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VOLUME 44

NUMBER 519



MARCH 1990

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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The Editor's Chat

RICHMAL CROMPTON CENTENARY



Our cover this month gives prominence to William Brown to mark the centenary of his originator. Richmal Crompton was born at Bury, Lancashire on 15th November, 1890, and throughout 1990 there will be celebratory events in various parts of the country.

At Bromley in Kent, where Richmal taught, and lived for most of her adult life, an Arts Festival this month will be devoting two mornings to her and the scruffy, exuberant but endearing anti-hero whom she created.

Several broadcasts and film-shows are planned (I hope to give details as the year proceeds), and a *World of William* exhibition will be held at the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood in London from August to October. Richmal's birth-place, Bury, is arranging several public functions to take place on or around her birthday in November.

There will also be celebratory exhibitions and events elsewhere (watch these columns!). C.D. readers may be particularly interested to know of two new publications which are being issued in this centenary year. Richmal's present publishers, Macmillan's, asked me to write a *William Companion* (the Who's Who and What's What of all the William books). I undertook this with some misgivings because of the enormity of the task. However, I received splendid help in my researches, and with the contribu-

tion of some articles, from David Schutte and Kenneth C. Waller, two William experts who share my enthusiasm for Richmal's wonderfully witty stories. As well as focussing on these, *The William Companion* features many of Thomas Henry's lively and expressive pictures, taken not only from the books but from the magazines in which the stories first appeared. Many of these - such as these pictures of Violet Elizabeth Bott before and after playing with William - may be unfamiliar and in the nature of pleasing discoveries to readers.



My book is to be published later this month, in company with *What's Wrong with Civilizashun and other important ritings* by Just William (really by Richmal, of course). This is a sparkling compilation of pieces from magazines not previously collected into books. It comprises William's letters to fans and friends, and articles by him on such subjects as 'School is a Waste of Time' and 'The Job I'd Like Best'. The issuing of a *new* William book is indeed an appropriate way of celebrating Richmal Crompton's centenary.

GREYFRIARS IN CALIFORNIA

Last month I made an unexpected but very happy trip to California. Whilst there I was able to visit Bob Whiter, his wife Marie and two of their daughters (their son Roger is now studying in England, and some of you may have met him at O.B.B.C. meetings). Bob of course is well known to C.D. readers for his illustrations and articles. I was only able to be with the Whiters for a few hours on my last day in America, and during this time talk and laughter, reminiscences and the sharing of 'treasures' were non-stop. I had a strange feeling throughout that I was visiting Bob Cherry - grown up! One can certainly say of the Whiters' warm and welcoming Los Angeles home that it is truly 'some corner of a foreign field that is for ever England' (and, even more, for ever Greyfriars).

It would have given much satisfaction to Frank Richards and those other authors who enriched our childhoods to know that their work still flourishes, both at home and abroad.

MARY CADOGAN



WILLY HANDFORTH'S PETS

by Jim Sutcliffe

At a recent London Club meeting an informal discussion took place on the pets in the Hamilton Stories. This prompted me to do a little research in my Nelson Lees featuring the pets of Willy Handforth, who surely must have had the most astonishing variety of any schoolboy.

When Willy arrived at St. Frank's in O.S. 386 there was no mention of any pets but soon after in O.S. 392, "The House of a Thousand Eyes", he is certainly featured as an amateur naturalist. Willy's pets crop up at various times but the whole troupe are shown in 1st N.S. 45 when he sets out to rescue them from the bicycle shed at St. Frank's which is almost submerged under the flood which cut the school off when the Pine Hill Reservoir burst after days of incessant rain.

There is Septimus the Squirrel, Marmaduke the Monkey, Rupert the Rat, Priscilla the Parrot, Ferdinand the Ferret, and Sebastian the Snake, all trapped, and Willy is almost in despair. Together with his pals, Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon, he launches a large solid table into the flood and manages to rescue the pets which fortunately were in wooden cages that floated, rising with the water. They also rescued Nipper's little spaniel, Boz, which in the confusion Nipper had forgotten.

In 1st N.S. 128 - 131 a greyhound called Domino is seriously injured by a hit and run car and left for dead by the bookmaker to whom it belonged, as it would be no use for racing again. Willy takes it back to

WHO'S WHO AT ST. FRANK'S.



WILLY HANDFORTH.

The cheery and audacious leader of the Third Form, which he rules with a "rod of iron." Is the younger brother of the celebrated Edward Oswald, from whom he makes a practice of extracting "five bobs." Shrewd and quick-thinking, good at sports, and a passionate lover of animals.

the school and nurses it back to health and renames it Lightning. The bookmaker gets hold of it again and enters it in a race at Helmford Stadium. But it had hardly recovered and is limping along the track when it spots Willy who with his major, Ted, had come to try and get the dog back. It turns out that the rascally bookmaker had stolen it when a puppy from the owner of the Stadium, Sir Herbert Rodney, and he, touched by Willy's devotion to the animal and the fact that it will never race again, makes him a present of it. With Dr. Stafford's approval, Willy is allowed to keep the dog as another pet.

REGGY PITT'S EFFORTS TO SAVE THE FAMILY FORTUNE

by Jack Greaves

This excellent series, will, I'm sure, have been discussed on other occasions in the C.D. so I will only briefly mention its main theme.

Mr. Pitt senior had lost his whole fortune by the unscrupulous activities of Simon Raspe, a scoundrelly financier. He and his wife had been turned out of their London home and were now living in dire circumstances in an apartment house in Fulham.

Reggy Pitt didn't hear of this calamity until he returned to England after spending the Summer holiday in America with the St. Frank's party, and he became a professional footballer under a disguise and the assumed name of Abdullah. His excellent skill at the game enabled him to earn money to send to his parents, until Simon Raspe received his just deserts through the efforts of Nelson Lee.

Perhaps some readers may think that Reggy Pitt at the age of 15 was a little young to face the rigours of professional soccer, but this happened quite a few times in real life and here are some examples.

OLDHAM ATHLETIC - WAYNE HARRISON: 15 yrs 11 months.

v. Notts County 27.10.1984.

PORT VALE - STUART CHAPMAN: 15 yrs 362 days.

QUEENS PARK RANGERS - FRANK SIBLEY: 15 yrs 274 days.

SHEFFIELD WEDS - PETER FOSSE: 15 yrs 10 months.

SWANSEA - NIGEL DARLING: 15 yrs 10 months.

WREXHAM - KEN ROBERTS: 15 yrs 158 days.

v. Bradford City 1951/52.

YORK CITY - REG. STOCKHILL: 15 and a half yrs (Aug 1929)

SUNDERLAND - DEREK FORSTER: 15 yrs 184 days.

BOLTON - RAY PARRY: 15 yrs 267 days.

No. 329.

THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. THREE-HALFPENCE



THE MYSTERY FOOTBALLER.

A Story of School Life and Detective Adventure at St. Frank's College, introducing NELSON LEE, NIPPER, and the Boys of St. Frank's. By the Author of "The Traitors of Caribou Pass," "The Fury of Thunder Rapids," "His House in Disorder," and many other Stirring Tales.

(THE NARRATIVE RELATED THROUGHOUT BY NIPPER.)

BOURNEMOUTH - JIMMY
 WHITE: 15 yrs.
 v. Brentford 30.4.58.
BRENTFORD - D. SALMAN:
 15 yrs 8 months 3 days.
BRISTOL ROVERS - RONNIE
 DIX: 15 yrs 180 days.
 The youngest player to score in
 football league (3rd March 1928).
CHESTER - A. NEWHOUSE: 15
 yrs (7.5.88)
DONCASTER - ALICK
 JEFFREYS: 15 yrs 7 months.
GILLINGHAM - BILLY HUGHES:
 15 yrs 275 days.
HUDDERSFIELD - DENNIS
 LAW: 15 yrs 10 months (1956).
MANCHESTER CITY - GLYN
 PARDOE: 15 yrs 314 days.

