

# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

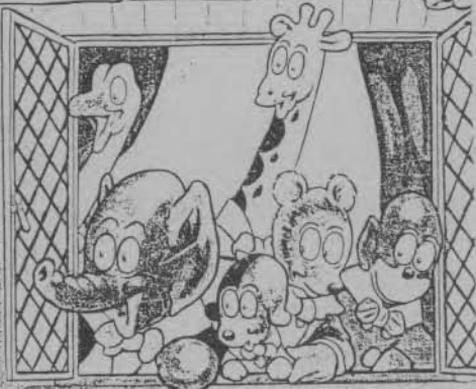
VOLUME 44

SEPTEMBER 1990

No. 525

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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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## Between Friends



## IT'S ANNUAL TIME AGAIN...

You will see from our cover this month that I have Annuals in mind; once again the time has come to begin preparations in earnest for this year's C.D. Annual. I have, in fact, already received a large and fascinating selection of articles. There is still space for more, so I look forward to receiving readers' further contributions. Looking through the old papers, I see that September seems always to have been the month for publishers to announce the publication of their respective annuals, so, in drawing your attention to the enclosed order form, we are continuing this Autumn-anticipation-of-Christmas tradition.

You will see that I have, as in previous years, endeavoured to keep the price of the Annual down, despite rising printing and paper costs. Your early completion and return of the order form helps me to plan production and distribution, and would be much appreciated. Also, as always, your small ads,

covering your 'sales', 'wants' and greetings to fellow hobbyists, help to cover the Annual's production costs, as well as adding considerably to its interest.

In next month's C.D. I shall be 'trailing' some of the delights which this year's Annual will offer. I feel confident that you will find the 1990 edition as richly nostalgic, varied and intriguing as its predecessors!

## MORE WILLIAM...

Just a reminder in this Richmal Crompton centenary year that THE WORLD OF WILLIAM exhibition at the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood in London is now running. It continues to the end of October, and Just William fans will find a visit extremely rewarding. A wonderful variety of William-iana has been assembled and, as always at the Bethnal Green Museum, most imaginatively and excitingly displayed. It is also a pleasure to announce that the National Film Theatre will be having a William film weekend: on 22nd September they will be showing JUST WILLIAM, the first (1939) movie to star Richmal's colourful character and, on the 23rd, JUST WILLIAM'S LUCK, which was made in 1947. Each film will be followed by a videotape from the 1977 Thames Television series, featuring Adrian Dannatt, Diana Dors and Bonnie Langford. I understand that tickets are generally available only to members of the N.F.T. but the programme **does** state that non-members are admitted if accompanied by a child! Perhaps I shall see some of you there.

MARY CADOGAN

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## OBITUARY

C.D. reader John Lewis has conveyed to us the sad news of the passing of Thomas Arnold Johnson of Neston Cheshire. Mr. Johnson will be especially remembered as the composer of the *The Greyfriars Suite* in 1947, a musical work which was much valued by Charles Hamilton, and many others. He was a long-standing subscriber to the C.D. and retained his interest in the old papers to the end of his life.

\*\*\*\*\*  
**WANTED:** £20 each offered for "*Boys Friend Libraries*" featuring BIGGLES. £15 each offered for Biggles jigsaw puzzles. £3 each offered for "Happy Mags". £15 offered for B.F.L. no. 204, "Crooked Gold". Original artwork of Bunter, etc., always wanted. NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, WD1 4JL. Telephone: (0923) 32383.

\*\*\*\*\*  
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\*\*\*\*\*



AROUND THE WORLD WITH SEXTON BLAKE

by J.E.M.

Number 9

Let me quote from the blurb to G.H. Teed's *Planned from Paris* (U.J. 1474):



*The escaping Martinel was just about to slide down the further side of the wall, when he heard a rifle crash.*

"Paul Laval, newly released convict from the Santé prison; Louis Martinel, serving a life sentence ... Sexton Blake in London and Mademoiselle Roxane in Paris ... Fate drew these four people together into an intrigue whose colossal climax was the most ingenious escape from Devil's Island ever planned."

Full of action and the colour of foreign parts, this is surely one of the best in the long-running Roxane saga which, over the years, took Blake to every corner of the globe. And Eric Parker's drawings do full justice to the tale. The second here, shows the luckless ex-convict Laval meeting

his sinister "benefactor" outside a Paris bistro (and what atmosphere the illustration captures); the first depicts master criminal Martinel making his escape from Devil's Island.



----- End of series -----

## SEXTON BLAKE AND THE THAMES BARGE MYSTERY

by Ray Hopkins

My Dad said, "I want you to stop reading those Public School stories. The general public can't go to 'em and neither can you..."

"But you used to read Frank Richards, Dad", I said. "You told me so."

"Ah", said Dad, a wonderful smile spreading over his face. "Frank Richards was different. I never read those you read, er... Milford..."

"Martin Clifford", I said. I just stopped myself shouting "Hurrah!" to show how enthusiastic I was.

"All right, son", Dad said. "Now here's something to put you on the right track: Sexton Blake, the world's greatest detective."

I'd been to the Library and I know who the world's greatest detective is. "What about Sherlock Holmes?" I cried.

My Mum looked in from the kitchen. "Don't shout, son", she said. "You're making the cat's fur stand on end."

Dad held out a thick book with a large "3d" on its cover.

"That's not Sexton Blake", I said. "They're fourpence; a bit thinner than that, an' all."

"No, this is a Boys' Friend, one I read when I was your age. See how you like it."

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On a bleak afternoon in February, two rather ordinary looking people turn up at Creekside on the Essex coast just below Purfleet, dressed in seafarers' clothes.

The man is Joe Garboard and his boy companion he calls Ted. They are accompanied by a large blood-hound who plunges into the water and returns dragging a body which turns out to be that of the Cap'n of the barge Rochester Bells due to sail to Sheerness with a cargo of cement. Cap'n Peascod's death leaves three living members of a tontine, a business arrangement and insurance against penurious old age between a group of individuals whose equal shares remain in the tontine upon the death of any one of them, the whole amount becoming the property of the last living share owner.

The three remaining are Cap'n Fairlead, whose health is such that he can no longer skipper a barge; Tibblewitt, a local grocer and Gregory Grooge, a wharf and ships stores owner. The latter is described by the author as gorilla-like, flying into rages and threatening those who oppose him with Biter, a home-made whip made from thick rope ending in a number of rusty, sharp nails.

Ted is smitten with Cap'n Fairlead's pretty, fifteen year old daughter, Dorothy, which may be a clue to older readers of these stories that Ted is Tinker in disguise. His companion must then be Sexton Blake and the heroic dog none other than dear old Pedro. Blake has come to Creekside commissioned by the owner of the Incewell lime and cement works to find who is responsible for the losses of the cargoes which are causing his company to come perilously close to closing down, for two of the sister barges to the Rochester Bells have floundered and sunk on their way to Sheerness.

With Cap'n Fairlead having to retire to an Essex village, ten miles inland, Tibblewitt realizes that he could be the next one to have a fatal accident and is observed by Blake to be in a constant state of fear which he surmises to be caused by Grooge.

