet". Two shorter Robin Hood strips appeared in issues 118 and 134. It is incredible that he was still producing superb covers in 1959 when he was eighty years old. Editors who remember Scott say that he was a real bohemian artist who would paint on anything that came to hand, even the inside of a Cornflake packet. Whatever the quality of his artboard, the quality of his art was first rate.

Another 'old timer' who produced some wonderful work for the comic was H.M. Brock. His "Breed of the Brudenells", from "Knockout" was reprinted in issue 9 as "Hunted on the Highway", a tale of Dick Turpin's youth. He drew an original Turpin strip for number 22 entitled "King of the Road". Three issues later came his splendid version of the "Loring Mystery". This was followed in issue 47 by "Lorna Doone" (Later reprinted in abridged form in a "Look and Learn" annual) "To Victory with the Iron Duke" (no. 102) was Brock's strip of D.H. Parry's "Sabre and Spurs", originally published by Cassell and Co. in 1926. It was not a particularly well drawn strip displaying evidence



of being redrawn in places by another hand. The same cannot be said for his next strip in issue 109. "A Christmas Carol" was superbly drawn, bringing vividly to life Marley and the spirits of Christmas. Brock's final strip for "Thriller Comics" was "Dick Turpin and the Followers of the Fang" in issue 189. At eighty-two the artist's eyesight was failing and there was much evidence of redrawing. Brock's only other strip for the comic was a short Robin Hood strip on the inside covers of number 106. From its style, it was probably originally drawn in the 1920 and it would be interesting to know in what publication it appeared. H.M. Brock's work appeared on four "Thriller Comics" covers. Number 25 "The Loring Mystery", No. 117 "Dick Turpin and The Phantom of the Highway", No. 124 "The Three Bravos" and No. 164 "Claude Duval and the Roundheads Revenge". Only "The Loring Mystery" had internal artwork by Brock. From the style of No. 164 it would appear that the cover had originally been painted many years earlier, though for what publication remains one of those yet unsolved mysteries that make collecting papers and comics such an interesting hobby.

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