In these times of soccer violence
 it is a pleasant experience to read the
 above series knowing that, in those
 far off days, Saturday afternoon was
 a day when families could attend the
 various clubs to enjoy themselves
 without fear of warfare in and
 outside the grounds.

No. 330.—A ROUSING STORY OF PITT'S GREAT "FOOTER" TRIUMPH!

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AROUND THE WORLD WITH SEXTON BLAKE

by J.E.M.

Number 3

More than thirty years before America got involved in Vietnam, in the days when that unhappy country was still French Indo-China, one of



*"You may have heard of me at Scotland Yard," she said.
"My name is Roxane Harfield. I believe I am sometimes
known as Mademoiselle Roxane."*

Blake's adventures took him to its capital, Saigon. Here, our detective comes up against a particularly nasty European crook called Otto Bruner, who, among other evil ambitions, has designs on the ravishing Mlle Roxane. In *The Brute of Saigon* by G.H. Teed (UJ 1383), Roxane, unusually naive, is at first persuaded to become Bruner's ally and, in this illustration, is seen with a Scotland Yard man (British detectives certainly got around even in the age before jet flight!) whom she has taken prisoner.

In the end, of course, Blake, truth and justice triumph but, my, how that headstrong young lady must have tried Sexton Blake's patience over the years!

THE SEXTON BLAKE LISTS

We've all seen them around in bookshops - The Book of Lists, The Book of Royal Lists, The Book of Movie Lists, The Book of Cricket Lists, etc. etc. - there have been many of them published over the past 15 years or so. And fascinating bits of trivia they are to browse through. Now BRIAN DOYLE submits a few Sexton Blake Lists; they are for amusement only and make no claims to be comprehensive...

THE 12 MOST PROLIFIC AUTHORS OF SEXTON BLAKE STORIES

G.H. Teed (nearly 300)	Rex Hardinge (over 100)
William Murray Graydon (260)	Anthony Parsons (over 100)
Gilbert Chester (176)	Edwy Searles Brooks (98)
Andrew Murray (over 170)	Mark Osborne (97)
Anthony Skene (125)	Lewis Jackson (over 90)
Robert Murray Graydon (over 100)	Mark Darran (over 86)

THE NEXT 12 MOST PROLIFIC AUTHORS OF SEXTON BLAKE STORIES

Gwyn Evans	Donald Stuart
John Hunter	Allan Blair
Cecil Hayter	John G. Brandon
Warwick Jardine	Coutts Brisbane
Walter Tyrer	Sidney Drew
Pierre Quiroule	W. Howard Baker

A DOZEN OF 'THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES' ENCOUNTERED BY SEXTON BLAKE

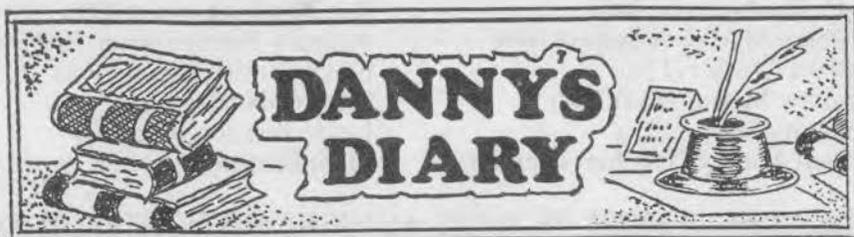
Mlle. Yvonne Cartier	Roxane Harfield
Vali Mata Vali	Mary Trent
Mlle. Julie	June Severance
Marie Galante	Paula Dane
Marion Lang	Martha Bardell
Nirvana	Olga Nasmyth

TWO DOZEN OF SEXTON BLAKE'S MOST FORMIDABLE CRIMINAL FOES

The Brotherhood of Silence
The Brotherhood of the Yellow Beetle
The Criminals' Confederation
(headed by Mr. Reece)
George Marsden Plummer
(once of Scotland Yard)
Dr. Huxton Rymer
Leon Kestrel, the Master Mummer
(whose real features no one knew)
Waldo the Wonder Man
Mr. Mist, the Invisible Man
Dr. Ferraro
Dr. Satira
The Man in Black

Carlac
Professor Kew
Miss Death
Paul Cynos
Prince Menes
King Karl II of Serbovia
Max Lupus
Krock Kelk
Baron von Kravitch
Zenith the Albino
The Black Trinity
The Council of Eleven
The Double Four Gang

TO BE CONTINUED



MARCH 1940

All told, not a very great month in the 41/2d Libraries. Still, there are some lovely items.

"The Boy With the Past" in the S.O.L. carries on with the tale of Jim Valentine at Greyfriars. He has been a crook in his time, and his old associates did not want to lose him. They are working hard to get him disgraced and kicked out of Greyfriars so that he may re-join the gang. And all the way through the story Jim is trying to foil them in their efforts. It's not finished yet, but will go on next month I expect.

This was No. 400 of the Schoolboys' Own Library. I wonder if anyone in the world has all 400 of them. You could read - morning, noon, and night.

The second S.O.L. is a St. Jim's tale, "Cock o'the Walk". About a strong, prizefighter type of new boy who comes into the Shell at St. Jim's and throws his weight about. He almost turns Tom Merry out of the junior captaincy. It's not by the real Martin Clifford, so it was a waste of 41/2d.

The St. Frank's tale is great. "The Rebels' Victory". The Rebel Remove at St. Frank's want to get rid of petticoat rule. They want to get rid of all the mistresses and have the masters back. Good fun, if a bit unbelievable.

As for the Knockout Library and the Bullseye Library, they are all new stories, and they don't appeal to me a bit. The titles alone put me off. Fancy spending 41/2d on "Happy Hoppy the Cowboy Ventriloquist" or "Constable Simon Simple".

I yearn for the old days when the B.F.L. gave us Ken King and Captain Justice and the rest.

I had a couple of good Sexton Blake Libraries. "The Black Swastika" by John G. Brandon was very up-to-date, with Hitler and his Nazi thugs, but the one I liked best is "Sexton Blake - Special Constable". This one centres on horse-racing and a deadly plot of a certain man's rascally brother. And Blake joins the police force, to help things along. This was by Mark Osborne.

In spite of the war there has been a Boat Race (of sorts) between Oxford and Cambridge, but the site was changed to Henley, and it was called the Substitute University Boat Race. Oxford won.

Some really rattling good films at the local cinemas this month. I loved "Dodge City", a gorgeous western in technicolor with plenty of American steam trains puffing along. Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, and Ann Sheridan were in this one. Really top-class. Another Western, not quite so good, was "Man of Conquest" with Richard Dix. A very enjoyable one was Barbara Stanwyck in "Golden Boy" about a poor boy who is torn between two loves - prizefighting and the violin.

Mum very much enjoyed "The Light that Failed" with Ronald Colman and Ida Lupino, about a great artist who is going blind, and wants to finish a picture before his sight goes completely. James Cagney is great in "Each Dawn I Die", all about prison life. A man, wrongfully sentenced, becomes the leader in a prison rebellion. A fascinating little British film is "Poison Pen" with Flora Robson, about a village which is put in turmoil by a secret writer of vindictive anonymous letters.

I much enjoyed "Babes in Arms" starring Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney, about the teenage youngsters of various stage stars who plan together and put on a big variety show of their own. Some nice songs in this one. Finally, "Just William", about Britain's favourite boy. I wonder if he is! At any rate, it's a grand film. Dicky Lupino is William, Roddy McDowall is Ginger, Peter Miles is Henry, and Norman Robinson is Douglas. And Fred Emney is also in the picture. It caused me to look out the latest William book, "William and A.R.P." which Mum bought for me some months ago. I loved reading it again. I think the funniest one in it is

THE BOY WITH A PAST!



