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VOL. 43

No. 507

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# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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W.H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by  
HERBERT LECKENBY

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## OLD FRIENDS

One of the few sad things about our hobby is that, inevitably, we hear from time to time of the passing of a fellow collector, club member, author or illustrator, and recently obituary notices have appeared in the press for three men to whom I wish to pay tribute.

Frank Pepper (who as Hal Wilton created Rockfist Rogan) died in December at the age of 78. He had retired from producing copy and story-lines for comics and boys' papers as recently as in 1983 and had then concentrated on the compilation of anthologies of quotations, which were extremely successful. In the November 1988 C.D. Alan Pratt, in an interesting article about the CHAMPION, outlined some of Pepper's achievements using the pen-names of Hal Wilton and John Marshall. As well as giving vivid life to Rockfist Rogan of the R.A.F. ('the boxing dare-devil of the skies'), Frank Pepper also created charismatic heroes such as Captain Condor, the space-pilot of the year 3000 A.D., for

LION, the footballing orphan-turned-star Danny of the Dazzlers for the CHAMPION, and Roy of the Rovers for TIGER. As well as writing for the boys' papers, Pepper, who started his career as an office boy at the CHILDREN'S NEWSPAPER and CHILDREN'S ENCYCLOPAEDIA, also wrote for PEARSON'S WEEKLY, TIT-BITS and JOHN BULL, the DAILY HERALD, DAILY EXPRESS, NEWS CHRONICLE and DAILY TELEGRAPH. His zestfully expressed talents were remarkable, and his passing is a great loss to the boys' papers world. I hope that the C.D. will cover his work more fully in some of its future issues.

## ROCKFIST ROGAN, R.A.F.



By Hal Wilton



One of the most famous of all the story paper flying heroes - Rockfist Rogan of The CHAMPION. This illustration is by Steve Chapman and is vintage 1941.

January brought news of the death of Eric Hiscock, a prolific writer and journalist who will be remembered by many of us for his enthusiasm for the works of Frank Richards. He promoted these (and the novels of Agatha Christie and Damon Runyon) with sustained loyalty. His article 'The Man Who Invented Billy Bunter' can be read still in the Museum Press's CHARLES HAMILTON COMPANION Vol. 3, which reprinted it in 1976.

We also heard in January that Arthur Marshall had died. Arthur, of course, had achieved stardom during the last few years of his life as the team-leader opposite Frank Muir in the BBC TV series CALL MY BLUFF. As he once commented to me, his career reached its peak or its nadir, according to one's point of view, when he became the subject of a THIS IS YOUR LIFE programme a few years ago! I am sure that many readers of C.D. will remember him not so much for his T.V. performances as for his radio work, which began with his impersonations of headmistresses of girls' schools in the Angela Brazil tradition. He sent up Miss Brazil's works, but always with affection and elegance; I think

that he was one of the few great wits who managed almost always to make us laugh at our own and other people's foibles in an endearing and absolutely non-malicious way. Many tributes have been written for him during the last few weeks. I would like to quote from one which appeared over forty years ago, when the second world war was still being waged. Nancy Spain produced a lively record of her experiences as a WRNS driver in a book called THANK YOU - NELSON. The tone of this is iconoclastic, but the patriotism which had inspired her to join the WRNS is heightened, like that of so many of her compatriots, after the evacuation of Dunkirk. She persistently questions some of the men from the splintered, blood-spattered 'little ships' who helped to get the British Expeditionary Force home, although they are at first reluctant to discuss that 'hell let loose'. Their description of 'the fag end of the Brigade of Guards', half starving, exhausted, under fire but still '... in line, heads up ...' is moving in spite of its incongruity. A different but equally heartening picture emerges from their accounts which suggest that the spirit of Angela Brazil's books, appropriately embodied in Arthur Marshall, was in operation at Dunkirk: 'Captain he was ... he's really a schoolmaster ... but he's made any money he has out of being a female impersonator'. His men, apparently, 'weren't a bit keen' on crossing the beach, which was being machine-gunned continually by Messerschmitts but 'this schoolmaster fellow, though hit in the ankle by a bullet, staggers up to rally them: "Come on girls", he calls ... "Who's on for the Botany Walk?" ... Follow him? I'll say they followed him. When they came aboard they were laughing...'

Apparently Arthur Marshall managed to keep his men in good spirits all the way back to England. Later in the war his radio portrayal of 'Nurse Dugdale' provided amusement for a wider audience: a cross between hearty hockey mistress and pantomime dame, 'she' was the bracing antithesis of the sentimental 'angels in VAD uniform' image which often popped up during both the world wars. I first met Arthur because of his Nurse Dugdale role. My very first job was as a BBC programmes secretary. Growing up during Hitler's war my great ambition was to join the BBC, which was then, of course, a symbol of national solidarity under stress. When we had to arrange a programme at the Carshalton Children's hospital (for the staff rather than the patients) I suggested that we should book Arthur Marshall, as Nurse Dugdale. He came along, a handsome figure in army officer's uniform, with dark curly hair and an infectiously lively manner. I was only seventeen, and then much too shy to talk to him about our shared enthusiasm for the stories of Angela Brazil. However, almost thirty years later, when I was, with Patricia Craig, beginning to work on the book which was later published as YOU'RE A BRICK, ANGELA!, I rather hesitantly contacted Arthur, and he asked me to send him some of our chapters. He was wonderfully encouraging, both then, and after the book was published, promoting it in radio programmes and in newspaper reviews.

Subsequently I had the joy of appearing in one or two radio programmes (on girls' fiction) with him, and of providing some material for his book about real-life girls' schools, GIGGLING IN THE SHRUBBERY. He has reviewed my books with warmth and generosity of spirit, and in many ways proved himself to be a true friend. Less than a year ago he sent me a letter from Angela Brazil (which had been passed on to him by one of his many fans), saying that this treasure would find its true home only amongst my collection. It is a treasure, as much because it represents Arthur's kindness and consideration as because it is a link with Angela Brazil, the founding mother of the twentieth-century girls' school story. Quintessentially British, unpretentious, but tellingly witty, Arthur Marshall will surely be long remembered

MARY CADOGAN

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**'A STRANGE CHARACTER'**

by C.H. Churchill

In the saga of St. Frank's as related by E.S. Brooks, our favourite author presented us with some very unusual characters over the years. By this I mean evil or bad ones, not the upright or popular characters about whom I wrote in the C.D. a while ago.

As an example, let us take Dr. Karnak, the Egyptian scientist, who came to St. Frank's in January 1924. He actually came to the school as Science master and Lecturer, but for some reason never explained by E.S.B. he started a movement among the boys for the study of sorcery. Seances were held during which Karnak caused faked manifestations to occur. The Egyptian was a clever hypnotist, and gradually brought Cecil De Valerie under his power and control. Why he wanted to do this, we were again not advised.

To help him in his deceptions, Karnak had brought with him an eight foot tall black native of some African state. This person was used to frighten people in the dark lanes of the Bellton district, to give the impres-sion that a mummy in the school museum had come to life. This mummy was of an ancient Egyptian named Baal of Harron, a magician of

his time. A man eight feet tall? Rubbish, some might say, and remark how typical it was of Brooks to write some impossible things. However, quite by chance when preparing this article, I chanced to look at the DAILY MAIL 'Factfile' cartoon and what did I see? The tallest living man is to be found in Mozambique and is called Monjane. When sixteen he stood 7 ft. 5 ins., and today he measures 8ft. 3/4 inches. Well prophesied by Brooks in 1924, and coming to pass in 1989!!

Reverting to Karnak, Nelson Lee, becoming aware of these occult meetings, forbade any more to take place, and thus incurred the enmity of Karnak. The latter then plotted revenge, and hypnotised De Valerie into attempting the murder of Nelson Lee.