Both are vastly surprised when Cap'n Fairlead, apparently rejuvenated, returns with every intention of taking the barge Rochester Bells to Sheerness. The First Mate is prevented from accompanying the Cap'n by an accident engineered by Second Mate Silas Croak, causing him to fall overboard, thus leaving Croak clear to accompany Ted and the restored Cap'n Fairlead on the trip to Sheerness, the latter being Sexton Blake in yet another faultless disguise. Blake holds a master-mariner's certificate and has skippered small craft from a ten-ton yawl to a brig, so is totally capable of taking a barge up and down the Thames.

With the help of a half-starved minion of Grooge who has stowed away, Croak seals the supposed Cap'n Fairlead in his cabin and Tinker in the stores cupboard where he is on watch for suspected dirty tricks from the Second Mate. This after the two crooks have dropped sodden blankets over Pedro, tied him up and thrown him overboard.

Tinker manages to crawl through a narrow aperture into the hold and emerges on deck through a small hatch left open to air the cargo. But he is too late to stop Croak and his accomplice ramming the barge into the iron pier-head of a riverside sewage works.

Tinker manages to remove the plank that is sealing Blake inside the sinking barge and both are thrown into the water and in danger of being sucked down into the vortex caused by the barge plunging to the bottom. Tinker has lapsed into unconsciousness but Blake just grabs him in time and after an heroic struggle with the elements, manages to get them both ashore. He mourns Pedro who he feels must have gone down with the barge.

They are saved from death from freezing cold by an old night-watchman in charge of a brick kiln who dries their clothes on the hot bricks and gives them warm

sacks to wrap themselves in until the clothes are dry. Tinker revives and both gratefully gulp down mugs of steaming coffee supplied by the kindly watchman. To their great joy their beloved Pedro, exhausted but still alive, turns up and falls panting at their feet.

On their way back to Creekside, Sexton Blake reads in a newspaper the report of the sinking of the Rochester Bells and loss of its Skipper and of the running down by a tug of a dinghy containing the Mate and a boy from the sunken barge. The boy was saved but the Mate was drowned when thrown out of the dinghy. This is the last we hear of the fates of Croak and his accomplice.

Grooge, believing that Cap'n Fairlead is now dead and that only he and Tibblewitt remain alive of the investors in the tontine, pays a call on the grocer offering to buy him out of the tontine and plying him with a drugged cigar, which little charade will end with Tibblewitt having a fatal accident. This is the same performance that had taken place between Grooge and Cap'n Peascod aboard the Rochester Bells, culminating in the Skipper falling from the gangplank and into the water, becoming the drowned body with which this story opened.

A stern, deep voice from the shadows in the back room of the shop accuses Grooge of his earlier crime and the one he is contemplating now. The real Cap'n Fairlead, who has returned to Creekside with Dorothy, reveals himself like a phantom to the terrified criminal and the stern voice tells him that the speaker had taken the Skipper's place aboard the barge and that his tool, Croak, had attempted to entomb him in the sinking barge but had not succeeded. Grooge, screaming with terror, falls to the ground and dies in convulsions.

---

"Sounds exciting", my pal Fred said, when I told him the plot.

"Wasn't 'arf good", I said.

"And what was it called?" Fred wanted to know.

"Tiller and Tideway", I said.

"Funny name for a detective story", said Fred. "I thought their titles were always 'The Case of the'..., or 'The Mystery of the'..."

When my Dad came home from work he also wanted to know how I had got along with it.

I pulled my mouth down both ends and said, "Not a patch on the old GEM."

My Mum stuck her head around the kitchen door.

"You fibber", she said. "That's not what you told Fred."

"Shhh", I said and my Dad chuckled. He knew what I was like.

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**WANTED** by Collector: Pre-1970 Williams, Bunters, Blytons, Biggles, Brent-Dyers, in dustwrappers. Also Rupert and other Annuals, Comic giveaways, Original artwork, associated Ephemera. High prices paid, or exchanged. JOHN BECK, 29 Mill Road, Lewes, Sussex.

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**GEMS WANTED TO COMPLETE SET.** Any condition considered. Your price paid. Nos. 154,155,160,169,170,173,186,190,192,193,195,196,199,203, 204,205,217,231,283,286,288,290,294,295,302,343,344,356,359 and 399.

Write: W.O.G. LOFTS, 56 Sheringham House, Lisson Street, London, NW1 5NY.

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## REMINISCING ON THE OLD SERIES OF NELSON LEE

by Jack Greaves

C.D. readers, particularly those who are motorists will be familiar with the modern road atlases which can be seen on sale at Newsagents' shops and stalls. They measure about 15" x 10" and contain really excellent information and the map illustrations are usually first class. At the end there is an alphabetical list of hundreds of towns and villages together with the map and page reference and as a former postmark collector I have recorded some very quaint and interesting names from these lists.



Amongst the many school titles in the old series, E.S. Brooks also introduces the names of many fictional hamlets, small towns and villages. The most commonly used are of course BELLTON, CAISTOWE and EDGEMORE and many adventures have been featured around these areas.

Here are some of the others:

- |                       |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Market Bushwick (418) | Esher (302)          |
| Marks Tey (304)       | Felling (299)        |
| Melhaven (136)        | Bicton (139)         |
| Midshott (208)        | Boxvale (237)        |
| Pilling (391)         | Somerton (394)       |
| Oystermouth (421)     | Bramley (279)        |
| Brentlowe (282)       | Tremley (344)        |
| Pellton (186)         | Wrexton (185)        |
| Ripley (514)          | Yalemoor (237)       |
| Cobham (514)          | Gadsbury (186)       |
| Shenfield (304)       | Great Rapley (145)   |
| Shoeburgness (443)    | Great Wayling (419)  |
| Fleethaven (470)      | Great Winstead (417) |
| Little Blanding (415) | Ketworth (168)       |
| Little Haddow (298)   | Little Bodsley (514) |
| Tregellis (290)       |                      |

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## OTHER FAVOURITE DETECTIVES: J.G. Reeder

by J.E.M.

It has been estimated that out of every four books read in this country during the 1930's, one was by Edgar Wallace. So, however we define "Old Boys' Books" and their audience, Wallace clearly ranks as a top favourite. He did, in fact, make a notable contribution to the weekly story papers themselves, the very first issue of THE THRILLER in 1929 containing a novel-length yarn by him. (For this he was paid several hundred pounds - a monumental sum in those days for a "twopenny" contributor and not a bad fee even for the highly-priced Wallace!) THE THRILLER went on to feature a further eight full-length stories by him, as well as two dozen shorts and these obviously attracted tens of thousands

of readers to the paper. Prominent in these tales was Wallace's most famous creation.

Contrary to the views of some critics, Edgar Wallace was a first-rate inventor of character. Who could forget, for example, Dr. Lomond from *The Ringer*, or Tony Braid and Dr. Rex Guelder, respectively hero and villain in *The Twister*, or Sergeant Elk of Scotland Yard - or a hundred other colourful figures? But arguably the most memorable character created by Wallace was J.G. Reeder.

An elderly detective attached to the Public Prosecutor's Office, he was as far removed from the general image of the official policeman as he was from that of the private investigator (though his dress would hardly have been out of place in Sherlock Holmes's wardrobe. With his high hard hat, frock coat, cravat and square-toed shoes, he was not exactly a contemporary figure even in 1929!). A benevolent countenance, adorned with side-whiskers and pince-nez, completed the public persona of an apparently harmless old fuddy-duddy. But, behind this disarming appearance, lay a mind as sharp as the nine inches of steel concealed in his tightly-furled umbrella and as deadly as the automatic pistol carried in the tail pocket of his frock-coat.