By FRANK RICHARDS.

JIM VALENTINE, the one-time boy crook, finds himself up against it to prevent his former associates from disgracing him at Greyfriars School!

"William and the Begging Letter". I expect a new William book will be out very soon.

There has been a tragic happening in a mine disaster. An explosion in a coal mine near Stoke. 8 men have been killed, and 4 more badly injured.

My brother Doug is an Agatha Christie fan, and buys all her books. The most recent published in Britain is called "Ten Little Niggers" which Doug bought a few months ago. He let me read it, and it is great. Nearly as good as Sexton Blake at his best. Oddly enough a new Christie book has been published in the States. It is called "The Regatta Mystery", and a friend of Doug's has sent it to him. He says I can read it later. I expect it will be published over here soon, but it's rummy being published across the Atlantic first.

And so, to the main event of the week - the arrival of the Magnet at the newsagent's. The Lamb series has gone on. The first tale of the month is "The Eleventh Hour". Vernon-Smith knows too many of Lamb's secrets for the comfort of the schoolmaster, and for ages Lamb has been trying to get rid of the Bounder. In this tale he succeeds, and at the end Smith is bunked.

Next week, "Vernon-Smith's Last Fling". Waiting to depart from Greyfriars, the Bounder decides to make things as hot for Lamb as he possibly can, before he leaves. Then came "Bounder and Sticker" which carries on with the Bounder's last hours at Greyfriars.

And then, at long last, came the final story in the series "The Bounder's Triumph". Ferrers Locke, the detective, has been trying and failing every week. And now the Bounder succeeds where Locke has failed. He frees Mr. Quelch, and unmasks Lamb as the criminal "Slim Jim".

I have enjoyed this very long series, though it has gone on too long and been rather repetitive. But there has been a lot of excitement and fun, so it never became tedious. But I'm not sorry it's ended after 16 weeks of it.

To end the month we have the start of a new Easter Holiday series. The opening tale is "Sir William's Double". Wibley plays a big part in it. Sir William is Loder's uncle, and he is big pot in the Secret Service. For fun, Wibley impersonates him. The powers-that-be at Greyfriars are angry with Wibley, but Sir William is not angry. He arranges for Wibley to go to his home, Eastcliff Lodge, - still impersonating Sir William. So that spies will think that the old chap is still at home. And the Greyfriars chums, and Bunter, are to go as well. Sounds like good stuff coming along. But the Easter Vac won't last as long as the Lamb series did, I'm sure.

FOR SOME WEEKS FERRERS LOCKE HAS BEEN WORKING TO TRAP "SLIM JIM," THE MYSTERY CRACKSMAN, WITHOUT SUCCESS. BUT WHERE THE BAKER STREET DETECTIVE HAS FAILED, VERNON-SMITH SUCCEEDS!



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

S.O.L. No. 400 "The Boy With a Past" comprised 3 more stories from the "Dick, the Penman" series of 11 stories which ran in the Magnet from late in the year 1932 and well into 1933. The titles in the Magnet of the 3 stories in this S.O.L. were respectively "Bunter the Footballer", "The Mad Musician of Greyfriars", and "Black Magic" which indicate that there was plenty of variety in this Penman series.

Though Danny did not know it then, S.O.L. No. 401, "Cock of the Walk" was to be the last St. Jim's story to feature in the S.O.L. It comprised a 4-story sub series, introducing a character named Bully Burkett which featured in the Gem early in 1930. It came from a long, long period in the Gem which was almost entirely given over to sub writers. It was sad that the last St. Jim's tale in the medium should have been a sub affair. Rookwood, of course, had seen its last S.O.L. story a month or two earlier. It indicates that they had pretty well run out of earlier St. Jim's and Rookwood stories for the Library. From now on, there would be 2 Greyfriars tales each month in the S.O.L. It makes one wonder whether, even if the paper shortage had not occurred, the days of the S.O.L. might have been numbered.

Actually, there were two splendid Gem pairs from Blue Cover days, which should have been used but were not. These were the Captain Mellish pair late 1912, and the Outram's "Strange Secret" pair from the summer of 1916. But at the A.P. they did not know their schools so well as we do now.

The film "Babes in Arms" was the first of a series of pictures starring Garland and Rooney in lively musicals - and M.G.M. was on a winning streak so far as box office went.

The Agatha Christie book, "Regatta Mystery" - published in America early in 1940 - was never published over here, oddly enough. It comprised a number of short stories - half a dozen Poirots, a couple of Miss Marple, and several previously unpublished shorts of Mr. Parker Pyne. The opening tale gave its title to the whole volume. However, all the tales except one turned up in this country in later years, in various collections of short stories. But "Yellow Iris", so far as I know, was never re-published, and this is not surprising a bit is a potted version of Christie's later full-length novel "Sparkling Cyanide".

A final thought back to the Libraries. It seemed that the S.O.L. had run out of St. Jim's and Rookwood tales. The supply of genuine tales of both schools was much smaller than that of Greyfriars. One wonders, idly, whether it was because they had run out of a supply of the more popular series that they decided to discontinue, earlier, the B.F.L. and change that Library to Bullseye Library and Knockout Library, with new yarns specially written for the new medium.

WATFORD BOOK FAIR. SATURDAY, 31st MARCH.

From 10.30 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. at Hartspring Suite, Hartspring Sports Centre, Park Avenue, Bushey, Watford. Two minutes from M1 junction 5. 25+ stands - books, magazines, ephemera. Admission free. W.E. Johns convention on same campus (Ticket entry in advance only). Enquiries - NORMAN WRIGHT (0923 32383) or JOHN TRENDLER (0923 31608).

I must confess that I never read *Puck* as a child, or come to that its obvious companion *The Sunbeam*. To me, the only coloured comics that really delighted me - after of course the nursery stage of *Chicks Own*, *Tiny Tots*, and *Little Bo-Beep*, were the Tiger Tim and the Bruin Boys group. *Rainbow*, *Tiger Tim's Weekly*, and *Playbox*.

Puck's colours always seemed a little duller, nor did the front page characters appeal to me in the slightest, though looking at some of them today, one can see how clever and skilfully drawn they were, Professor Radium drawn by Tom Wilkison. Dr. Jolliboys School, by Alex Akerbladhi (an Austrian who eventually died out in South Africa) as well as jovial Bert Brown's Angel and her Merry Playmates.

The first issue of *Puck* appeared as far back as July 30th 1904 priced one Penny. It was described as 'The New Humorous Paper for Home'. It also claimed to be the very first coloured comic paper, which was not strictly true. Seven years earlier in 1897 there was an aptly named *Coloured Comic* published by Trapps Holmes Ltd, at only half the price. *Puck* like all comics then catered for the adult field, when its contents included such grown-up serials as 'The Man with Weird Eyes' (A mystery of Paris) with other contributors from the Sexton Blake field such as Robert Murray, Norman Goddard, and David Goodwin. Paul Herring also wrote about 'Pickwick's Club'.

As the front page included 'The Comic Adventures of Oliver Twist and the Artful Dodger' it confirmed what I was once told, that the editor G.W. Cante was a great fan of Charles Dickens. Another unusual fact was that the Oliver Twist strip was drawn in the unmistakable style of Fred Bennet, before he became so prolific in the boys paper illustrator field. Later contributors to *Puck* included E.W. Hornung - the creator of Raffles.