He sent the junior while 'under the influence' to Lee's bedroom, to try to plunge a poisoned needle into the detective's neck. At the vital moment De Valerie 'came to', and Lee awoke, so the plot failed. The junior collapsed and was then sent to a nursing home. This was the last straw and Karnak was sacked by the Head.

Karnak was a dark skinned man, smartly dressed, who unusually wore a turban or fez. He had once been a member of a party worshipping Baal, the moon god, whose body was supposed to be the mummy in the school museum. Karnak broke away from this party and so became a traitor to them. The sentence was death. These Egyptians traced him to St. Frank's and managed to kidnap him. They embarked with him on a ship bound for Egypt, but fairly soon struck a derelict. Before the people on board could get into the boats, the ship blew up and all were drowned. And so ended Dr. Karnak. Another of E.S.B.'s queer characters gone.

POWERFUL NEW SERIES BEGINS IN THIS ISSUE.

**NELSON LEE Library 2D**  
*St. Frank's Magazine*



He wanted to flee—he wanted to scream, but sheer fear held him. And then he saw the mummy moving. The face seemed to twitch and the mouth opened. And a ghastly arm came from the linen bindings.

**THE SCHOOL MUSEUM MYSTERY!**

No. 448 EVERY WEDNESDAY January 5, 1924.

By the way, in all the seven stories of this series we never read Karnak's full name. Rather odd! He was just Dr. Karnak. This series was certainly one of the most eerie ever penned by Mr. Brooks.

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## A SEXTON BLAKE GALLERY

Number One; A Few of the Good Guys (Illustrations by Eric Parker; Montage and captions by J.E.M.)

First, of course, must come the great sleuthing partnership itself. Tinker became Blake's assistant in 1904, just eleven years after the great man's own first appearance, and stayed with him till the end - if indeed we have yet seen the end! Here (1) the duo track a murderer in *The Case of the Sexton Blake Bust*, Union Jack 1169, a story linked with the real bust designed by Eric Parker, copies of which were offered to readers of the UJ.

Dour and dogged Chief Inspector Coutts (2) of Scotland Yard was a long-time comrade-in-arms of the Baker Street pair and always a favourite with readers. Originally created by Robert Murray, he was used by many other authors. This scene shows him assisting Blake and *The Witches' Moon* affair - one of the famous 'Tram' series - in UJ 1488.

'Splash' Page, the ebullient Fleet Street journalist (3) is seen with Tinker trying to revive a drugged Blake in *The Plague of the Onion Men*, UJ 1493. Created by Gwyn Evans, 'Splash' was another figure, probably based on the author himself.

Sir Richard ('Spots') Losely KCB (4), colonial administrator and trouble-shooter, was a sort of superior Sanders of the River. Ever at hand to assist him in the maintenance of British rule was the faithful native chief Lobangu (5). The creations of Rex Hardinge, these two stalwarts made their debut over eighty years ago and starred in most of the cases which took Blake to Africa.



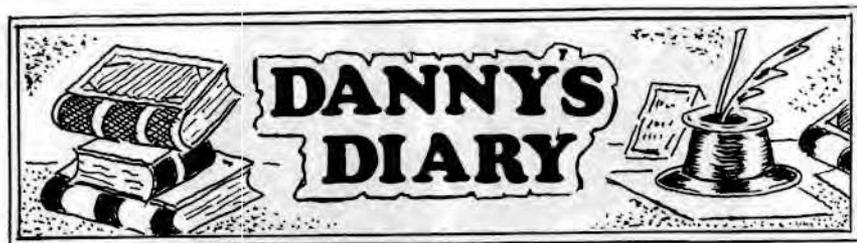
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**MARCH 1939**

The Schoolboys' Own Libraries have been just great this month. "The Greyfriars Cracksman" brought to an end the long story of that gentleman. He has been cracking cribs near and around Greyfriars for some time. He didn't know that Mr. Steele, the Remove master from Scotland Yard, was hot on his trail. And, at last, the cracksman is caught. What a surprise for everyone when they find out his identity - except for the reader who has been given a hint now and then. A surprise, too, for the Head - and for Barnes, the Head's chauffeur. Lovely school tale.

And absolutely tip-top, too, is "The Boy Who Came Back" in which the Levison family lose all their money and are ruined unless they can find the Will of Mr. Levison's uncle, a Mr. Thorpe, who was once a master at Greyfriars. So, in a cleverly contrived story, the Levison brothers go back from St. Jim's to Greyfriars to find the Will which they believe is hidden somewhere in the Kent school. But also searching for the Will is Bright, the Toad of the Remove. This story closely links St. Jim's and Greyfriars. Yet there are some dim fellows who still don't realise that Frank Richards and Martin Clifford are one and the same man.

The third S.O.L. is "The St. Frank's Cadets". They are in camp on an island, and have an exciting and mysterious time.

I had one Boys' Friend Library this month - "The Flying Globes", which is a Captain Justice yarn; very scientific.

I also bought one Sexton Blake Library - "The Night Club Mystery". In the early hours of the morning Sexton Blake and Tinker go into a notorious night club in London and buy a bottle of whisky. And that purchase sets the fur flying. Exciting tale of crime in sleazier London.

Startling things are happening in Europe in real life. Thank goodness for the English Channel. The Civil War in Spain has ended at last, it seems. Franco, with his army, has marched into Madrid and taken it. What will this Dictator do next? And another Dictator, Adolf Hitler, has marched into Czecho-Slovakia and occupied it. The villainous old bounder. What will he do next? The governments of Britain and of France are alert to what is going on. Once more, thank goodness for the Channel.

The main attraction in Modern Boy this month has been the new series of Captain Justice stories. Justice and his friends are the prisoners

of Sheik Hussein in the Sahara Desert. The Sheik has an army of giant spiders, and these spiders are keeping guard over the prisoners. It's awful tripe, really, but you can't help getting excited over it all. The titles of the stories are "The Insect Army", "Flying Terrors", "Dragon of El Ybarrah", and "Desert Raiders". M.B. also has a Biggles serial entitled "Wings Over Spain".

Our wonderful Magnet has continued all the month with the series about the spiteful and villainous Old Boy of Greyfriars who has set up shop near the school as a cobbler. His aim is to get his own back on the Headmaster who had expelled him and to make trouble for Greyfriars from whence he was once given the order of the boot. There is also a secondary theme in the series about someone who prowls through Greyfriars at night committing thefts and doing all sorts of damage. Jack Drake, the assistant of Ferrers Locke, has come back to his old school in disguise and calling himself James Duck, to try to discover the identity of the night prowler. Various people have been suspected and then proved innocent. Us readers have a good idea who the prowler is, but maybe we are more intelligent than Mr. Quelch and his boys.

The month's first tale is "An Old Boy's Vengeance". The Old Boy is, of course, the horrible Crocker. Next tale is "Who Sacked Hacker?". Somebody has put the acid Drop into a sack. Who is the guilty person? Though this is becoming a long series, there are any amount of original incidents, and it is all grand reading. In the third tale "Harry Wharton's Secret", Wharton discovers that the new boy, James Duck, is actually Jack Drake, the boy tec, and Wharton finds himself with a big secret to keep under his cap. Last tale of the month is "Guilt Gold". Hacker has a little hoard of real golden sovereigns, Loder backs a horse on tick with Crocker, and loses. And, Loder, in debt, thinks of Hacker's gold. But before the end, the new boy Duck steps in and takes a hand. The series, about Crocker and the night prowler, continues next month. The Magnet's tales are very long these days, and the illustrations, by Shields who does the covers, and Chapman who does the interior pictures, are superb. I couldn't do better myself.

When I could spare time from my reading, I have turned to the Regal, the Super, the Majestic, and the Plaza - and they have been nearly as good as the Magnet. Some great films.

A truly splendid British film was "The Lady Vanishes" directed by Hitchcock, and starring Margaret Lockwood and Michael Redgrave. An old lady disappears on a train, and two young people investigate. Full of suspense and excitement. I loved it.