Our good friend and pop lit expert, Jack Adrian, once drew my attention to Edgar Wallace's sharp sense of humour - too often missed in the thrills and excitement of his stories - and this quality is well to the fore in many of THE THRILLER shorts about Reeder which were collected in book form under the title of *The Mind of Mr. J.G. Reeder*. One delicious example concerns an American crook, new to Britain, who, no doubt deceived by his appearance, is unimpressed by Reeder's reputation and dares to pick the detective's pocket - only to discover later that not only has Mr. Reeder skilfully retrieved his watch but has lifted the crook's own expensive time-piecer as well! In Wallace's amusing words, 'Mr. Reeder could be heavily jocular at times'.

One of my sharpest pleasures from the Reeder saga comes from a short story called *Sheer Melodrama* (a nicely ironic title as the plot reveals). In this, Wallace offers the best defence I know of simple, old-fashioned good-versus-evil crime fiction. Mr. Reeder has taken a young lady to the theatre and she is astonished that her celebrated escort can enjoy a simple melodrama which, she protests, is so unlike life. Reeder offers his own view and I can do no better than quote:

"No plays are quite like life, my dear young lady ...  
Melodramas appeal to me because of their idealism."

She turned and stared at him.

"Idealism?" she repeated incredulously.

He nodded.

"Have you ever noticed that there is nothing sordid about a melodrama? I once saw a classical drama - 'Oedipus' - and it made me feel sick. In melodrama even the villains are heroic and the inevitable and unvarying moral is 'Truth crushed to

earth will rise again' - isn't that idealism? And they are wholesome. There are no sex problems; unpleasant things are never shown in an attractive light - you come away uplifted."

"If you are young enough", she smiled.

"One should always be young enough to rejoice in the triumph of virtue", said Mr. Reeder soberly.

G.K. Chesterton's famous apology for "blood and thunder" fiction did not make a better case than this. When, therefore, we get bored, as we often do, with slick, "sophisticated" modern crime fiction, we can do worse than go back sixty years and be young enough to enjoy some exciting stories involving a unique and unforgettable detective - Mr. John G. Reeder.

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## SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT CARDEW

by Roger Jenkins

Ralph Reckness Cardew's first appearance in the Gem was March 1917, and the date has some significance. Rupert de Courcy, the Caterpillar, made his debut in the first of the two celebrated Highcliffe stories that were published in the Boys' Friend libraries in 1914-15. Charles Hamilton, who was so lavish and indeed prodigal with his creations, must later have regretted that he had wasted so fine a character on a minor school. Highcliffe had no more genuine stories in its own right, and subsequently made guest appearances in the Magnet. The Caterpillar often featured on these occasions, but usually in brief sequences only. It seems reasonably certain that Cardew was intended to be a re-run of the Caterpillar in a more permanent setting, though Charles Hamilton was too fastidious a writer to produce mere carbon copies of other characters.

Cardew was the grandson of an earl, Lord Reckness, and a distant relative of D'Arcy who went to meet him at the railway station. The initial impression was that of a slightly snobbish and selfish boy, wealthy but inclined to be unscrupulous. When D'Arcy informed him that it would be frowned upon to hire a car from the station to the school in wartime, Cardew went to a local hospital and picked up some injured soldiers and gave them a lift to St. Jim's so that he could use the car without reproach, yet his attitude to the soldiers was genuinely solicitous. During the course of the initial series in Gems 475-7, Cardew accepted punishment rather than implicate someone else, but he nearly succeeded in getting Tom Merry flogged in revenge for another incident. Undoubtedly, his most typical remark was made to Levison - "Perhaps I shall turn over a new leaf some day, and become more worthy of the high moral atmosphere of this study."



There was some mystery about Cardew's previous school, and this was resolved in a subsequent series, Gems 486-9. He had been obliged to leave Wodehouse in disgrace, and when Lacy, another junior from Wodehouse who had been transferred to Rylcombe Grammar School, put in an appearance, the full story was bound to emerge. Cardew's insouciance and his airy persiflage were in evidence, and the essential Cardew was on view even at this early stage. There is no doubt that Cardew's attitude to Levison, a sort of self-deprecating whimsicality based on respect, was the same as the Caterpillar's attitude to Courtenay. The Gem situation contained the added irony that Levison had once been as bad as Cardew at his worst.

As time went by, further details about Cardew's family background were filled in. His grandfather's residence changed from Reckness Lodge to Reckness Towers (promoting Cardew from Wharton's level to Lord Mauleverer's status), and his unsympathetic uncle, Lord Lilburn, began to be featured. This all came into prominence in the Gems series in 768-772 when Cardew, about to be ragged for letting the team down, averted the impending punishment by announcing that he had personally persuaded his grandfather to donate a handsome solid silver cup to be competed for by junior football teams. The trophy was to be called the Cardew Cup. When Cardew wrote to his grandfather, he discovered that Lord Reckness was laid up with gout, and Lord Lilburn was attending to his correspondence, with the result that Cardew received nothing. As matters were getting urgent at St. Jim's, Cardew pawned all his personal jewellery in order to buy the cup, which Racke later called the Pawnbroker's Cup. Cardew then sent the pawn tickets to his grandfather in a registered envelope.

Lord Lilburn's last mention in the Gem seems to have been in the Christmas series in Nos. 930-1. Having won some money gambling, Lord Lilburn decided to send Cardew a handsome tip, which never arrived because of someone's dishonesty. The untypical generosity of Cardew's uncle was not the only strange aspect of this odd series. The plain fact was that all Cardew's relatives were somewhat unusual: our first introduction to his grandfather had been a testy response to a telephone call, Lord Reckness complaining to his grandson that he had interrupted his evening card game. There was undoubtedly a suspicion that Lord Reckness's relatives, apart from Cardew (his favourite), were jockeying for position as his potential heirs. Apart from this, the whole family, despite their great wealth, were engaging in a vastly different life style from their dignified and stately relatives at Eastwood House, but I have an unworthy suspicion that life at Reckness Towers would have been much more fun.

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## **Ernest Holman is DIALLING DANIEL**

Hullo, Danny!

So you didn't form a good view of Euclid, eh? Fourteen years after your introduction to the subject, I followed in your footsteps. It was the other side of the coin, with a vengeance, for me. Accustomed at my previous School regularly to being called on to read aloud my English Essay (the Form Master's Favourite, what?) Euclid brought me down to earth with quite a hefty bump. After discussing the latest Theorem (were there really only a few of them - they seemed endless?) and commenting on various items from Homework offerings, the Master always added "and now, here is Holman's look at the matter!" (Hacker to the life, this chap.) This

was always the High Spot of the lesson, eagerly awaited by my Classmates. All the same, I did not suffer the Geometric pressure that you encountered. I never did find Euclid 'awful' - just utterly and completely incomprehensible!

Your 1912 remarks also brought forth a memory of when I first met with Peter Hazeldene's nickname of Vaseline. This was not until the nineteen sixties, when Magnet No. 1 was reprinted. At the conclusion of this opening Magnet story, the reader was informed that next week's offering would introduce the new characters of Bob Cherry and Vaseline. I was then unaware that the latter name was applied to Hazeldene - as was a National Newspaper writer. He ventured the opinion that Vaseline would turn out to be a dog! When I did eventually read Magnet No. 2, the matter was cleared up.