The issue of *Puck* No. 11 left no doubt whatsoever that it was an adult paper, when they included a supplement entitled '*Puck Junior*' with several pages devoted speically for young people. This however was dropped in No. 16, when in my opinion the comic then gradually changed its format to the juvenile one we know so well. Issues of the First World War prove that this was so. Its front page had 'The Merry Pranks of Angel, Bertie, and their friends the Little Clowns' drawn by the jovial Bert Brown - the cockney doyen of all comic artists. Stories included 'Val Fox, the Boy Ventriloquist'; a well known and familiar title, 'Boys Will Be Boys' by Albert E. Bull, whose claim to fame was that he was the author of the famous 'Mabel' stories in Henderson's *Young Folks Tales*, whilst a school yarn of St. Cuthbert's was penned by 'Jack Devon', hiding the identity of Jack Lewis - otherwise 'Lewis Jackson' of Sexton Blake fame and The Master Mummer. This story incidentally was illustrated by Leonard Shields, the *Magnet* artist, who drew hundreds of similar pictures in nearly all the Amalgamated Press comics, his work always being in such demand.

VAL FOX

AND HIS FUNNY PETS.



Pat popped his head round the side of the set, and Sam Hammond gave a shout of laughter.

History was made on the 15th May 1920, when the first real adventure strip in an English comic appeared. Entitled 'Rob the Rover' it was enormously popular running right until the last issue in 1940. Drawn by Walter Booth, assisted by Stanley White, it featured also Captain May and Dorothy in world wide adventures serialised with gripping excitement awaiting the reader until next week's instalment.

Reverting to Angel and her Playmates (the Bertie Brown strip) 1925 saw them joined by some comic animals who seemed to have been lifted out of *The Rainbow*: Bert Bruin, Eddy Elephant, Olly Ostrich, plus two penguins Popsy and Pansy - maybe due to the great popularity of *The Daily Mirror* strip, Pip, Squeak, and Wilfred. Hereby lies a story, as up to this date *Puck* had been classed as The King of Comics. Such was the enormous popularity of editor Bill Fisher's Tiger Tim group, that their sales were then far greater, with the *Rainbow* especially being the best seller.

"Feature comic animals, and you cannot go wrong" a coloured-comic editor once told me, so consequently the *Puck* editor followed suit as in later issues one found Dr. Jolliboys School, as well as Jolly Jinks in Jungle-Land with Charlie Crock.

Reg. Perrott (who died so young) brought more fame to *Puck* in 1937 with his brilliant serial *The Golden Arrow*. Using a more modern technique of having different size panels (from the all same size version) his drawings were really brilliant, featuring Texas Ranger, and Johnny and

Silver Moon, who were fighting hostile Indians, falling into deep streams where rotten rope bridges gave way, as well as diving into rapids from steep cliffs. They were just as thrilling as any cowboy serial in the cinema!

Every Tuesday—PUCK—Price Twopence.

ROB THE ROVER.



It should be said that *Puck* had no less than five different picture serials in the thirties, more than any other comic. Yet despite all this the circulation just got lower and lower, whilst *Sunbeam's* (its companion's) circulation was quite healthy. It was no surprise then that with the sudden acute paper shortage in World War Two *Puck* was the first to go, being Amalgamated into *Sunbeam*, after 1867 issues and dated May 11th, 1940.

Its last issue featured on the front cover Edwin and Edgar The Terrible Twins, who were the double in more ways than one of the Katzenjammer Kids (Cats Meowe). Val Fox was still there and also, as mentioned earlier, Rob the Rover. Another long strip was present starring Rin-Tin-Tin, who had appeared in so many films and was originally a German guard dog. I have a feeling that there were about six dogs in all through the years, including a bitch! A typical story also featured was 'Three Evacuees at Periwinkle Farm', which today would bring back great nostalgic memories to many.

Some features were carried on into *Sunbeam* (which had a free glider the following week) such as Rob the Rover and Val Fox, but most unfortunately *Sunbeam* and *Puck* only lasted two issues before the giant axe that killed off so many of our greatly loved papers fell even harder. Walter Purchase, who edited both in later years, must have shed a tear, when two great comics that had entertained millions in their day simply went into oblivion. But they are greatly remembered by many of us half a century later.

"THE GREYFRIARS TREASURE SEEKERS" (Part Three)

Chroniced by Leslie Rowley

"That's Bunter's bleat."

"The bleating of the ridiculous Bunter is terrific", agreed Inky. "Perhapsfully he has met with the ludicrous Pon and Co. and they are about to rag him!"

Already the dusky junior and the others were racing towards the sounds of those terrified yells. There was a possibility that Inky was right and, if Pon & Co. were up to their little games, they had to be taught a lesson.

"Help! He's got a gun! Keep off, you beast!"

Really, it was extremely unlikely that the elegant Pon would have a gun and be threatening the fat Owl. There must be some more urgent cause for his terrified yells.

Bunter was not that difficult to locate. His cries had carried far and wide but, on a cold and dusky January afternoon, there would not normally have been many ears to hear! Now there were eight pairs of ears, and eight pairs of legs soon brought their owners to a small clearing in which stood the fat and petrified figure of W.G. Bunter! He was still yelling when the Removites arrived on the scene! The fat Removite stood, with his back to a tree, shaking like a jelly.

"What's that fat pig yelling for?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"I reckon he could have been heard in Lantham", opined Robert Cherry.

"Canterbury, more likely", suggested Johnny Bull.

"Yes, Bunter, what's all the din for", demanded Harry Wharton. "What are you doing here, anyway?"

Answer came there none from the terror-stricken Removite, but he managed to point a fat finger in the direction of a sturdy oak, the vast trunk of which was already partly shrouded in the early dusk. The eight fellows followed the direction of that podgy finger. They became aware of the slim, dark figure of the man who was leaning nonchalantly against the tree.

"Good afternoon, young gentlemen", came the suave tones of James Soames. "I fear that Master Bunter became over-excited when I touched him on the shoulder. Really, it was not my intention to occasion him any alarm. I wished merely to enquire after the well-being of your goodselves. It is some time since we last met. Two or, possibly, three years!"

"And what have you been doing in that time", enquired the Bounder with a sneer, "Two or, possibly, three years?"

"I should imagine that a school such as Greyfriars would have a pretty extensive curriculum, it seems a pity that the Board of Governors have not seen fit to include instruction in good manners. Fortunately, I have not been subject to the advantages of a public school education."

"If you had had such an education, you might have learned that honesty was the best policy", retorted the Bounder, angrily, "and so kept your hands from picking and stealing!"

"It must be a refreshing but, nevertheless, hypocritical experience for you, Master Herbert, to point out the path of virtue to others!" There was an added mocking deference to Soames's voice as he continued. "I see that the company is blessed by a member of the aristocracy", he turned and bowed theatrically to Lord Mauleverer. "It does one good to stand in the presence of a gentleman whose style and title are not dependent on the peculiarities of the stockbroking world. And now, young gentlemen, I feel I must reluctantly take my leave of you. It has, I trust, been as much pleasure to you as it has been to me for us to meet once more."

"Hold on, Soames! Stay where you are! You are not leaving here until you've explained why you scared Bunter with a gun and, if we are not satisfied, we will see what you have to say to Inspector Grimes at Courtfield police station!"

"All I did was touch that fat fool on the shoulder. I have no gun in my possession with which to threaten him. If you take me before the police, you will be in trouble for wasting their time ----"

"I say you fellows, Soames is telling fibs." As is customary with those who are economical with the truth themselves, Bunter was most indignant at lying in others. "I definitely saw a gun in his hand, and he's probably got a dagger in his pocket."

Wharton looked hard at the fat Owl. He knew his Bunter! Bunter could never tell a story without a lot of superfluous embellishment. Bunter was a staunch follower of the American cinema and, especially the more lurid gangster films. The Courtfield inspector would not take kindly to any unsupported nonsense from a schoolboy such as Bunter, Wharton turned to Soames.

"What business brought you here, anyway" he demanded from that gentleman.

"That is a matter which is no concern of yours", retorted Soames. "Who are you to question a member of the public who is taking a walk in the countryside? And now, if you have finished, I will pass on my way." Soames lifted his hat in mock salutation, and turned to go.