Laurel and Hardy's new long film "Blockheads" is just terrific. One of their best. Fairly good was Joan Bennett in "The Texans", a tale of the American civil war. Mum and I both enjoyed "White Banners", a family tale with a hospital background, starring Claud Rains, Fay Bainter, and Jackie Cooper.

A gorgeous Musical we saw this month is "Alexander's Ragtime Band", starring Tyrone Power and Alice Faye, the true story of a couple of American song-writers, and packed with the lovely tunes they composed. Pretty good was "Too Hot to Handle" with Clark Gable and Myrna Loy, about a newsreel cameraman. Yes, a lovely month at the local cinemas.

The Gem has gone merrily on its way this month. It has been good without, perhaps, being quite tip-top. The first St. Jim's tale, "Cardew Cuts Loose", is really great. It introduces Tickey Tapp and his gambling den, with Cardew running all sorts of risks, "The Misdeeds of Micky" is also a grand tale, original in plot and full of fun. Micky Mulvaney's rich Uncle O'Toole decides to adopt Micky and take him back to Ireland. But Micky doesn't want to go - and he makes Uncle only too glad to go back to Ireland on his own. Next tale "The Schemer of the Sixth" is very definitely not by the genuine Martin Clifford. And not a good tale, either. Knox needs £10 urgently and schemes to get it, making Gussy and his minor his victims. Finally, a funny, if rather daft, tale entitled "Glyn's Hair Raising Invention". Glyn invents a hair restorer and plans to use it on the masters of St. Jim's who are thin on top. Pretty good, this one.

In the Cedar Creek saga a connected series has run through the month. It starts with "The Mystery of the New Master". A Mr. Trevelyan is the new master, but Beauclerc has met the real Mr. Trevelyan before, and feels sure that the new master at school is an imposter. Next story is called "The Imposter" and it continues the theme. The new master is really Gerald Goring, and he is out to swindle the real Mr. Trevelyan of an inheritance. The plot unfolds further with "A Fortune at Stake". The series ends with "Saved by his Son". Vere Beauclerc saves his father from Goring, saves Mr. Trevelyan's inheritance, and brings the criminal to justice. An excellent 4-story series.

The Benbow tales start with "Tuckey's Wonderful Wheeze". Tuckey has an idea for making the bullying prefect, Ransome, squirm. After this one, the Benbow starts off on a new tack. The Benbow is fitted out for a sea voyage, and the school sets sail for the West Indies. The remaining tales are "All Aboard for the Spanish Main", "The School at Sea", and "The Seaman's Secret". The seaman, Slaney, has an old document which may reveal the secret of a hidden treasure. So the Benbow at Sea will carry on next month. I'm a bit disappointed that the good Benbow tales have turned into a kind of overseas holiday series. Seems a bit hackneyed!

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#### ERIC FAYNE Comments on This Month's DANNY'S DIARY

S.O.L. No. 364 "The Greyfriars Cracksman" comprised the final 3 stories of the famous Courtfield Cracksman series of 9 stories which had featured in the Magnet at the start of 1930. S.O.L. No. 365 "The Boy Who Came Back" was one of the strangest of all in the Library's fine history. It comprised two gem stories which had appeared in the Gem in December 1927, entitled respectively "Levison's Last Day"

and "Levison's Return". (In the Gem these two stories were separated by 2 substitute stories.) In this S.O.L. the book was completed with a Magnet story on the same theme, for this had been one of those affairs in which the Magnet was happily associated with the Gem in a linked series. Oddly enough, the main Greyfriars part of the series had appeared, years earlier, in S.O.L. No. 179 entitled "The Toad of the Remove". And late 1927 was, of course, the start of the Golden Age of the Magnet.

In Danny's 1939 Gem, "Cardew Cuts Loose" had originally been "Called to Order" in November 1918. "The Misdeeds of Micky" (a delightfully humorous little tale) had been "The Misdeeds of Mulvaney Minor" a few weeks later in December 1918. "The Schemer of the Sixth" of 1939 had been "The Fag's Honour", a pretty awful sub tale from the autumn of 1919. "Glyn's Hair-Raising Invention" had been "Glyn's Great Stunt", a single little genuine story picked out from a long, long run of sub stories early in 1920.

The Cedar Creek tales which Danny enjoyed in March 1939 were 4 stories which had run consecutively in the Boys' Friend from mid-April 1918. "The Mystery of the New Master" had originally been "An Affair of Mystery"; "The Impostor" had been "The Heir of Trevelyan"; the other two tales, "A Fortune at Stake" and "Saved by His Son" bore the same titles on both occasions.

There is an intriguing little factor in connection with this series. Rummy how, even at this late stage, we keep finding out fascinating little new items. The man who impersonated the Heir of Trevelyan in order to try to steal his inheritance was one named Gerald Goring. Many years earlier, in the Blue Gem, a man tried to steal Tom Merry's inheritance by kidnapping Tom, and replacing him with Tom's "double", Clavering. Clavering, as Tom Merry, was to disgrace himself so that he would lose the millions which he was due to inherit. The man who plotted to steal Tom's inheritance was Gerald Goring. It could hardly have been the same man each time, but it was odd how Hamilton landed on the same name, Gerald Goring, for the inheritance thief on both occasions.

Of the Benbow tales in the March 1939 Gem, the 4 stories had originally run consecutively in the Greyfriars Herald from early June 1920. "Tuckey's Wonderful Wheeze" had originally been "The Wrong Man"; "All Aboard for the Spanish Main" had been "A Surprise for the School"; "The School at Sea" had the same title on both occasions; "The Seaman's Secret" had been "The Secret of the One-Eyed Seaman".

So the Benbow series, as we had known it for about a year, had virtually now ended. For a while we were to have a number of stories with the Benbow out in the West Indies. Then, when the Benbow returned, the school closed, and Drake and Rodney went to Greyfriars. Hamilton seems to have written all these stories, so, for a while, we had the irony of the genuine writer churning out tales of Drake at Greyfriars for the Greyfriars Herald, while sub writers churned out a string of sub tales for the Magnet. It didn't seem to make sense. Probably there was a reason for it; one which we are never likely to know.

I recall that I myself lost interest when the Benbow tales became yet another travel series. The Benbow tales, as a whole, were readable, like all Hamilton material, though they never seem to have won the general popularity of most of his other work. I cannot recall that the series was ever reprinted, apart from this second run in the Gem. I do not remember the Benbow tales ever featuring in the S.O.L., which, in its own way, is a bit strange.

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## Cliff House Corner

by Margery Woods



The letter page, replies to readers and the agony column have been with us since magazines began and children's publications were no exception. Most of our storypapers and comics, even those for the tinies, reserved a niche somewhere within their pages for the important contact with their readership. During the early years of THE SCHOOL FRIEND quite a number of column inches, often a whole page, were devoted to the editor's replies to the queries and suggestions that filled his mail. THE SCHOOL FRIEND never published the actual letters but judging by the replies some of the comments from the young readers must have raised a few editorial smiles.

Once the more mundane queries as to Babs' age, the colour of Mabs' eyes, the estimated weight of Bessie Bunter or the shoe size of Clara were dealt with --- these were repeated week after week --- the next largest section concerned requests for a particular type of story or feature. Quite a lot of readers wanted the paper to be published twice a week, others queried wistfully whether it could be twice its size, all of which was no doubt satisfying to authors and staff, at least assuring them that they were on the right lines to popularity.

Sports stories were much in demand. From hockey and lacrosse, through swimming, netball, cricket, gymnastics and tennis to skating and dancing. Other desired subjects included music, theatricals, art, chemistry and autograph hunting. One reader wanted a story about mesmerism. No wonder the Cliff House girls became the accomplished heroines we knew and loved.

Other readers were a little more cosmopolitan, asking when the author would introduce French, American, Dutch, Black and Jewish pupils to the school. One reader wanted to know if a Quaker girl would ever arrive. Girl Guiding was greatly in demand.