Your brother revealed it to you four years after Magnet No. 1. By then, it seemed that the nickname had been dropped. Eric Fayne's explanation is most likely the correct reason for discarding the name - although, as he points out, we shall never really know why it was 'taken out'. Now then - if the true reason is, indeed, a mystery, well here's another for you, Danny Boy. When did the name Vaseline crop up again?

Did it, you may ask? Yes, on what was probably a 'one-off' occasion. This occasion will be found in Magnet No. 1486, dated 8/8/36. It was in 'The Rascal of the Remove' during the Muccolini Circus series and the following item appeared in the first column on page 9:

"That cad Vaseline!" grunted Bunter, referring to Hazel by the rather unpleasant nickname by which he was sometimes called at Greyfriars.

Can you solve that one, Danny? Why, after so many years had passed, did the Author reintroduce Hazeldene's nickname - and, I believe, never again.

So you see, your 1912 entry has really touched the memory. What you must now do, of course, is to delve amongst your entries of more than a quarter of a Century and bring out those special occasions - when the Companion Papers and personal activities occurred during the time of memorable events. As, for example, your 1912 trip on the Clacton Belle and the recalling, **during the previous month**, of the tragedy of the Titanic.

You are in the fortunate position of being ageless - and therefore able to treat us ordinary mortals to what **IS** happening 'at the time'. Do get cracking old chap, won't you? Your Diary is for ever and everybody - it really is, in the truest sense of the word, indelible!

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**WANTED:** Modern Boys, bound or singles. Bound vols. of The Gem, Nelson Lee, Biggles and Captain Justice, Boys' Friends Library. Other bound volumes of Story Papers for my collection. Many Howard Baker volumes required. P. GALVIN, 2 The Lindales, Pogmoor, Barnsley, S. Yorks., SY5 2DT. Tel. 0226 295613.

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**HAMILTONIA ALL TYPES:** WANTED especially Holiday Annuals all years, Howard Baker Press and Club volumes, Dustwrapped Biggles, Bunters, Williams, Enid Blyton, Malcolm Saville, Jennings. Generous prices paid. Contact: COLIN CREWE, 12b Westwood Road, Canvey Island, Essex. Tel. 0268 693735, Evenings 7.15 - 9.30 p.m.

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With the arrival in the late 1950s of the teenager and rock 'n' roll, 'Girl' began to change to cater not only for schoolgirls, but also to recognise the emerging adolescent. The change in emphasis was clearly seen in the 'Picture Gallery'. Increasingly amidst the puppies, ponies and princesses, photos of pop stars were seen. I have no doubt that a full colour picture of Elvis Presley boosted circulation considerably.

Boarding schools, and ballerinas still abounded, so how else to compete with the burgeoning romantic comics? In August 1958, Wendy and Jinx the inseparable pals of Manor School, were shuffled from the front pages, changing places with student nurse 'Susan of St. Bride's'.

Also in August 1958, a new career strip was launched which typifies what 'Girl' was trying to achieve. 'Angela Air Hostess - the story of a girl who longed for adventure.'

There had been career girls in the pages of 'Girl' before this; 'Kitty Hawke', a pilot with an all-girl crew launched the paper. There had been romances in the pages of 'Girl' before this; but our fictional heroine was never a participant - always the bridesmaid never the bride. See again, 'Kitty Hawke', also 'Belle of the Ballet, and 'Key of the Courier'.

Having overcome maternal opposition to her ambition to fly, Angela starts to train alongside her sophisticated cousin Sandra, with whom there is friction. The training with Wingways is arduous, and exacting, but not without its rewards in friendships made, and skills acquired. After one domestic setback Angela qualifies and embarks on her career.

Political stowaways in Eastern Europe, a kidnapped child in Greece, nervous passengers over the Atlantic, and bumpy landings in Singapore were all part of the storyline. Also romance, when Angela becomes infatuated with one of the senior

pilots, Ian Lewis, (another reason for antipathy between her and cousin Sandra). Tantalizingly they fly on the same route, and Ian entertains her in Istanbul; but is always somewhat elusive. Angela through her brother acquires a steady boyfriend, Ron, a medical student, with whom she attends dances, plays sport, and generally has fun.

Ian Lewis eventually and reluctantly rejects her in the line of duty; despite Angela's wangling a trip to Australia to see him. By the time she returns to England, dear, old, solid Ron has found another, and is engaged. Angela is briefly depressed, until her Mother points out: "You're young, you're free, you've got the whole wide world in front of you". So Angela throws in her lot with two ex Wingways pilots setting up a charter company, and thus is set for her next adventure, 'Angela in Africa'.

The strip ran for 77 weeks from August 1958 to March 1960, and was written with verve and sympathy by Betty Roland, and drawn with style and wit by Dudley Pout. In the course of the story we see a quiet, shy, retiring, girl transformed into a confident, competent adult, with a pleasing personality, and well in charge of her own life.

**Editor's Note:** GIRL fans will be glad to know that Webb & Bower have published THE BEST OF GIRL ANNUAL, 1952-1959, compiled by Denis Gifford, at £14.95.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**"SPITFIRE SUMMER", by Peter Haining (W.H. Allen & Co; £12.95). Reviewed by Dennis L. Bird.**

"...I also wish to particularly thank W.O.G. Lofts..." That acknowledgement is bound to catch the eye of "Collectors' Digest" readers. Bill Lofts is in good company, for among others who helped the author are the film star Douglas Fairbanks, junior, and the late J.B. Priestley and Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding, AOC-in-C Fighter Command.

This Golden Jubilee anniversary has produced some 28 new books on the Battle of Britain, but Peter Haining's is different in that it presents "the people's eye-view". For those of us who lived through that unforgettable summer, this is a wonderfully evocative account of what life was really like. Skilful use of radio scripts, newspaper cartoons, and personal reminiscences conjure up those fateful days - and nights. Mr. Haining even includes a photograph of "our" Messerschmitt 109, shot down in a cornfield at Shoreham, where I live; I remember going to look at it.

As a Sussex schoolboy, I recall blue skies, vapour trails, the rattle of machine-guns, and at night the heavy throb of diesel engines as the Luftwaffe attack switched from RAF airfields to London. That was the providential stroke that saved us from defeat.

Later I spent nearly 20 years in the RAF, and came to know some of "The Few", and to share their anger at the disgraceful treatment of Lord Dowding and

Air Vice-Marshal Park (AOC II Group), who were virtually dismissed from their posts after having won the first significant British victory of the war.

"C.D." readers may ask what part our story-book heroes played in the Battle. The two I remember are Flight Lieutenant "Rockfist" Rogan of "The Champion", and Captain W.E. Johns' imperishable Biggles. Major James Bigglesworth commanded a Camel squadron in World War I; in 1940 "Spitfire Parade", a book of short stories, recorded his deeds as Squadron Leader Bigglesworth in the greatest aerial conflict in history.

**"THE DEFENCE OF HURREE SINGH". Frank Richards. (Howard Baker Book Club Special £18). Reviewed by Eric Fayne.**

A fascinating nostalgic volume, showing how the gallant Magnet managed to carry on as the third year of the First World War drew to its close. Though the substitute writers are well to the fore, the volume is assuredly packed with interest for the Magnet historian.

It comprises 9 Magnets from the late summer of 1917 up to the last issue of that fateful year. It differs from recent previous volumes in this magnificent Book Club series insofar as, though copies are presented in their original order of publication, the stories are by no means consecutive, many copies being omitted. Curiously, several of the omitted tales were genuine stories from Hamilton, and we can only guess as to why they are left out.