"Come on you fellows, let's help that rascal on his way. We know from past experience that he's up to no good. Let's give him a hint of what to expect if we find him scaring the life out of helpless duffer again!"

James Soames had already turned his back on the Greyfriars men. He had intended leaving the scene with the suave carriage of a former valet, but that intention was not to be realised. It was the Bounder who got in first. Smith felt that he had an old score to pay against the villain for what had happened in the past. The Bounder would have liked to have followed that kick up with another, but Soames had already accelerated his departure and the other fellows were hard put to continue the action before the man was lost amongst the shadows and the trees. Over the increasing distance came his voice heavy with threat and venom.

"You have not seen the last of me, and things will be very different when we meet again!"

The fellows paused for a moment in the silence that followed, and when that silence was broken it was by a fat voice reminding them that tea-time was

approaching. They made their way back through the woods to the School, where Harry Wharton left them to go and report their encounter with Soames to Henry Samuel Quelch. The Remove master's face became serious as he listened to his Head Boy.

"I will have a word with Inspector Grimes, so that the police are aware that this man is in the neighbourhood. Perhaps they will persuade Soames to stay away from the area, but I cannot emphasise too strongly that you and the others must avoid all encounters with him. Although there appears to be no connection between your meeting with Soames and your visit to the Priory ruins, it would be adviseable for any future visit to be in broad daylight!"

Harry Wharton had tactfully made no mention of the booting of Soames in his report to Quelch. He did not regret lending his own foot to that enterprise and, as he made his way back down Masters' passage, Wharton wished that he had been able to land his boot more times on the elegant trousers of their enemy from the past.

Mauleverer quietly let himself into the School Chapel the following day. He had obtained permission for his visit from his form master, and had borrowed a pair of folding steps from Gosling's store without bothering their crusty old custodian. Far above him rose the hammerbeam rafters, their time-blackened oak dark against the white of the ceiling they supported. The schoolboy earl walked silently past the serried ranks of pews, the wood of many bearing the initials of Greyfriars men, past and present, probably carved during the passage of some overlong sermon. Like many such places, the chapel was a meeting place of history, faith and beauty, and blessed with an elusive atmosphere of its own.

The stained glass window that Mauly sought formed a single panel which was framed in the traditional tracery of the sixteenth century. It was not a large window, approximately four and a half feet in height and two and a half feet in width. Its main subject was a figure in grey habit. Prior Anselm, if it was he, was depicted with his hands outstretched as though he was bestowing a blessing on an unseen congregation. From below the hem of his habit, one sandal-encased foot appeared at odds with its fellow which bore no sandal at all. Both feet rested upon a paved floor, the uneven squares of which were outlined in blue, the cobalt hue of which served to relieve the sombre appearance of the solitary figure. Behind the prior stood a scriptorium, on the sloping surface of which lay a parchment which the good man had probably been studying. The background was a wall of flint and stone into which was set a window, its tracery bereft of any sign of glass.

Mauleverer erected the steps, mounted them and, taking from his pocket a small but expensive camera, took several shots of the window before him. The stern glance of the prior gazed back at the Removite with unseeing eyes of coloured glass. His task over, Mauleverer folded the steps, pocketed his camera and prepared to leave the chapel. Before he did so, he looked once more at that austere countenance.

"Thanks, old bean, I know that you have a message or a warning for us. Help a chap to understand what you've wanted all these years!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

A POINT OF VIEW

by Edward Rake

Over the years I have read many times that the fascination of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood, etc. for young readers of the old school story papers was due to the fact that a vast number of these readers longed to belong to a big public school. They dreamed of being pupils at the kind of school Charles Hamilton wrote about so entertainingly and successfully.

Well, that may be so, but I know that as a young boy I had no dreams of residing at Greyfriars or any of the other famous fictional schools.

The Hamilton boys fascinated me then, and still do, because of their natures, their personalities. For instance there was the ice-cold nerve and tremendous confidence of the Bounder. The cheery optimism and good-natured hilarity of Bob Cherry. The sober common sense and conscientiousness of Harry Wharton. And so on.

These characters had to have a background, or a backcloth if you like, to their comedies and dramas and the Hamilton schools provided just that.

It was the way in which the Hamilton fellows reacted to the problems, pleasures and pains of their scholastic environment that I found, and still find, so engrossing. Just one brief example. The Bounder was a born rebel. He hated discipline and being **made** to do anything. The way he reacted to the strict discipline of school-life at Greyfriars made such enjoyable stories in the Magnet.

No, I never hankered after life at a public school but I'm very glad to have met, in my own youth, the Hamilton boys who did experience that kind of life. And their stories delight me still.

CLIFF HOUSE DIARY - March 1990

(edited by BARBARA REDFERN
and MARGERY WOODS)

Doesn't it still seem strange to be dating our papers and letters with 1990? We're getting used to it, of course, except for Bessie, who had just got used to 1989, but not to the sense of time passing and bringing a new century over the horizon. Perhaps this could be causing a new curve in the climatic graph, as well as the so-called greenhouse effect. Cliff House has gone "green" with great enthusiasm, although Bessie's idea of what constitutes a suitable case for recycling has not met with approval --- Miss Bullivant was not impressed when Bessie decided that her maths books and exam prep notes would be of more value to waste-paper collection than to Bessie's scholastic achievements!

Incidentally, our fat one's diet didn't last long --- to the second day of term, to be precise.



Cliff House's roof is still holding firm against the fearsome gales we've had lately. Yesterday, even Clara had to admit that it was too wild for games practice. Instead we had an informal meeting to discuss the end of term play and whether we were going to do one this year. Afterwards we lingered round a gorgeous fire in the Common-room while the gale blustered against the windows and tore at the ancient walls. It was really wuthering right into the school, and Bessie, having been sent with a note to a mistress's study, had to come back through Great Hall by herself, just as darkness was falling and the creepy shadows were lurking in every niche and cranney. She came charging into the room, almost gibbering with fright, crying that she'd seen a ghost in Great Hall, on the stairs. We all know Fatima's ghosts, but she swore she'd seen the ghost of John Ogilvie appear on the stairs. He was our famous Loyalist who had to flee from the Roundheads and whose long lost treasure was discovered a few years ago after Dolly Jobling found an ancient chart and the Fourth actually found the treasure in a secret place in the old Clock Tower.

This began a real nostalgia session round the fire. We watched the rosy flames and recalled days of fun with dear chums now departed for other shores or other schools. Dolly, of course, our Toffee Queen, and the aristocratic Augusta, Phyllis Howell, Annabel Hichens, and Philippa Derwent, affectionately known as Flap.

"Remember that art exhibition --- before Babs discovered she was an artist?" recalled Mabs. "You didn't like drawing in those days", she teased, "and Philippa and Phyllis were our artistic stars, until you saw the light, like a slow developer", Mabs added affectionately.

Suddenly Clara was in stitches. "That was the time when Bessie was going to paint the Tuck Shop. And Aunty Jones nearly had forty fits --- she hadn't heard about the art exhibition lark. She imagined Bessie armed with paint pot and brush sloshing paint all over the old beams and panelling."

"Then Bessie said she had permission from Primmy", giggled Mabs.

"Oh, Aunty Jones' face!" chortled Clara. "And then Bess said she was going to paint the doughnuts and jam tarts as well!"

"Hilarious!" sighed Jemima, weak with mirth.

"Then Bess went hunting for canvas and paints and raided some motor oil from the garage because it was green, and demanded some red oil from Piper, the kind he used to fill the red rear lamps!" hooted Clara. "But Bess gave up the idea and decided to paint Primmy in oils instead, and managed to do that quite literally when she spilt her "oil paints" over Primmy's carpet and Primmy herself."

"That was the end of Bessie's aspirations in the art world!"

"And with Bessie's great talent debarred from the exhibition Philippa won first prize."

"Oh, happy days!"