Many of the replies seemed strangely cryptic, until one guesses that they refer to the eternal question we all asked before coming into possession of a little insider knowledge about the editorial policy which dictated a total divorce between the MAGNET'S Cliff House and THE

SCHOOL FRIEND's Cliff House. Thus we see the puzzlement of the bright young readers who obviously read both papers.

A guarded reply confirms: "Yes, Marjorie has a brother at the school you mention".

And: "Babs is not related to the boy you mention. I am not related to the gentleman to whom you refer. Babs has not a brother at the school you mention. The Cliff House girls occasionally meet the boy to whom you refer".

And: "You are not correct in your surmise concerning Miss Hilda Richards", appeared time after time. The more logical and inquisitive among regular readers must have been bewildered by the blanket of secrecy which seemed to blot out all mention of Greyfriars and the apparently accidental similarity of the authors' pseudonyms.

There was criticism as well as curiosity. Judging by one quote, "Miss Hilda Richards is intoxicated by the exuberance of her own verbosity", the paper's readers included at least one precocious future contender for a job on the Guardian's panel of book critics. Unless, of course, a mischievous parent had had a hand in the composing of the letter!

The age brackets of readers could surprise. To Babs of Ealing, July 20th, 1920. "You are not too old to read the stories. Why, I have thousands of readers over twenty-one. A crochet pattern may come later." (For mittens and shawl, maybe?) Similar reassurances were addressed to boy readers, perhaps slightly self-conscious about a predilection for a girl's magazine.

Sometimes the replies sounded a little brusque, sometimes over formal. To Bonnie Prince Charlie: "Good gracious no! The Cliff House girls do not speak Cockney!" and: "I note your request for a SCHOOL FRIEND annual and would inform you that this matter is receiving my attention".



.....  
*Here, Cliff House admirers,*

**HILDA  
RICHARDS  
REPLIES.**

.....

More terse were responses to letters on the subject of caning, which seemed to worry the more serious young readers concerned about the problems of social injustice. "I have dealt with the subject of caning in a previous issue." And a sad partisanship was betrayed in the reply to Dead Leaves (a strangely melancholy pseudonym): "I fail to see that to call a girl a cat is an insult to the animal, for the cat has a very mean and selfish nature". Oh, dear! The weight of the next postbag from indignant young cat-lovers must have been enough to clobber any editor.

The sex of the editor was queried several times, also his nationality. Another reader was anxious to know if Bessie's parrot had grown any more feathers. Apparently it hadn't, poor thing. There was a request for a story about a burglary, and at least one reader thought her Cliff House chums must be tough, judging by the long-suffering editor's reply: "No, the Cliff House girls do not indulge in boxing and wrestling!"

Replies to readers began to lessen as the twenties decade wore on and by 27 and 28, the last years of the first SCHOOL FRIEND, had virtually disappeared. Later, when SCHOOLGIRL made its debut and Cliff House was under new management, so to speak, replies to letters reappeared, this time by Hilda Richards herself from the pen of John Wheway. His responses were much more friendly and informal, with the warmth that came through all Wheway's writing. And the readers were still asking that eternal question, to be told: "No I am not related to Mr. Frank Richards of the MAGNET".

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## MEMORIES OF STORY-PAPER AUTHORS

EDITOR'S NOTE: I have received quite a large response to my editorial in the January C.D., asking readers to share their memories of contacts with the writers of our favourite papers. Further reminiscences of this nature will be published in subsequent issues.

A.J. Lake of Birmingham writes: "I wrote to Frank Richards in 1960 saying how much I enjoyed his Billy Bunter and Tom Merry books, and I enquired if there was any chance of reading his old papers, the GEM and the MAGNET. A few days later, to my delight, not only did I receive a reply but a gift as well from the great man. He replied he was very pleased that I liked his books. He said that the old papers had been so long out of print that copies were scarce; sometimes they were advertised for sale, but the prices asked were, in his opinion, too high. He thought that perhaps I would like JACK OF ALL TRADES, and enclosed a copy, which I was to consider as a present from the author. He autographed the book "With kind regards from Frank Richards". Unfortunately I no longer have it, because it was accidentally burnt. However, I still have precious memories of that great day many years ago."

Jim Cook, from Auckland, New Zealand, comments: "I suppose the chance of my mother ever meeting Edwy Searles Brooks was so remote that it was unthinkable since she lived in London and he was miles away. But it did happen! At the height of the bombing in London during the last war my poor mother just couldn't stand things any longer, and somehow remembered my correspondent, the late Ron Mabbett of Fairford, Glos. So, with my sister, and after a tortuous, roundabout trip, she eventually arrived at my old friend's cottage in rural

Gloucestershire... And who should also have called at this cottage but E.S.B.! He complained that the bombing had prevented him from writing his Norman Conquest novels, and, because Ron Mabbett was a frequent correspondent of his, Edwy's first thought, in getting away from South London, was of his address in Fairford. He had hundreds of readers who regularly wrote to him, and it is strange that he should have sought sanctuary there as did my mother and sister at the same time.

"Incidentally I have the last photos of Brooks taken just before his passing. His wife kindly sent me his necktie; his pipe filled with his favourite tobacco; also a handkerchief. Incidentally, when I visited Edwy and his wife, Frances, the cigarette he offered me was from his favourite brand, named Tortoiseshell. I have never seen this brand since that day. He mentioned that his tobacconist in Biggleswaide managed to get them for him."

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## OUR BOOKSHELVES



REVIEWS BY

MARY CADOGAN

I have just been enjoying a well researched and beautifully produced book which many C.D. readers would find of interest. **BONZO: THE LIFE AND WORK OF GEORGE STUDDY** by Paul Babb and Gay Owen (published by Richard Dennis at £19.50) includes 76 pages of full colour, and 52 of black and white illustrations of Studdy's celebrated canine, Bonzo, as well as examples of his other work. This talented illustrator died just over forty years ago, but Bonzo, who starred for decades in his own newspaper strip, in annuals and in animated films, is still remembered with affection. Bonzo was a great character, and, as this excellent book points out, Studdy made him the focus for a great deal of witty and wry comment about animal and human relationships. So great was his popularity that Bonzo appeared on picture postcards (in well over 800 different designs), in a variety of advertising campaigns, and in games and puzzles. Many of these spin-offs are reproduced in the book. The biography of Studdy which runs through the richly illustrated pages is intriguing; he comes across as an extremely likeable, as well as a gifted, person.

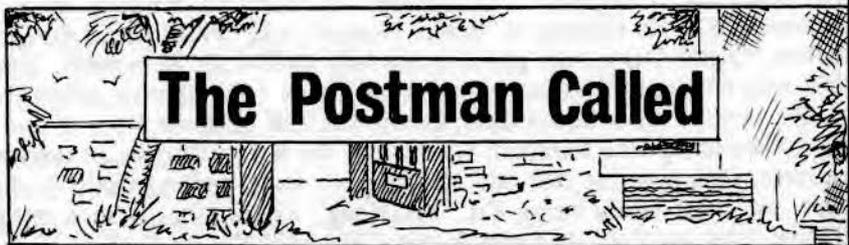
Another book (to buy, beg or borrow from the library service), which also has a doggy theme, is Robert Rosenblum's *THE DOG IN ART FROM ROCOCO TO POST-MODERNISM* (John Murray £15.95). It is rather staggering to see the many different ways in which our canine companions have been presented, over the last two hundred and fifty years, in pictures both great and 'popular'. This is another sumptuous work, with the high quality of its coloured and half-tone pictures matched by the excellence of its informative and fascinating text. Man's best friend, from courtly pets to the famous listener to "His Master's Voice", is splendidly presented here.