Possibly they had been previously published in the series, or, more likely, the copies were not available for the hard-working and enthusiastic compiler of the volumes to use. In any case, it is inevitable that sub writers must be much in evidence in any volumes of that period. One feels that, to some extent, Hamilton was himself responsible. Had he concentrated on the Magnet he could, undoubtedly, have written every story of Greyfriars. But he was also writing plenty of St. Jim's, plus the entire output of Rookwood at this time, and his full-length Boys' Friend Library "After Lights Out" was just being snapped up in the shops.

Back to this latest Book Club special. The opening tale is "On the Wrong Track", a light frolic from E.S. Brooks who was destined to become famous later on with his stories of St. Frank's. Wibley succeeds in fooling Ferrers Locke who does not quite live up to his detecting reputation. Now a jump of a month to "On the Make". Here we have the unmistakable stamp of Pentelow. It is Bunter who is on the make, and Coker adds to the fun. Next comes "The Schoolboy Inventor" from another sub writer. Bob Cherry is the unexpected inventor of a new device in connection with telephones, and Bunter plays his part.

The famous "Judge Jeffreys' barring-out series of 5 stories is now omitted (may be it will turn up later in a volume of its own), and we find ourselves with a Samways' effort "Rivals of the Chase" in which the chums set out on a mission on behalf of Mr. Prout. A jump of 3 weeks brings us to another Samways' effort "A Gentleman Ranker" in which a strange new boot-boy named Brown comes on the scene at Greyfriars. This is one of Samways' best yarns.

Then Hamilton himself takes over. "The Missing Skipper" is an intriguing single story in which the Greyfriars captain disappears unaccountably.

The Pentelow Christmas story of 1917 is omitted, and we find ourselves with "Four From the East" which is really a sequel to the Christmas Number. Pentelow

tells of mysterious happenings at the old school, with sinister faces at the windows.

Next comes "Flap's Brother", an excellent and unusual tale from Hamilton. It is unusual in the fact that Hamilton introduces two of Pentelow's characters, Flip and Flap Derwent, who had been created originally in "The Twins from Tasmania", a serial about Cliff House and Highcliffe which Pentelow had written for the Gem some time before.

I close my eyes and wonder why Hamilton took the rare step of introducing into his story a couple of characters created by a substitute writer. Was it, just possibly, an expedient little gesture to please his editor, Pentelow?

I can think of only one other occasion when something similar happened. At St. Jim's, Hamilton took over the lovely camera which Manners had won for an act of



courage. Actually, Manners's camera was created by the young Brooks in a blue Gem tale entitled "Misunderstood".

With the final story in this volume Hamilton is on the scene again in "Looking After Inky". (It is this tale which provides the overall title for the collection.) Actually it is a sequel to two fine tales (omitted from this book) from earlier in 1917, concerning an old friend of Hurree Singh's childhood - a fellow named Kuri Din. Inky's chums, assisted by Wibley, manage to expose Kuri Din for what he is - a rogue unworthy of the Nabob's friendship. A tip-top yarn to wind up a volume packed with nostalgic delight.

An additional bonus in this superbly-bound volume is an abundance of jolly items from the "Greyfriars Herald" - items which, in 1917, had replaced the serial in the last page or two of the Magnet. I'm sure they pleased readers long ago - as they please us today.

## LOOKING AFTER INKY!

A Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.



## JOHNNY ON THE JOB!

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## More postcards from Santos

To Master W.G. Bunter, c/o Fern Bay Camp, Falcon Isle, Northshire.

Dear Billy, I don't know if this will reach you before you leave with Harry Wharton and Co. for the cruise to Madeera but mother said I must send cards to you and Sammy. The food is great here and we are having a great time. I have been snorkelling in the cave---I have to show the others of course, we Bunters are such superb swimmers. Clara is reading this over my shoulder and giggling and trying to alter swimmers to porpoises, the cheeky thing. But that is gratitude, after I found her and Babs and rescued them after they'd got themselves shut in a hidden cell in the old monastery ruins. Why they want to go wandering round silly old ruins is beyond me. They were there all night and said they'd followed



Felicity because they had heard her cry out and thought something was wrong. But Felicity came back to the villa just after midnight with that beastly Rex Brandon and said she'd never seen Babs and Clara nor been near the ruins. She'd tripped and hurt her ankle while she was out with Rex and that was why she was late. Anyway, Celeste had told us all to stay in as she didn't want anybody else vanishing and the search party from the crew went on looking for Babs and Clara. Then Jimmy and Mabs set off at dawn to go on looking because none of us slept a wink for worrying.

Of course I found them. It was quite easy. There was this old door hidden behind a lot of greenery and an old vine that seemed to be growing wild. The grapes were gorgeous and I may have picked one or two while I was carefully looking for clues. Janet says the grapevine found them, which is pure jealousy because I had spotted the footprints and heard something knocking behind the wall. Babs said they had been shut in deliberately and there was an old iron latch on the door. Mr. Margesson is making enquiries, and Rex said he thought the ruins should be out of bounds to us. Babs found a great big old jar like they used in olden days, while she and Clara were trying to find another way out. It is an amforra and Clara said it was a funny thing to find in the ruins, but Babs said the monks probably stored their wine in it. Don't forget to bring me a cake from Madeera. Your affectionate sister, **Bessie**.

To Miss Sheila Jordan, Jordan's Circus, Meadow Lane Site, Maybourne.

Wish you were here, sis, you'd love Santos and the villa. We swim and explore and play cricket --- after a fashion! --- on the beach. Greatest excitement is hunting for treasure supposed to be hidden on the island, despite the official story that the ancient wreck was thoroughly mapped out by marine archaeologists and the treasure brought up years ago. Local lore says it had been got at long before this. One tale says that pirates got it when they sacked the old monastery centuries ago. Another says that the survivors of the wreck managed to save the best of the treasure and carry it up to the monastery and the pirates never found it. But whether there is any truth in this no one knows. The treasure, if it ever existed, seems to have been lost in antiquity. Maybe it was hidden in the amphora Babs found! If so, somebody got

at the wine a long time ago! Celeste was talking the other night about an ancient book she'd seen in her grandfather's library. It mentioned Santos and the treasure but it seems to have got mislaid because Mr. Margesson had been searching for it himself. Meanwhile, we are all getting gloriously tanned --- except for poor old Fatima. Kindest way I can describe Bessie's summer tan is the well cooked look. Love to Dad, and yourself. **Janet.**

**Cable to Colonel Carstairs, The Foreign Office, Downing Street, London.**

This is urgent, Guv. Something is going on. I need info. Can you contact Greek Embassy? Any records on history of Santos, the sack of St. Spiridion's by Turks circa 1420, rebuilding of monastery on adjacent site, and any maps. Also, any records on these names: Gregor Rastov, Sandor Kovenchy, and Rex Brandon. Any trace at British Library of History of Aegean Monasteries, author unknown, translated from early and Byzantine sources, pub. circa 1815. Report following. **J. (in disgrace).**