But our Bess didn't look very happy. She was still scared after her real or imagined ghost sighting in Great Hall, which, we have to admit, is a spooky place at night. Janet nudged the Duffer: "Perhaps John Ogilvie has come back to claim his treasure and found the secret passage from Great Hall has been sealed up."

"No no, methinks not." Jemima shook her head, entering into the teasing of poor Bess. "That would not worry his ancient nibs, y'know. Our honoured ancestral dweller is now as all true spooks: transparent, knowing no earthly barriers, fair Bess, able to materialise or de-materialise at will." Jemima gave a sepulchral sigh. "The poor man is probably homesick and wondering what this fair fat damsel is doing in his ancestral abode, what?"

"I say---are there really secret passages in the school?"

The speaker was Julia Frankland, our rather strange new girl. None of us knew how long she had been hovering there behind our circle. Now she sought to move in, and Marjorie, always good-natured, shifted along on her cushion to make room for the newcomer. There was no shortage of offers to impart the more intriguing bits of the school's history, and she listened intently, her features sculpted attractively by the rose-amber glow of the flames.

"And there's a secret passage from the Clock Tower vaults that goes right under the fields to that old house overlooking the sea", exclaimed Janet.

"Is that Cliff Top Manor?" asked Julia casually.

"Yes, it's just been bought by some fabulously wealthy tycoon." For the first time Diana Royston-Clarke spoke lazily. "He's something of an art expert, I hear", she added.

"Really", said Julia, without much show of interest. "Tell me more about the secret passages, girls."

"Well, nobody's ever really mapped them all. It's said there is a warren of them if one could find them, what with the smuggling in olden days, and the monastery and the Reformation when they had all those hiding places."

"Fascinating", breathed Julia, showing more animation.

"Alas", said Mabs, "the ones we know about are all either sealed up or out of bounds. Every so often hidden places come to light during alterations or repairs, when the---"

Suddenly she caught her breath. We all did, frozen by the sheer penetrating roar of a blast from the elements without. We felt the room quiver around us, and the fire spurted flame and billowed smoke and sparks into the room. Mabs seized the big fire-guard and thrust it in place, while some of us rushed to the window and drew back the curtains.

We saw lightning split the sky and heard the most dreadful rending crash from somewhere in the darkened grounds.

We heard activity below as doors opened and girls cried in scared tones, wondering what was happening. Clara and Janet rushed to the door and we all tore down the corridor and made for the stairs. Then we heard Miss Bullivant's stentorian voice:

"It's the Clock Tower! The roof has gone!"

" DENISE 'S DIARY "

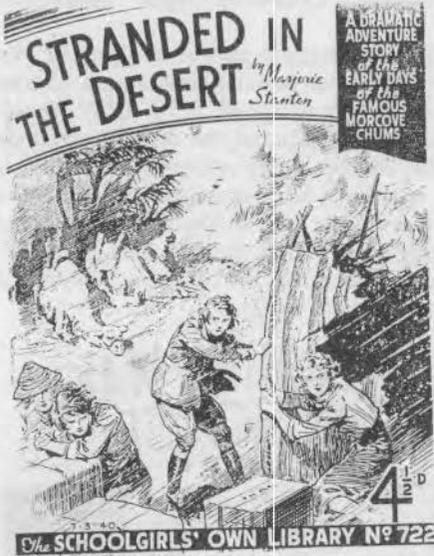
MARCH 1940

by Dennis L. Bird

Another month of "phoney war", another month of bitter weather. Almost nothing happened. The war between Finland and Russia ended with an uneasy treaty on March 12. Four days later the Luftwaffe bombed Britain's naval base at Scapa Flow, and we retaliated with an attack on German airfields. That was about all.

An air of normality prevailed for us schoolchildren. Our weekly papers appeared as usual, and the four SGOL books came out on time on March 7. One I no longer have: Joan Inglesant's "At School to Right a Wrong" (no. 720). It was specially written for the Library, and I have no recollection of it except that it

seemed a blend of the same author's "On Secret Service at School" (No. 694) and Renee Frazer's "The Girl Who Searched in Secret" (No. 691). Who, I wonder, was Joan Inglesant?



The Morcove book was No. 722, "Stranded in the Desert", and was another of Betty Barton & Co's visits to exotic places abroad. It is of especial interest in that it shows Naomer Nakara in a different light - not just as part of a comedy duo with Paula Creel, but in her own right as Her Serene Highness the Queen of Nakara. On impulse, she decides to visit her African kingdom, taking her chums with her for a holiday. Rose of the Desert comes over to act as her attendant; she was an old acquaintance of Morcove's. The girls' happy anticipation is disturbed by a warning note on Naomer's pillow: "Those who go to Nakara may never return!" But the visit goes ahead as planned, and Queen Naomer receives a right royal welcome to her capital city, remote in the midst of the North African desert. Beneath the surface, however, all is not well. Plots are afoot, and the Nakarans are persuaded that the English girls are a bad influence on their Queen. The Morcovians must be banished! They set out for home in a camel train, accompanied by the British Resident and his wife, and undergo many ordeals, including an attack by desert tribesmen, and a sandstorm. In the end, of course, all comes right; the plotters against Naomer are exposed, and the young Queen is able to return to Morcove with her friends. (Surely unwise of her to leave her country after such unrest?)

No. 723, Doris Leslie's "Girl Rider of the Blue Hills", was a vigorous tale of cattle-rustlers in Texas, who are eventually beaten by plucky rancher's daughter Fay Thornton. It was, incidentally, the only SGOL book I ever saw with illustrations in the text: some diagrams showing different branding marks on cattle.

The Hilda Richards adventure was one of John Wheway's very best: "The Mischief-Maker of Cliff House" (No. 721). Never can there have been a cleverer or more charming young villain at the famous school than the 14-year-old Thelma

Fielding. The story has some particular points worthy of note. For once, it can be dated quite precisely: just after "The Jubilee", which must be the May 1935 celebrations of the 25-year reign of King George V. And we learn a little of Cliff House's history - it was founded in 1879. (Perhaps "Collectors' Digest" should have had a centenary issue in 1979?)

The plot revolves around one of the school's original pupils, 68-year-old Miss Dorothy Fielding, who has spent most of her life in Jamaica amassing a fortune. Now, back in her home town of Courtfield, she wants to spend it on Cliff House - "to make it the most famous, the most well-equipped, and the most luxuriously-appointed school in the British Isles." But she has some relatives - her nephew Leopold Fielding and his three daughters - who think her money should be spent on them. The resourceful Thelma suggests that she be sent to the school as a pupil under the assumed name of Thelma Warrington, and that she should then create a series of incidents which will convince Miss Fielding that the school is unworthy of her generosity. Perhaps her family would then benefit instead.

Thelma's plans work brilliantly. Carefully-engineered mishaps and disasters blacken the school's name - and no one suspects the pretty, tactful, friendly new girl. But then unpopular Lydia Crossendale finds out - and conveniently has an accident and loses her memory. Later, Barbara Redfern becomes suspicious, but it is actually Bessie Bunter who entirely unwittingly brings about the schemer's downfall. Thelma is ignominiously expelled, but goes gallantly to her doom. She takes leave of her Nemesis: "Bessie, the blunderer! Bessie, the duffer! You've licked me. You robbed me of a fortune. Well, there it is, all in the game! And what a game it is!" John Wheway himself cannot conceal his liking for Thelma despite her misdeeds; he says "One or two girls there would have liked to add a small cheer for Thelma Warrington", and he entitles his final chapter "A Sport to the Last".

A curious footnote: the scene featured on the cover of SGOL 721 does not appear in the story; perhaps it was in the original weekly version?

NOTE. Danny was right and I was wrong! Keen-eyed readers of this column will have noticed from the illustrations that - as Danny's Diary recorded two months ago - it was in January 1940 that the price of the Amalgamated Press's various Libraries went up to 4/2d, not in February as I wrote last time.