It is a far cry from the domestic cosiness of Louisa May Alcott's *LITTLE WOMEN* to the thrillers which, published pseudonymously, have been discovered only in recent years. Two volumes of these have already been published, and *A DOUBLE LIFE*, edited by Madeleine B. Stern, Joel Myerson and Daniel Shealy, now provides us with further dips into the atmospherically murky exploits of Alcott heroines, heroes and villains who people a very different world from those charismatic four sisters of the March family who were eventually to bring her undying fame. These stories appeared in the same decade (the 1860s) as *LITTLE WOMEN*, and they give us further insights into the personality of a remarkable writer (Macmillan £12.95).

It can hardly have escaped readers' notice that 1989 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the Second World War; already a number of books related to this have been published, and doubtless the progress of the year will bring many more. *DE MORTUIS NIL NISI BONUM* by Arthur Edwards (The Friars Library), which has as its theme the Dunkirk evacuation, was actually published during 1985, but copies are still available (details from Peter McCall, 47 The Terrace, Wokingham, Berks., RG11 1BP). Imagine the feelings of the Greyfriars chums in May 1940 when south-eastern England was under the threat of a German invasion; imagine too plucky juniors like the Famous Five, Redwing and the Bounder knowing that the B.E.F. was desperately needing all the help it could get from 'the little ships' and every man or boy who could navigate them... I don't want to give away the plot, so, if you wish to hear more (and to understand how Marjorie's weak and wayward brother gets into the act!) you will have to read this story for yourselves.

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'J.E.M.' (Brighton): Congratulations to John Bridgwater on his interesting and valuable account of Havlock Preed (Blakiana, January). Has anyone noticed that Preed might have been inspired by Edgar Wallace's J.G. Reeder? With his old-fashioned dress, deceptively fuddy-duddy appearance, stuffy manner - and that sword-umbrella, **Preed** does not seem a million miles from **Reeder**.

**COLIN PARTIS** (Grimsby): In reply to M. Lewis's query in the January C.D. about C.H. Chapman, I remember he often used to illustrate articles in CYCLING (or it could have been BICYCLE). I specially recall a page called 'Types', of pictures by Chapman of characters one might meet in country pubs.

With regard to Eric Fayne's comments on "Danny's Diary" in the same issue, the term "Walker" certainly originated earlier than 1917. It occurs in Dickens's A CHRISTMAS CAROL. When Scrooge asks the boy if the prize turkey is still hanging in the poulterer's shop, and then asks him to go and buy it the boy exclaims "Walk-er!", and Scrooge has to convince him that he is in earnest. Perhaps some other reader might know the actual origin of the expression.

**LAURENCE ELLIOTT** (London): I am writing about Bill Lofts's mention in this year's C.D. Annual of the 'unknown' short story by Sir Winston Churchill. Hardly 'unknown'. I have the story before me, and have had it for some years. Vol. 1, no. 6, December 1898 of Harmsworths Magazine, two and two-thirds pages with three illustrations by Henry Austin. I was offered another copy of this a few years back - and yet, with a fanfare of trumpets, ARGOSY published their 'find'. Not the first time, either, as some years ago ARGOSY published a 'long lost novel' by Errol Flynn, found in the second-hand bookstalls in New York. At the time I had two copies of the first publication by Foulsham's of this book... I am not decrying Bill Lofts, of course ...neither am I getting at ARGOSY, which was a fine mag. while it lasted, but there must be many people who possess these 'lost' items and others, and think nothing of it.

**BILL LOFTS (London):** In answer to Esmond Kadish in the December C.D., the identity of 'Isobel Norton', who wrote about the girl detective Valerie Drew, was given in the July 1987 C.D. by myself. The author was Reginald Kirkham. As far as I have been able to establish, after the creator John Bobin died, Lewis Carlton took over for a short spell, followed by Reg Kirkham who wrote the then anonymous stories. Of course, it is possible that odd writers may have penned some of the stories, the most likely being E.L. MacKeag, who was used to writing detective tales as Colwyn Dane in the CHAMPION, as well as being editor of girls' papers. One could also include the mysterious Ronald Fleming, who was also a writer of detective yarns in the girls' papers.

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## **THE GEM REFERENCE CLUB**

by Jack Hughes

In the collections of each of us, there will exist many, many boys' papers which carry the rubber-stamp imprint of some shop or other agency from which the copy of the paper was originally purchased. And these imprints often are a source of nostalgic remembrance.

'Newtown Book Exchange' reminds me of a day long ago when in Air Force life in wartime Sydney I was sitting in a tram which happened to stop outside this shop. I sat gazing across at the window when to my excitement I realised I was looking at a clutch of NELSON LEEs on display. The tram now moving, I had impatiently to await the next stop, then hurrying back to snatch up the suddenly presented prize. As these issues were copies I at that time needed, my pleasure can be imagined.

'The property of MAGNET Productions Ltd.' appears on the covers of some half dozen SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARIES. I had written to the Back Number Dept. of the Amalgamated Press, around 1940, seeking GEMs, MAGNETs, etc. To my delight they were able to supply me with the SCHOOLBOYS' OWN, and these were of a fairly early period.

Other used-books shops and newsagencies through the years have left their mark on many issues, some indicating different places in Australia where I lived in my youth.

A little while ago, busily sorting into cartons for the move I was making, I came across a rubber-stamp and a minute-book, tucked away and all but forgotten. THE GEM REFERENCE CLUB. It was all a long time ago. In the closing few years of GEM and MAGNET I had used the Pen Pals adverts to seek old copies of my favourite weeklies, with some happy results. But in 1941 I felt I needed a bit of 'clout' to impress fellows with the idea of selling me their hordes (I hoped) of Companion Papers. So The Gem Reference Club was born, with yours truly as President, Secretary and Total Membership. Typing up a 'letter head' by using a purple carbon paper and listing on it the type of papers I sought, I began to post these 'important, business-like' letters abroad.

As a Junior Clerk in an accountant's Office, in those days my princely wage at 17 years of a pound a week didn't run to Air Mail, so it would be a long, slow journey until replies (if any) would be received. And, believe it or not, a number of replies **did** come.

First there was a reply from a Mr. Syd Smith of Sydney. He also was a collector and was willing to swop, and even had spare copies to sell. This was the beginning of a long pen-friendship. In 1942 we both were called into service and then our paths crossed several times. He stayed on leave with my parents, in Brisbane; I stayed with his sister and family in Sydney. By our loaning MAGNETs to each other, I read many series it would take many years for me to obtain for myself. Sadly, Syd had a massive heart attack and was found eventually by a neighbour, dead, a year ago.

Of course, I got the African appeal: a monkey skin would be sent in exchange for a camera. So I obliged with a Brownie of no further use to me, and the skin arrived. It sat in a drawer for so long that it eventually disintegrated.

However, an interesting reply came from a Cedric Rickard of Calgary. He shared with me the secret of the authorship of GEM and MAGNET, and much other history of the papers. Also he sent me a large number of these from the period of the First World War. We were to have done even more business but the Exchange Control Board refused to let me have dollars to pay for them. I still have Cedric's letters 46 years on.

These early papers gave me more Pen Pal ads. so letters went to readers of 25 years before. And some were answered: 'Sorry, only recently sold my collection'; 'Gave up reading many years ago, went in for stamps'. In fact there were several who replied by sending news of some stamp clubs they themselves ran.

The Bonanza came in a letter from a chap in Adelaide, South Australia. He had decided to sell his collection of NELSON LEE. Would I care to buy it? And, for what must now be considered a pittance, I bought a very near complete run of St. Frank's NELSON LEEs. The excitement when a post office van delivered about a dozen parcels to my front door was indescribable. And I can't forget that collector's name, as it is inscribed on so many issues by the newsagent who supplied them to him week by week.

War Service intervened, the Club was put aside (like childish things), but collecting would go on. Syd one day would discover the COLLECTORS' DIGEST, and I would become hooked at about issue number 30. That in turn introduced me to Herbert Leckenby with whom I enjoyed several chats in 1954 whilst in England.