**To Miss Valerie Charmant, c/o Clove Cottage, Grayly Lane, Dantonleigh.**

Dear Miss Charmant, We are having quite an adventurous holiday here and perfect weather. We haven't forgotten about the Greek project you suggested we might like to try. We decided it should take the form of a frieze about two metres in length, with the Greek key motif as a frame. The monastery is to be the main central section with other scenes of the islands at left and right. But you'll have to forgive me if it is not completed by the time we return, because somehow or other most of the actual drawing and tinting is falling to yours truly. Jemima is taking an enormous interest in it and has made several suggestions. In fact if I follow out her plan the frieze will become exactly that --- a plan! Or rather a continuous map of the island if we join its ends together into the biggest lampshade ever! I hope you are enjoying your hols. Looking forward to seeing you again, even if not entirely to what that entails. Affectionately, **Barbara.**

**To Miss Jean Cartwright, Glengowrie Castle, Glengowrie, Inverness.**

Dear Jean, A proper letter this time because we know you're longing to hear our news. We are all on the treasure trail now and think we have found a possible lead. When Clara and I managed to get ourselves shut in that old cell in the ruins we squeezed through a broken bit of the wall and found ourselves in an ancient passageway. Really dank and horrid. It wound down a long way, getting narrower and lower. My little pocket torch gave up halfway so we had to turn back, partly in case we got even more lost and partly because we didn't know how long Clara's little torch would last. Meanwhile, Janet and Leila have been exploring the caves under the headland, since Rex Brandon managed to get us banned from the big underwater cavern near the old wreck. They found several tunnels and crevices and some very old, crumbley steps, and Jimmy thinks there might be a link up to the ruins. So we're trying to make ourselves a chart of where these mysterious passages lead.

But poor Jimmy is out of it. I must admit she was behaving most mysteriously last week. She took to toddling down to the ouzo hour at the village taverna and sitting gossiping with the locals over well diluted ouzo or retsina. She picked up some Greek in no time, but you know how she can do anything once she stirs herself. I think the locals don't quite know what to make of her. But Rex soon did. He is a miserable spoilsport, and a trouble-maker. He seems to have taken a complete dislike to all of us, and Jemima in particular. He actually convinced Mr.

Margesson that Jemima was out of hand and that Mr. Margesson was, after all, responsible for her safety. He did all this so smarmily, and we were all shocked when Felicity backed him up and Celeste didn't take our side. This is very upsetting as we've always had such a super relationship with Celeste, and of course we can't say very much as she is our hostess. But I wish she wasn't so devoted to the fair and fluffy Felicity (as Jemima calls her), because we are beginning to have our reservations about that girl.

Those two sinister men haven't been seen for a couple of days, and we definitely believe Clara now, about her seeing them with Rex way back in Piraeus. And I think this is why Rex Brandon is being so foul. I'm sure he'd like to get rid of us if he possibly could. So we're determined to make sure he doesn't. Unfortunately, he's managed to get poor Jimmy put out of bounds, so to speak, and confined to the yacht. She is over there, with just the crew for company, for three days. Not that she'll be unduly worried; you know our Jimmy! In fact, I wouldn't mind betting she's putting her time to very good use while she's on probation, so to speak. She's always been great chums with Captain Skegs and Peter, and our little stewardess adores Jimmy, would do anything for her. Anyway, we are making plans, and pooling all our little jigsaw pieces of knowledge of the island and tonight we are going to test some theories. The biggest problem is getting out without Fatima knowing. Nothing will convince her that we are not bound on a secret feed somewhere. So we'll be posting this in a few minutes time. Looking at the glorious blue Aegean and the sun-washed sands it seems unthinkable that there should be anything sinister happening on this idyllic island. But Jimmy is convinced there is, and now we are too. Will write again very soon. Till anon, love from us all...

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### From Len Hawkey, Leigh-on-Sea

When I settled down to enjoy my reading of the C.D. July issue, I fully expected to find that about a dozen members had answered the queries raised by John Bridgwater in his intriguing article "The disguised Detective". I was surprised to find no mention of the piece, I had held back my own comments, not wishing to appear a "clever clogs" - but in case no-one else has bothered, here goes! John was indeed right - "The Forest Mystery" in "Penny Pictorial" No. 634 is the same as "The Clue of the Broken Boots" in "Detective Weekly", almost 25 years later. Apart from Sexton Blake being changed to Marcus Max, everything is the same tho' a few paragraphs have been condensed, so that the story in "D.W." is a trifle shorter.

However, a dog attacks the detective in the final moments, - graphically depicted by R.J. MacDonald in the old "Penny Pictorial" - and this produces a noticeable amendment. Sensitivity concerning the treatment of man's best friend probably went deeper in 1936 than it did in 1911! Marcus Max knocks the animal

out with a blow to the head - Sexton Blake, however, "lunged his stick across the animal's forelegs, and broke them with a snap! The hound dropped in a tawny, whining mass at his feet". Thus the original writer describes the incident. One would suspect that Blake would have taken a pretty dim view of anyone who did that to poor old Pedro!

Whilst congratulating John on his own excellent detective work in tracking down the origins of the Marcus Max tales, does he, or anyone, know, I wonder, who wrote the shortish Blake stories that appeared in "The Boy's Realm" in 1906? There were 13 in all, starting 11/8/1906, ending 3/11/1906. They do not seem to be mentioned in the otherwise invaluable "Sexton Blake Catalogue" (nor the "Supplement") and the titles do not seem to bear any relationship to other short S.B. stories, e.g. in "Answers", "Penny Popular", etc. I'm sure some expert can supply all the relevant details.

### **From Bill Lofts, London**

Re. Sexton Hyde, the detective mentioned in your July editorial, I don't think one would ever find any explanation of how the first name of Sexton came about. Fred Cordwell who created him, and wrote most of the stories, never had anything to do with Sexton Blake - being chief of Film Fun group. Details or background are always scanty on comic detectives. I know his (Hyde) assistants were all named F (Flossy, etc., after Fred). Hyde lived at Glasshut St., London, which I think was really meant to be Glasshouse St. near Piccadilly Circus.

Referring again to Norman Wright's article on that William Competition, that very dull magazine 'Mine' edited by Stephen King-Hall only ran till mid-1936, and the result was never published in its pages.

I also looked up *The Scout* where it was advertised, and they only announced their own competitions. *The Happy Magazine* did announce in the November 1935 issue that some 40,000 readers had entered 'our recent competition' all pointing out that William was good! Although I perused the following issues to July 1936, no prize-winners names were printed. It is strange to give no result, or the best slogans - unless they did appear in some other Newnes publication - perhaps in the Women's field of fiction.

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## **SOME D.C. THOMSON ANNUALS**

by D.J. O'Leary

### **Number One: THE ROVER BOOK FOR BOYS 1926**

Talking one day to my elder brother who knows of my interest in boys' story papers and annuals, I was struck by his remark that in the 1930s he was completely unaware of MAGNET and GEM and thought that the D.C. Thomson publications were the only ones for boys. As I considered his words I realised that for me too the "Dundee School" provided almost a monopoly of my favourite reading during World War Two.

MAGNET and GEM had, of course, vanished before I had the chance to know them but I was lucky enough to find a friendly neighbour who had kept the Thomson annuals that his son had read in his younger days. Reading materials were scarce in the war and I read and re-read them many times. They made a welcome addition to the weekly Thomsons I rushed to buy each week.

I would like to share with you my love for these books by examining in separate articles each of the "Big Five" annuals which are particular favourites of mine. I shall not be keeping to strict chronological order but, rather, the order in which I first read them.