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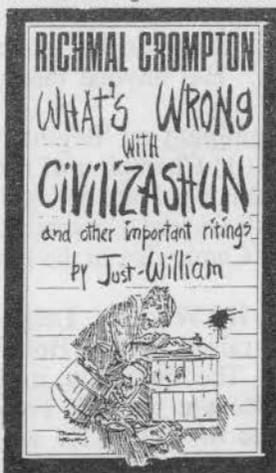
In this collection of articles 'by William', we have his forthright views on education ('at present it is all wrong. You've only got to look at the grown-ups round you to see that'), holidays ('there's far too few of them'), Latin ('I don't wonder the Latin people have all died off, having to speak a language like that'), careers ('pirates are a noble and glorious career') and, of course, civilizashun.

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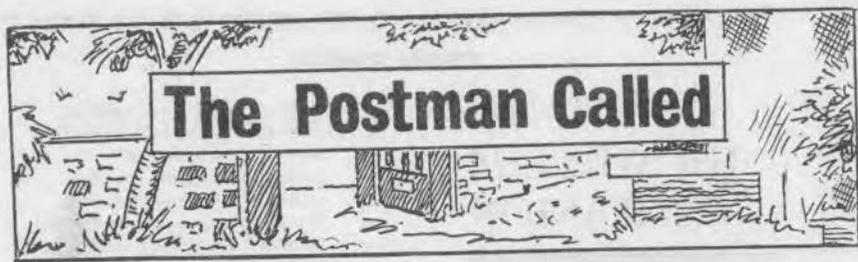


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EDWARD BALDOCK, Cambridge: What memories were conjured up by the article by H. Heath (Feb. C.D.). How well I remember those salmon coloured 'Magnets' to which he refers. I believe I rather resented the change of colour at the time. Against the dreadful fact that the old paper was soon to disappear forever how trivial can one become? I recall my Mother carefully preserving these later copies in a drawer against my return on infrequent weekend leave - when I would lose myself for a brief hour or so and forget the hectic world of wartime Britain with its many urgencies and lose myself in the peaceful retreats of Friardale and Courtfield with those fellows who had been boon companions since a time which seems now to have existed in some other dimension.

PHILIP HOBSON, Woodhall Spa: Were the short Greyfriars stories which appeared in the *Comet* specially written by Frank Richards for that paper? It would be interesting to have a volume of Greyfriars short stories. Has anyone thought of reproducing the *Comet* stories in book form?

Comment on 'Beginnings of the Champion' in the C.D. Annual (see page 101) Champion of the River (issue 10): Ruskin College which is at Oxford is a private college for Trades Union members and has nothing to do with Oxford University, so a student there could not row for Oxford versus Cambridge in the Boat Race!

LEN HAWKEY, Leigh-on-Sea: Just a 'quickie' in response to the query raised by Mr. Holman on 'The Art of St. Frank's' in the January C.D. The unknown 'middle chap' was Christopher Gifford Ambler (b.1886) who drew St. Frank's from No. 76 (1st New Series) in 1927 until the end of 1929. He was arguably the most important of those who depicted Edwy Searles Brooks' characters, although school stories were not really his metier, and how he landed the job, who knows? True, he had drawn in many magazines since around 1919: *The Popular*, *Boys Friend*, *Chums*, *Boys Own Paper*, *Little Folks*, *Young Britain*, etc., plus many Annuals. Usually these were for adventure stories set in 'furrin parts', and it was as an animal artist that he excelled. One leading publisher claimed him to be 'the natural successor to Cecil Aldin'. Many books were illustrated by him, including a number which he wrote

himself, e.g. *Maxims of Marquis* (1937) and *Smiler* (1946). He was still at work in the 1950s, but must I suppose have left us long since. As to who depicted Nipper and his chums best, well you have only to look at the 19 *Monster Libraries*. J.H. VALDA's work is in a class of its own and, in my opinion, those 38 illustrations (covers plus title pages) best exemplify Brooks' school and characters. What a pity he didn't take over permanently in the *Nelson Lee*!

C.M. KELLY, Sheffield: I have a pen and ink original drawing by Chapman, bought from the artist thirty years ago, which I have been unable to trace among the stories. The title pencilled on top is 'The Haunted House at Hovingham', and the scene shows a guilty butler cringing before the accusing finger of Wharton, while his friends laugh in the background. I wonder whether any C.D. reader can identify for me the *Magnet* or other paper in which this picture was printed.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: There was a good response to Don Webster's recent letter about the occupants of the various St. Jim's studies, etc. As well as Geoff Lardner, whose letter is reproduced below, John Connolly of Tadworth wrote to us with this information (plus the fact that Hammond, Gibbon and Scrope occupied Study 5 in the Shell), while Mark Taha of London mentioned that a list of Fourth Form studies and occupants appeared in the *Gem* in 1939 in Jack Blake's column).

GEOFF LARDNER, Littledean: The information Don Webster is seeking about St. Jim's study occupancy, etc., can all be found in the 1921 Holiday Annual, which contains a detailed Who's Who for each of St. Jim's, Greyfriars and Rookwood. Although 1921 was only about one-third of the way through the *Gem* and *Magnet* years, the characters, groupings, and so on were pretty well settled by then. Unfortunately the original 1921 H.A. is, I believe, the rarest, while the Howard Baker facsimile appears to be out of print. In answer to his specific questions, Grundy, Wilkins and Gunn occupy Study No. 3, Noble, Glyn and Dane No. 11, Racke and Crooke No. 7. In the Fourth, Reilly, Kerruish and Hammond are in No. 5 and Trimble is in No. 2 with Mellish. (What a pair!) Julian is shown as being in No. 6. Since he follows Herries in the form list I think it likely that the compositor read off the wrong line and the slip didn't get picked up in proof-reading. Would he not also have been a member of Study No. 5? The New House members of the Shell are Clampe, French, Jimson and Thompson.

BILL LOFTS (London): In answer to Ray Hopkins (Feb. C.D.) Clive Bancroft was a nom-de-plume of Stanley Edward Austin, who also used the name of 'Olive Bancroft' for his output of girls stories. He also used the 'Sheila Austin' peri-name. Austin was an Eastender born at Shoreditch

1890, and died at Hackney aged 67 in 1957. He was a really clever substitute writer of Greyfriars/St. Jim's, and Rookwood, being easily the best in the view of the Companion Papers editor C.M. Down. Because of this he was entrusted with long series. Austin also penned a number of Cliff House stories in the Schoolgirl - at least a dozen, with a number of others possibly from his pen.

As far as records go "Wallace Carr" was that author's real name. From some source was gleaned the information that he was born and educated at Paddington.

(Editor's Note: It is interesting to learn that Clive Bancroft is the same author as Stanley (and Sheila) Austin. He was certainly an excellent writer of truly gripping tales.)

MARK TAHA (London): In reply to Norman Wright, "The Rival Schoolmasters" was indeed an abridged version of a First World War story, but the original story, which I think was No. 365, "Herr Schneider's Secret", was an original Hamilton. Reading the reprint, I was struck by the fact that, while Herr Schneider spoke of "Mein Kaiser" in 1915, he didn't speak of "Mein Fuhrer" in 1940. By the way-regarding the St. Jim's "Triumph" stories, does anybody know which idiot at the Amalgamated Press changed the name of George Alfred Grundy to Norman Leonard Parker, and why?

TO MR. JAMES HODGE (alias Semaj Egdoh)

Dear Mr. Hodge,

With reference to your letter in the February C.D., it sounds as if you are almost getting ready to emigrate, but I am happy to tell you now that you are quite safe.

I have had a word with Coker on your behalf, and he said (a trifle pompously) "Well, I never was a chap to bear a grudge, I have had my say, and now I am prepared to forget it". So, Mr. Hodge, there is no need for you to hide away, or to change your name.