The years have tumbled by so quickly. Then I was a callow youth. Now I am a Pensioner. My collection is as much loved by me as ever. And I have made many dear friends; penfriends who have made the journey to visit and stay awhile, whilst I have had the privilege of visiting

them. And the many hours of browsing together, in imagination rambling through Greyfriars and St. Jim's and St. Frank's.

For me this is, and always will be, a Hobby Par Excellence.

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**Leslie Rowley comes across some more  
LETTERS FROM THE GREYFRIARS ARCHIVES:**

Horace James Coker, Greyfriars School, Kent, to the Board of Directors,  
Camford University Press Ltd.



I am riting to point out the many mistakes made in your dikshunairy, and to a peel to you to play the white man and own up to my form master Prout, who keeps on insysting that your words are the rite ones. Prout should kno better, so shoode you. He, Prout, has given me a bumper impot bekoz you spell oxyput with two c's. Mind, I dont blayme you entyrelly, as I have found other dikshunairies making the same mistake.



So, play up and rite to Prout showing him wear his wrong and get me off that impot as Potter and Greene have refused to rite it for me.

Yours, Horace James Coker.

---

The Managing Director, Camford University Press, Ltd., to  
Mr. Prout, Greyfriars School, Kent

Dear Sir,

I am enclosing a copy of a most remarkable communication received from a pupil of yours, a Horace James Coker, in which he complains of mis-spelt entries in the dictionaries published by my firm. We are aware, of course, that our dictionaries have long been in use at Greyfriars School although, until now, we were not conscious that the Greyfriars Foundation also embraced a Preparatory School for the very young. Presumably it is a preparatory school to which Master Coker belongs and at which you yourself teach. If such is the case, I can well understand the difficulties that Master Coker is experiencing with a dictionary intended for use in junior forms at a great public school, and I feel that you, in the

especial understanding that such a pupil merits, will now rescind the imposition that Coker mentions.

Also enclosed is a complimentary copy of our "Little Words for Little Folk" which, I venture to suggest, is the ideal guide to the Queen's English for those of tender years. It comes with our sympathy and understanding for one who is a guide and mentor to those who stand at learning's doorway.

Yours &c., Ivor Fraise, Managing Director.

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From Paul Pontifex Prout, M.A., Master of the Fifth Form and Senior Assistant Master at Greyfriars School, Kent, to the Managing Director, Camford University Press

Sir,

I am in receipt of your letter and enclosure (which I return herewith), and would acquaint you with the fact that there is no Preparatory School affiliated to Greyfriars and, if there were, I would not be a member of its staff! Your text book (if such it may properly be called) has no place in any form at Greyfriars School. As senior assistant master and master of a Senior Form at the School, as author of "With Prout in The Rockies" (Rockbottom Press £9.95), Master of Arts (Hons.) (Oxon) and one-time temporary Headmaster of this School, I repudiate most categorically and emphatically your assumption that I am a preparatory schoolmaster.

Coker is a boy of my form, a Fifth form boy, whose obstinacy and stupidity are both unprecedented and unparalleled in the annals of academic endeavour. Far from complying with your request that his imposition be rescinded, it has been doubled by,

Yours &c., Paul Pontifex Prout.

---

Fisher Tarleton Fish, Entrepreneur, Study No. 14, Remove Passage, Greyfriars School, Kent, to Messrs. Fleecem & Flit, Mail Order Bargains, Ltd.

Gents,

Sure, count me in, and rush me two dozen of your 'reliable timekeepers' at ninepence each for quick sale to my schoolfellows for ready cash.

Yours, F.T. Fish (sole prop Fish Enterprises Inc.)

Fisher Tarleton Fish, Ex-Entrepreneur, Study No. 14, Remove Passage,  
Greyfriars School, Kent, to Messrs. Flecem and Flit  
Mail Order Bargains Ltd.

What gives with you guys sending me two dozen cut-out cardboard sundials? You stipulated 'reliable time-keepers'. Your rubbish now returned for complete cash refund, pronto. Sure, goods are damaged, what do you guys expect when I've had them jammed down the back of my neck?

Yours, F.T. Fish (sole prop Fish Enterprises Inc.)

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Messrs. Flecem & Flit, Mail Order Bargains Ltd.,  
to Fisher T. Fish, Greyfriars School, Kent

Dear Sir,

Your letter and returned sundials not understood. The latter were correctly described as reliable timekeepers, which they are, providing they are protected from inclement weather.

The damaged sundials are being returned to you, Cash On Delivery, and we would re-state our policy, one which we are sure you will appreciate, is one of **no cash refunds under any circumstance.**

Yours &c., Flecem and Flit, Mail Order Bargains, Ltd.  
(now in liquidation)

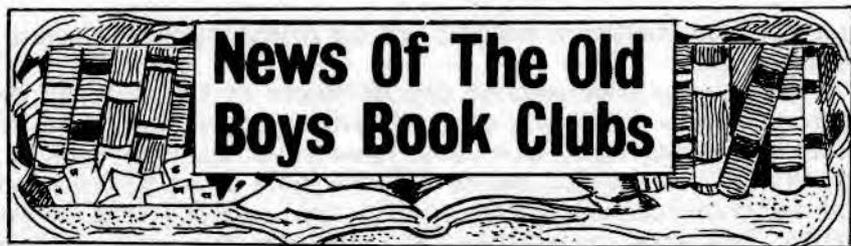
\*\*\*\*\*  
**COLLECTOR** wishes to start collection of Jennings first editions in V.G. Dustwrappers; Bunter first editions in V.G. Dustwrappers; William reprints in V.G. Dustwrappers. Have you any spares, or a collection for sale? Paul Galvin, 2 The Lindales, Pogmoor, Barnsley, S. Yorks., SY5 2DT. Tel: 0226 295613.

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**J.R. MURTAGH** apologizes for his delay in answering letters from C.D. readers, as his wife has been ill and was for some time in hospital. Happily she is now recovering. He hopes to answer all letters eventually.

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**WANTED:** Magnets 879 to 888 (Wharton the Rebel Series), original or reprint. Roy Parsons, 7 Stuart Court, Prince of Wales Mansions, York Place, Harrogate, HG1 1JB.

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**ALWAYS WANTED:** Singles/collections: SOL's, SBL's, Beanos. Dustwrapped Biggles, Bunters, Williams, Enid Blyton, Malcolm Saville. ALL original artwork. Norman Wright, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, Hertfordshire.

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### MIDLAND O.B.B.C.

There was a small attendance of 6 at our January meeting, and we spent a very long time discussing ways and means of improving matters, but a run of bad luck, with several members becoming ill or moving to distant places, has played havoc with our club. After much discussion it was decided to bring matters to a head at the A.G.M. in May. People who compile items are wasting their time if so few come to hear and see them.

Ivan Webster and Christine Bretell provided excellent refreshments. The news of the death of Jack Corbett, founder of our club, was a shock to those who knew him. He was a great pioneer of the hobby way back in the 1950s. Jack died in July, and his widow informed Tom Porter, who had sent him a Christmas card.

A 20 Questions quiz by your correspondent on the old school papers was the first item after the refreshments. It was won by our acting chairman, Geoff Lardner. 'Take a Letter', based on the titles of the Howard Baker volumes, was introduced by Geoff. We did not allow the poor attendance to depress us unduly, and hope for better attendance at our February meeting. All good wishes to O.B.B.C. members.

JACK BELLFIELD

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

Chairman David Bradley welcomed members to the February meeting. Paul Galvin reported that resulting from the W.E. Johns meeting in October of last year, four members had decided to organize the publication of a quarterly Biggles Magazine to supplement the one currently produced in Holland by Bert von Vondel in Dutch and English. It was reported also that plans for the JUST WILLIAM meeting, to be held in Norwich in April, were proceeding well.

A special welcome was given to Mike Parsons, making a return visit from Northern Library Services. On his previous visit he had told us some rather harrowing stories of how books and papers could be damaged by the atmosphere over the years. He had shown us some examples and

we had left that meeting wondering how our collections would look in a few years' time.