So, although the first Thomson storypaper annual to appear was ADVENTURELAND in 1924, I am going to begin with the first "pre-war" annual I ever encountered, THE ROVER BOOK FOR BOYS, which many years later I found, thanks to the invaluable guide of Adley and Lofts, dated from 1926 and was the second paper that Thomson granted an annual to. In fact, it became the longest running of all (1926-1942; 1950-1959).

Priced at 2/6, it was in the "chunky" format (8 1/4" x 6 3/4") favoured until about 1940 by ROVER and SKIPPER annuals. It had 188 pages, four colour plates and many black and white line drawings. The covers, front and back, showed a cross-country race with boys crossing a stream. The front-papers showed a cricket scene while the end-papers illustrated a football match. The fifteen stories had named authors, but the only one who seems to be more than a Thomson stock name is the well-known Gilbert Chester. No artists are named. The stories vary from 21 to 6 pages in length, including illustrations.

Here is a list of the stories with brief synopsis of each:

1. THE BROKEN BRIDGE - Railway adventure in the Canadian Rockies where young fireman Dan Doyle stops the villains in their attempt to rob the Quebec-Vancouver express, and prevents gangster Pierre the Wolf's escape by 'plane from his secret hide-out.
2. TEACHING WATSON - Humorous school adventure where Watson, the detested sneak, gets the lesson he deserves.
3. YOUNG VIM, the Demon Hitter - A sixteen year old orphan tries to make his way in the hard world of a boxing-booth. He is drugged and knocked out by a treacherous opponent but persists in his efforts to recompense the decent booth-owner who has trusted him. He succeeds with the help of a passing stranger who proves to be a champion boxer and who promises to make him a champion too!
4. THE JUNGLE GIANT - Rick Ward accompanies White Hunter Ben Rivers in his pursuit of the huge bull-elephant he has been hunting since it killed his uncle fifty years before! Into the Mau Forest of Kenya they track the monster, braving attacks by pygmies and a terrific storm. Finally Rick kills the elephant and old Ben shows him his uncle's muzzle-loader bullet still in the giant's hide!
5. BOSS FOR A DAY - Sixth former Prayne Robson mistakenly receives a summons to take charge of his uncle's glass factory during his absence. His unorthodox approach - talking frankly to the workers, putting them in the picture of what is going on and visiting their homes to see what repairs are needed - succeeds in meeting a big and profitable order for the factory and gains him a permanent job from his grateful uncle.
6. GOLIATH CALLING - Huge Alec Smart, nick-named "Goliath" and his fellow apprentice, the tiny "shrimp" Salter, are sent to the South American Republic of Montebuco to help install wireless in its ports and navy. Shrimp's quick wits enable them to prevent a revolution.
7. THE TERROR OF SLINGER'S FORM - Dicky Cole of Burnham County Council Schools plays a joke on their tyrannical teacher, Mr. Slinger. All is not plain sailing, but Dicky finally gains his revenge.
8. SLEEPY RYMER'S GOLDMINE - "Sleepy" Rymer proves himself wide-awake enough to foil thieves who are after gold he discovers in a British Columbian mine.

9. **NOBBY'S BUNCH** - Nobby Beale and his pals raise the money they need for their gymnasium by busking on the beach for the Bank Holiday crowds. And Nobby's brave rescue of a puppy leads to an even more successful conclusion of their financial problem.

10. **THAT MUTT MALONEY** - The mystery of Maloney's missing money which had threatened St. Jermyn's school with mass "gating" turns out to be a lark gone astray, to the relief of boys and masters.

11. **DAN WROTH'S DUTCHMAN** - In British Guiana 14 year old orphan Dan thwarts the rascally Schomberg who twice tries to kill him. In the siege of a ruined fort in the jungle Dan has to use his arm to secure the door against savage Indians but he survives and brings his Dutch foe to justice.

12. **THE SPINNING POOL** (by Gilbert Chester) - Two lads, Chad and Bunny, re-condition an old boat to start their own charter yachting business. On their first trip, they are chartered by someone who proves to be a villain after something hidden in the ballast of the boat. Avoiding the peril of the Spinning Pit, a giant whirlpool, the boys finally get back to harbour. When the ballast is examined it turns out to be, not lead, but silver! Their business success is now ensured.

13. **TUFTY BROWN'S TWISTERS** - Tufty and the Swifts Cricket Team set out for a game with Highcliffe Academy(!). Tufty has some dress problems, wearing a too-large shirt of his father's and whitening his cricket boots with enamel. By misadventure, they arrive at the wrong ground to encounter a very "snooty" set of opponents. Tufty's team, of course, win, helped by his weird appearance and his substitution for the cream in the tea-buns, selfishly not shared by the home team, by white enamel!

14. **TWO-GUN TAD** - When his circus burns down in Arizona, trick-shooter Tad hunts Mexican bandit El Condor. His skill with his six-guns eventually ensures that the reward money will be restored and re-build the ruined circus.

15. **BLUNDELL'S BLUNDERS** - These are the comic misadventures of William Blundell, bucher boy, as he delices "sassingers" to his customers. Despite a mischevicious dog and a runaway bullock, everything ends happily.

A varied bunch of yarns, eh? Humour, adventure, school, sport-etcetera. Only one cowboy story but that the longest in the annual (21 pages). And yet the two stories that appealed to me most in my boyhood still seem the most vivid and interesting today.

**BOSS FOR A DAY** by "Harold Fotheringham" is based in the world of heavy industry and factories familiar to me as I grew up in industrial South Wales. It shows a determined young man facing up to a challenge that everyone thinks beyond



His Last Hope

him. With humour and resolution he averts a threatened strike by straight talking to his workers, suspending a bullying foreman and replacing him with a natural leader from the workforce. "Ain't so much difference between handling men and handling boys, and I've had plenty of experience in that", is former School Captain Prayne's response to his uncle's manager who compliments him on his handling of the men.

When Prayne and his pal Jimmy get ready to visit the workmen's houses, the manager is concerned: "They're a mighty rough lot, I'm telling you. Neither your uncle nor myself would go near them". Prayne's reproofing reply is: "Maybe if Uncle and you had gone there oftener, there might have been lots of things done and less discontent amongst the men". Instructing Jimmy to "bring the biggest book you can lay hands on, and a big blue pencil" the boys greet the workers' wives courteously, list the repairs needed in their company houses and casually mention the good money to be earned in overtime for the new rush order which will ensure the survival of the works.

*NOBBY'S BUNCH.*

It's not all work, however. Elderly typist Miss Dimple is the horrified witness as the energetic lads do a bit of boxing, vault over the office's magnificent mahogany table and then play ping-pong on it. Even she is eventually cajoled into a vigorous game of shinty where she is soon returning one full-blooded swipe for another! This is unfortunately the moment when Uncle Robson returns! He is appalled at the error which has brought a sixth-former to take charge of his works but is forced to admit that his nephew has done well as "Boss for a day". It has always seemed to me that Prayne's attitude to what we would now probably call "man-management", "worker-participation", "incentive payments" and "health and welfare concerns" shows an amazingly progressive and up-to-date business sense. Perhaps this country could still benefit from the forward-looking management ideas put forward by Prayne Robins in 1926!



On swept the defunct jelly-fish ; then it stopped abruptly, full in the red face of the gentleman, who was holding his ribs through laughter.