All is forgiven.

Best Wishes from Irene Radford.

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REVIEWS BY MARY CADOGAN

BLAZERS, BADGES & BOATERS, by Alexander Davidson (Scope Books £12.95).

Although the dust jacket of this extremely interesting book describes it as 'A Pictorial History of School Uniform', it is much more than that. Alexander Davidson has done meticulous research into school uniforms, which, as he comments, are so popular with the British, and the illustrations are complemented by a narrative which gives rich insights into many aspects of both boarding and day-school life. Girls clothes as well as those of boys are included. (I wish the pictures had shown some of those broad-brimmed velour and panama hats which were so much in evidence at my school and others like it during the 1930s.) There are plenty of boaters, on both male and female heads, as well as toppers for boys and tammies for girls. Caps are shown in a variety of shapes and sizes, worn in every possible way except perhaps at the wonderfully askew angle adopted by Richmal Crompton's William!

The author points out many of the social implications of uniforms - the identifying links with peer groups, the distinguishing of one school from another, and of course the place in a school hierarchy which can be made clear from variations in the uniform, or in the way in which it is worn. He gives examples of the latter at real-life public schools (I rather like a fictional illustration of the hierarchical aspects of uniform from Angela Brazil, when a senior reprimands a would-be unorthodox younger girl: 'Only seniors may wear their sailors on the backs of their heads. It's a strict point of school etiquette. You may jam on your hockey cap as you like, but not your sailor.'). Andrew Davidson makes good use of quotations from popular fiction (Greyfriars gets a look in, with Bunter's unorthodox bags spotlighted), and pictures of a long ago cricketing tennis or hockey-playing groups in a variety of hats and blazers are quite movingly evocative.

I don't think that I agree with all of the author's assessments but these make stimulating reading. He seems to favour the view that those who like uniforms favour psychological conformity. My own view as a child, despite periodic resentment of navy-blue serge gymslips, was that it was good for all of us, from scholarship girls like myself to fee-paying daughters of the rich, to wear similar garb. Otherwise the girls from hard-up homes would have been made to appear pretty small fry in, say, cheap no-nonsense gingham whilst those from posher backgrounds would be encased in silks with frills and furbelows.



A 20th century pupil from Calf's School, London SE12 meeting his 17th century counterpart in an imaginative drawing by C.J. Folkard.

John Rae, a former Head Master of Westminster, who provides an informative introduction to the book, succinctly sums up our attitudes towards the wearing of uniform by children: 'The debate about school uniform is full of paradoxes. I suspect the British will always be ambivalent, not sure whether uniform encourages positive attitudes or dull conformity, humility or arrogance, equality or social pretension. Which is why it remains such an intriguing subject.' It has now produced an appropriately intriguing book.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF HERCULE POIROT by Anne Hart (Pavilion £14.95)

As we are being reminded by the media, Richmal Crompton is not the only author of popular fiction whose centenary is to be celebrated this year. Agatha Christie was also born one hundred years ago, and to mark the occasion Anne Hart has followed up her well received 'biography' of Miss Marple with one of the moustache-twirling, dapper little Belgian sleuth, Hercule Poirot. Everything about him has been explored, from his continental family background to his association with his friend and the chronicler of his exploits, Captain Arthur Hastings, O.B.E.; from his domestic habits to his expeditionary exploits and attitudes. There are of course also some interesting vignettes of his impressively efficient secretary, Felicity Lemon who, 'sublimely incurious by nature' prefers 'typing Poirot's letters beautifully and filing his papers flawlessly' to being wrested away from the office by him to do some sleuthing (such as interviewing a fishmonger!). This very readable account of Poirot's methods and achievements is supplemented by over twenty pages of bibliographical information.

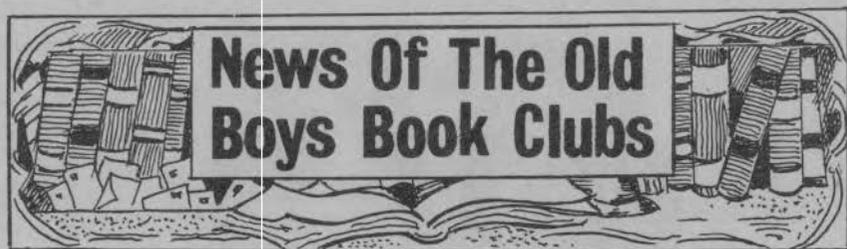
PENGUIN CLASSIC CRIME SERIES (£3.99 each)

I have thoroughly enjoyed two more riveting reprints in this series (from 1928 and 1941 respectively): *The White Cottage Mystery* by Margery Allingham and *The Silk Stocking Murders* by Anthony Berkeley. A special interest about the Allingham book is that *The White Cottage Mystery*, her first detective story, was for several decades unavailable in book form. Originally published as a serial in the *Daily*

Express, it was edited after the author's death by her sister Joyce into an appropriate form for book publication in 1974.

THE SCHOOL OF ENGLISH MURDER by Ruth Dudley Edwards (Gollancz £12.95)

Still in the sleuthing sphere, I should mention one of the funniest and most gripping stories which I've come across for some time. Ruth Dudley Edwards' reluctant ex-Civil Service detective, Robert Amiss, had already been the hero (or anti-hero) of *Corridors of Death* and *The Saint Valentine's Day Murders*. He surpasses himself in *The School of English Murder* when he has to assume the role of a Cad-about-Town in order to investigate murky happenings at a London language school, which has managed to acquire a particularly hedonistic and obnoxious group of foreign students. Bizarre and baffling characters and circumstances abound, and the mystery remains unravelable until very near the end.



LONDON O.B.B.C.

The new chairman, Brian Doyle, welcomed the 19 members present to the February 1990 meeting at Chingford. Rev. Arthur Bruning gave a talk on Greyfriars, which culminated in a very funny reading from the 1921 Holiday Annual, concerning Bunter hiring a butler for the day!

Bill Bradford's Memory Lane took us back to February 1970 and the meeting at 27 Archdale Road. Next came Don Webster's quiz on Christian names of pupils and masters from the companion papers. Joint winners with a maximum score of 20 were Eric Lawrence and Mark Taha. Mark then gave us a reading from RIGHT HO, JEEVES, which centered on the character of Gussy Fink-Nottle.

Finally, Tony Potts gave a talk regarding religious instruction at Greyfriars. A discussion followed concerning Hamilton's views on this topic. Incidentally, Tony and Audrey Potts recently returned from a holiday in Gibraltar where they discovered a restaurant called Bunters. Amongst the items on the menu was a cocktail known as BUNTER'S BLASTER!

Next meeting at Ealing Liberal Hall on the second Sunday in March.

GRAHAM BRUTON

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

At our February meeting Mike Parsons, of Northern Library Services, was our guest once again for an evening of practical information concerning the preservation and repair of books. Mike presented a Book Maintenance Workshop: he had asked

members to bring along books that needed some repair. For almost two hours, he enthralled and entertained us as he worked on some minor repairs showing us all the archival materials available, and the simple ways in which they could be applied to produce a first class repair. Some books may be of little monetary value, but of sentimental value to the owner, and, although the cost of repair may outweigh the cost of the book, it was a pleasure to see a volume take on a new lease of life.

Our 16 members present thought the presentation was of immense value. They felt that they had learned a great deal. It was obvious from the amount of repair material purchased at the meeting that a number of members would be spending some painstaking but very rewarding hours on maintenance work on their books!

Very little time was available for the business section of the meeting, but it was felt everything was in hand and could be left over to the next meeting on 10th March. On the 24th March, we shall be having our informal dinner at 8.00 p.m. at The Stansfield Arms, Apperley Bridge - between Leeds and Bradford. This venue has proved very popular, and we welcome anyone who would like to join us that evening.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR



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