Mike gave us some practical demonstrations on how to repair and rejuvenate books and papers using specialist materials with acid-free contents. Special repair tape could mend small tears in pages in a virtually invisible manner; hinges of books could be strengthened, and cloth and leather cleaned. All the materials used were of special archival quality. This useful demonstration gave us all something to think about, and might be of timely use to all Club librarians. Our own Club purchased some of the materials for the maintenance of our extensive library.

Our next meeting is on 11th March when we shall be delighted to welcome Mary Cadogan to our evening meeting and to lunch in Wakefield at 1.00 p.m. Any visitor would be most welcome to attend either or both these functions. Applications should be made to our Secretary, Thornes Vicarage, Wakefield.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

### LONDON O.B.B.C.

The new club officers for the year 1989/90 took the top table for the first time. Roger Jenkins, in the Chair, welcomed all to what is becoming a very popular venue, the Chingford Horticultural Society Hall. Tony and Audrey Potts and friends had worked very hard to make our visit a pleasant one, and a tea which would have caused the Fat Owl to ejaculate 'Prime!' was provided.

In the full and varied programme of entertainment, Alan Stewart's Name Game was won by Don Webster; Bill Bradford took us down Memory Lane to the Club meeting of 20 years ago, February 1969, and then Tony Potts spoke of Captain W.E. Johns's writings on horticulture. After tea Don Webster kicked off the second half with one of his EXASPERATION quizzes, which was won by Roger Jenkins. Phil Griffiths read 'A Question of Grammar' from a WILLIAM book. Alan Pratt presented a quiz with special emphasis on the Thomson papers which was won by Chris Harper, and Eric Lawrence read a nostalgic essay by Basil Amps on the subject of childhood games.

The next meeting will be at the Ealing Liberal Centre, and NOT at the previously announced venue. Please bring own foodstuffs, but the cup that cheers will be provided. We gather at the usual time on Sunday, 12th March.

MARK JARVIS

## FRIARS' NEW YEAR LUNCH

Although the Friars' Club Christmas lunch was delayed from December to January, it seems to have been a good idea to move the venue to the Crown Tavern at Clerkenwell, and to celebrate the New Year as well as Christmas.

After a good and plentiful lunch, members were treated to a talk by Bill Lofts on new facts about the Holiday Annuals, and, in true Lofts style, Bill had amassed curious features about the policy, distribution and writers of this great Christmas treat.

Mary Cadogan then brought back memories of Christmas with Charles Hamilton, reminding us just how much we owe to his skills and ability to enthrall us, particularly at this season. We all had our own thoughts of lovely times from the past, which arose from Hamilton's superb use of the English language.

Chairman Maurice Hall told a ghost story about the Crown Tavern and John Grogan, Highwayman. Grogan met his death in the inn, having been tracked down by the Bow Street Runners in January 1839, a mere 150 years ago. His Ghost did not appear!

It is intended that the future Christmas lunches could become January fixtures, to relieve the pressure in that busy month of December, which is generally so packed with meetings.

BRIAN SIMMONDS

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### "THE TRIAL OF CECIL SNAITH"

Frank Richards (Howard Baker Book Club Special: £18)

Reviewed by Eric Fayne

Another beautifully-bound volume to grace your bookcase, with contents to tickle your nostalgia buds. The ingredients are 6 consecutive issues of the Magnet for the Autumn of 1915. The lovely Red Cover had passed on, a casualty of the war, but the paper still kept its liberal 32 pages. Ironically enough, the most remarkable story in this collection - in fact, the most remarkable Magnet tale ever published - comes from a substitute writer. The remarkable factor is nothing to do with the quality of the writing. It is just how such a story as "The Sunday Crusaders" came to be accepted at all, for it was quite out of place in the Magnet.

It is not merely the religious angle, though that angle is heavily overstressed. But much-loved youngsters' tales of late Victorian times had their religious slant, and still win the heart today. Talbot Baines Reed's stories live on, and they were lightly touched with the brush of an earnest Believer. But the most surprising factor of "The Sunday Crusaders" was the sectarian nature of the tale. This story was fully considered in our

own "Let's be Controversial" series. It was No. 92, "The Place of Religion in School Stories", which appeared in C.D. dated October 1965.

The black sheep of the Remove become Atheists, calling themselves the "Pagans". A novel feature is that Todd joins them. They go to the pictures on Sunday, they play football on Sunday, they rob the tuckshop, and finally two of them climb into a church belfry to replace the bell with a tin of stones. But the last item goes wrong and Skinner sacrifices himself to save Bolsover, and falls from the belfry down into the church. He is very badly injured, an operation is performed, and he is fighting for his life. The Head of Greyfriars cannot make up his mind whether he should notify the boy's parents, Well, well.

Actually the story was written by the youthful Samways, and the reader is left with no doubt of the complete personal Faith of the young author. With a little more experience and skill, and a lighter touch with more restraint, he might have produced a winner. All the same, it was a fascinating and outstanding moment in Magnet history.

The 4 genuine Hamilton tales in the volume are a delight. Mainly they are heavily dated with a wartime flavour, which means they were not reprinted, and so the themes come fresh. "Bunter's Anti-Tuck Campaign"; is amusing. Bunter, severely criticised by his fellows for gorging in wartime, produces the maxim "Eat less tuck", which is surprising. But there's a catch in Billy's noble example.

"The Midnight Marauders" was a childhood favourite of my own. German spies are operating on Popper's island, and Sir Hilton gets kidnapped. The finest school tale in the book is "Straight as a Die". This is the one about Snaith which gives an overall title to the volume, though the reason for the change in title is a bit obscure. Cecil Snaith of the Shell is expelled for theft, the blame for which he tried to throw on another. A tip-top drama with Hamilton at his early best.

There is good nostalgic fun in "Going the Pace" which stars Fisher T. Fish who sets himself up as a bookie. Naturally he cheats, and he is delightfully exposed by the Caterpillar of Highcliffe.

The volume closes with another tale from Samways, on more orthodox lines this time. "The Remove Eleven on Tour" is the title which tells most of the plot. The Remove footballers tour the southern counties, under the charge of Wingate, to raise money for comforts for the troops. Skinner, his period of religious repentance past, is up to his old dirty tricks again, and Bunter foils him.

Lovely stuff for the historian or the nostalgia seeker - or for anyone - and the advertisements alone are well worth the price of this splendid book. (The Greyfriars Herald is just starting as a separate entity.) One of the Editor's Chat pages contains one of those letters in verse from Jimmy R. of Repton which used to brighten our weeks from time to time in those days. (I have a feeling that the "Jimmy R." letters were really an example of Samways' splendid verse.)

In short! Fine volume! Not to be missed!



**NEW BOOKS FOR 1989**

Forthcoming GREYFRIARS BOOK CLUB volumes scheduled to be published in the current year:  
Available directly from the Publisher at £18 per volume

**CLUB VOL. 84**

**THE TRIAL OF CECIL SNAITH** Publication Date  
by Frank Richards JANUARY 1989

*Magnet issues: No. 400, The Sunday Crusaders; No. 401, Bunter's Anti-Tuck Campaign; No. 402, The Midnight Marauders; No. 403, Straight as a Die; No. 404, Going The Pace; No. 405, The Remove Eleven On Tour.*

ISBN: 07030 0314 3

**CLUB VOL. 87**

**BOB CHERRY'S SECRET** Publication Date  
by Frank Richards JULY 1989

*Magnet issues: No. 262, A Split In The Sixth; No. 263, Captain Coker; No. 264, A Son Of The Sea; No. 265, The Captain's Minor; No. 266, Bob Cherry's Secret; No. 267, Chums Afloat.*

ISBN: 07030 0317 8

**CLUB VOL. 85**

**BUNTER THE MASHER** Publication Date  
by Frank Richards MARCH 1989

*Magnet issues: No. 406, The Conjuror's Capture; No. 407, The Jape Of The Season; No. 408, The Rebels Of The Remove; No. 410, Bunter The Masher; No. 411, The Bounder's Relapse.*

ISBN: 07030 0315 1

**CLUB VOL. 88**

**FRIARS VERSUS SAINTS** Publication Date  
by Frank Richards SEPTEMBER 1989

*Magnet issues: No. 268, The Schoolboy Conjuror; No. 269, Barred By The Fags; No. 270, Bob Cherry's Chase; No. 271, The Impossible Four; No. 272, The Schoolboy Moneylender; No. 273, Friars Versus Saints.*

ISBN: 07030 0318 6

**CLUB VOL. 86**

**FISH'S FAG AGENCY** Publication Date  
by Frank Richards MAY 1989

*Magnet issues: No. 255, The Greyfriars Pantomime; No. 257, Fish's Fag Agency; No. 258, Rake Of The Remove; No. 259, Left In The Lurch; No. 260, Harry Wharton & Co.'s Rescue; No. 261, Scorned By Greyfriars.*

ISBN: 07030 0316 X

**CLUB VOL. 89**

**PETER TODD'S CHANCE** Publication Date  
by Frank Richards NOV/DEC 1989

*Magnet issues: No. 274, Standing By Skinner; No. 275, Peter Todd's Chance; No. 276, Wun Lung's Secret; No. 277, Holding The Fort; No. 278, In Direst Peril; No. 279, His Own Betrayal.*

ISBN: 07030 0319 4

For guide to contents of above Volumes,  
see The Magnet Companion '86

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**SEVENTY-SIX YEARS OF DIXON HAWKE**

by W.O.G. Lofts

Dixon Hawke, the celebrated detective of the Scottish firm of D.C. Thomson Ltd., must have set up a unique world record in popular fiction. Believe it or not, he has been running continuously on a weekly basis for now well over 76 years, and so must be credited with being the longest consecutive running character of all time. Deservedly he would be in the Guinness Book of Records because, astoundingly as far as one can gather from a perusal of the files, he has never even missed one week!

His initial appearance was in No. 347 of THE SATURDAY POST, dated 6th April 1912, in a story entitled "The Great Hotel Mystery" (the paper's title being changed to the more familiar THE SPORTING POST in 1914). As mentioned, despite two world wars Dixon Hawke has never missed a weekly

instalment. As far as I know he is still appearing on the back page today. This means that he will have solved almost 4000 cases by the time this article appears in print, in over 76 years of active service as a world-renowned criminologist.

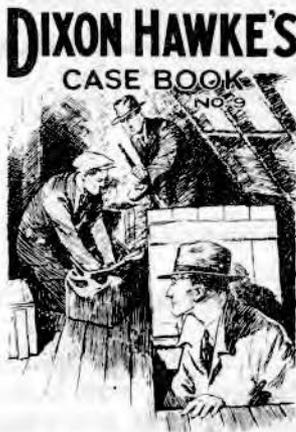
In addition the DIXON HAWKE LIBRARY (1919-1941) contained a further 742 stories. The ADVENTURE (1921-1961) had another 437 tales, and, in their twenty issues THE DIXON HAWKE CASE BOOKS (1938-1953) contained a further 800 short stories. In 1921 TOPICAL TIMES had a further 8 stories. All this gives him a total of some 5000 stories, thus beating his greatest rival, Sexton Blake, who, according to estimates, had 3848 exploits published until the last original story to feature him appeared cir. 1968.

At the offset, Dixon Hawke could be seen as a Scottish detective with chambers in Bath Street, Glasgow. His famous assistant Tommy Burke (then believe it or not named the same as Nelson Lee's sidekick "Nipper") sold newspapers in the streets (like Tinker, Sexton Blake's celebrated helper). Burke then mainly assisted Hawke by shadowing suspects in the streets, somewhat similarly to all those urchins who were a great help at times to Sherlock Holmes.

Towards the end of the First World War, with staff increasingly returning from the services, the editors decided to go into the teenage and upwards market. Thus the DIXON HAWKE LIBRARY was launched in 1919. With this new venture into the English market, it was also decided that Hawke should move to London, where all the greatest (fictional) detectives such as Holmes, Blake, Lee and Ferrers Locke lived. Hawke then moved from Glasgow to Dover Street, which is famous for its Brown's Hotel, a place almost opposite the Ritz Hotel in Piccadilly.

It was mainly in this publication that the character developed, Hawke being described as tall and aquiline, with a clear cut face. He was aged about 35 and wore a dressing-gown when in residence. Continuing the Holmes tradition, he also smoked a blackened briar. Soon he acquired a bloodhound named Solomon, plus a Housekeeper named Mrs. Martha Benvie. Hawke drove a large Sunbeam roadster and often dined with the Prime Minister, having friends in highest places. He was also friends with the top detectives at Scotland Yard, including Det. Inspector Duncan McPhinney who appeared throughout the series.

The hordes of villains who pitted their wits against the famous sleuth were almost as numerous as Sexton Blake's foes. These included Yokota the Jap: The Tiger: Fuh Canton, the White Chinaman: Kito the Dwarf: Li Foo the Super Chinese Criminal: The Snake: The Microbe (by E.S. Brooks, anon.): The Snipe: Dr. Den the Arch Rogue, and Sun-Fu, yet another Chinese criminal. THE ADVENTURE usually had serials featuring most of these, the first picture-strip incidentally in this paper (on the front cover in 1949) being entitled "Dixon Hawke and the Yellow Ghost".



Easily the greatest mystery surrounding Hawke is that of the identity of the hundreds of authors who have chronicled his adventures through the years, for all the stories have been anonymous. At times speculation has raged as to the creator. It was once suggested that this could have been Edgar Wallace as he was writing a great deal for the Scottish firm in 1919, but there is no proof of this. It might well be that Hawke in the first place was simply editorially suggested, like most of D.C. Thomson's famous juvenile characters. What gives some strength to this theory is the fact that there is hardly any characterization in the tales, which all were written on the same style, unlike the Sexton Blake stories where some of the different authors could be detected straight away.

Over the years a number of writers have admitted to penning stories in the Dixon Hawke saga. These include John Creasey, Lewis Carlton, Richard Goyne, Gilbert Chester, F. Addington Symonds, Rex Hardinge, Reginald Thomas, Lester Bidston, Frank Howe, George Goodchild and Roy Vickers. W.W. Sayer revealed that he wrote a few stories in THE ADVENTURE. E.S. Brooks, as mentioned earlier, wrote about The Microbe and also produced many stories for the Library featuring Marko, who was a sort of Waldo the Wonder Man (the original of which of course appeared in the UNION JACK).

Many years ago, the now late T.C.H. Jacobs (J. Pendower) claimed in a letter to Derek Adley to have written all the Shilling Dixon Hawke Case Books, though whether this was exactly true remains to be proved.

The Dixon Hawke Library was much smaller in size, with shorter tales than the SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY. It is also very scarce hardly ever appearing in wants list or dealers' catalogues, yet its sales were just as good as those of its rival, Sexton Blake. Many years ago now I did meet a collector who had the full set, kept in several large cardboard boxes under the dining room table.

Certainly many people remember Dixon Hawke and his assistant Tommy Burke with some affection. His supposed offices in Dover Street are now above a high class tailor's shop at which I always glance up on my visits to the West End of London.

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**R.F. ACRAMAN** wishes to advise readers that the Greyfriars Club meeting at Kingsgate Castle, Kent (announced in the C.D. Annual on page 102) will NOT now take place on 26th March but on THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY, 2nd APRIL.

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May I remind C.D. readers that because of our attendance at the Christening of our neices' baby son in Norfolk on the 26th March, the date for The Greyfriars Club meeting announced on page 102 of the C.D.A. has to be altered to the following Sunday, 2nd April 1989 (2.00 p.m. at Kingsgate Castle).

R.F. ACRAMAN

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