My other favourite among the stories is *NOBBY'S BUNCH* by "J.C. Crisp". It offers a picture of a group of youngsters enjoying themselves happily and healthily in summer sunshine. Their need to raise money to pay off the unfair demands of their arch-enemy, "Snorter" Hogg leads to "Nobby's Boy Buskers", dressed as 'Nigger' Minstrels, heading for the Bank Holiday beach. A brief fracas with a rival group of Pierrots results: "He caught Nobby no end of a slap across the face,

removing a little of the burnt cork, and very nearly removing Nobby's head as well".

Nobby's bunch retaliates: "...the jelly-fish fairly hurtled through the air. Straight for the Pierrot it was sailing and the red-faced man in the deck-chair bellowed with laughter... But at that moment the Pierrot ducked at just the right moment. On swept the defunct jelly-fish, then it stopped abruptly, full in the red face of the gentleman who was holding his sides with laughter ... the next thing Nobby and his bunch saw was that the Pierrot had a fresh war on..." The buskers have a hard time raising money with their musical numbers; their collection suffers from customers only pretending to contribute and even taking money out. Nobby remarks bitterly as he counts the meagre takings: "Eastpole isn't half a seaside town! Must be, or else the tide couldn't have washed up so many sharks!".

Undaunted, the lads move on to the pier to attract custom and, thanks to Nobby's daring rescue of a little dog, they have an enthusiastic audience for their show (very sensibly, they abandon their "musical numbers" for a skilled gymnastic display). They return in triumph to their little gymnasium with enough money for new equipment as well as the payment of "Snorter" Hogg's extortionate demands. To cap their joy, Hogg is roundly reprimanded for his greed by his employer and Nobby is embarrassed but pleased to receive a visit from the lady whose dog he'd saved. Everyone is happy, except for "Snorter" Hogg!

It seems strange that this Annual featured no articles or picture illustrations such as those featured by the CHAMPION ANNUAL or Thomson's own ADVENTURELAND, or even cartoons, since the "Rover" story paper had already started featuring the drawings of Allan Morley in 1925 (remember "Nosey Parker"?).

Still, let's be grateful for what we got: an array of "punchy", quick-moving stories, whose heroes came very often from a world which their young readers could instantly recognise. A world where money for cricket gear or gym equipment had to be painfully found, where boys worked as apprentices or butcher-boys and attended council schools. Not the "real" world, whatever that is, for no boy wants that in his stories, but a world of fun and adventure where dreams just might come true!

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**CHARLES CHURCHILL** wishes C.D. readers to know that he and his wife have now changed their address (from Topsham) to Lymptone House, Strawberry Hill, Lymptone, Devon, EX8 5JZ.

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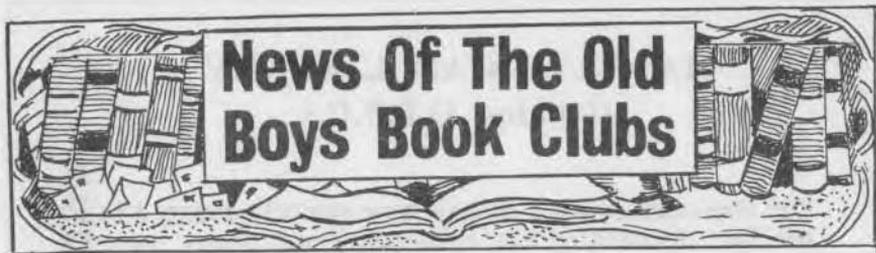
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### LONDON O.B.B.C.

26 members made their way in the stifling heat to our August meeting at the Chingford Horticultural Hall, the hosts being Tony and Audrey Potts. A special welcome was made to Marie and Bob Whiter, over from the States for a holiday.

Brian Doyle set the ball rolling with a quiz using opening passages from many famous novels, of which we had to guess the title. Not an easy one this, but full marks to Chris Harper for knowing his authors. We could not let Bob Whiter return to the USA without taking part in the meeting, and luckily for us Bob had prepared a quiz on the Companion papers. Mark Taha won this, and in fact all the runners up as well received prizes made by Bob of various Greyfriars masters and pupils. After an excellent tea, Alan Pratt gave a very interesting talk about the Champion. Alan's enthusiasm always bubbles over when he gives these presentations and rubs off on everyone else! Bill Bradford up next, with the Memory Lane reading for August 1970 at Cricklewood. Lastly, Arthur Bruning gave three readings of his own writings in the style of Brooks, Hamilton and Charteris, using their characters. A fine job of work much appreciated by all present. Next meeting: Ealing Liberal Hall on 9th September, no need to let Bill Bradford know before hand.

GRAHAM BRUTON

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

Chairman Joan welcomed the 14 present (a good number for a holiday month) to our August meeting, but we were very sorry not to have our Secretary Geoffrey with us, as he was ill. We hope he will be back with us very soon. Keith and Margaret Atkinson had recently been holidaying in Kent and had paid a visit to the home of Frank Richards. Photographs taken by them, showed us the alterations made to the house. Seemingly, the tour courier had mentioned Charles Dickens and Broadstairs, but had not known about Frank Richards. Keith and Margaret were able to put matters right and so, hopefully, future itineraries will include a mention of our author!

Our guest speaker was Clive Eardley who runs a Science Fiction and Fantasy Course at Wakefield Polytechnic. Seemingly, this is a very popular course for people of all ages and he is organising a local *Doctor Who* Convention in November. He began by giving a video presentation with clips of well-known (and some forgotten) t.v. series of science fiction and fantasy, and went on to tell us more about them: their authors and creators: their producers. He also mentioned the large number of books that were now available concerning science fiction and fantasy, with many titles going into reprints. It turned out to be a most fascinating present-

tation, and we were all made aware that science fiction is big business. To conclude, a light-hearted quiz between three teams - Darrell's team being the winner.

Our next meeting is on Saturday, 8th September when we accept the kind invitation to attend the home and library of Bruce and Geraldine Lamb at Macclesfield in Cheshire.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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

April 28th saw what we all hope will prove to be the new dawn for the club. Certainly a highly satisfactory turnout- fourteen all told - enjoyed a delightful afternoon at the Blackheath Public Library. The attendance would have been even higher but for some late cancellations. Terry Jones, who was to have been one of the guest speakers, was suffering severe back trouble and could not travel, while Joan Golen and Ian Bennett were both obliged to cry off at the last minute as a result of family bereavements. We hope that by the time he reads this Terry will have recovered and that they will all be able to come to the September meeting.

Those who did come found the new venue without difficulty, to be greeted by Christine with a cup of coffee, a most welcome and thoughtful touch. The library proved to be a comfortable and appropriate meeting-place; to be surrounded by books gave us an atmosphere we could never have achieved in the austere environment of our previous meeting place.

We were delighted to welcome a guest from the North Club - Keith Atkinson. Members present were Christine Brettell, Betty and Johnny Hopton, Joan and Vin Loveday, Jack Bellfield, Steven Gridley, Geoff Lardner, Bill Lofts, Joe Marston, Keith Normington, Darrell Swift and Ivan Webster.

Bill was the first speaker, taking us "Round the Libraries". This was the title of a most interesting talk on the Public Libraries - a highly suitable choice for the initiation of our new venue. Bill gave the background to how the Libraries worked and selected books, and described some of the astonishing things found between the leaves of returned books - five-pound notes, wills, love letters and, it has been alleged, even on one occasion a kipper! (Christine was able to add one or two of her own experiences here.) Bill also revealed that he has now been going to the British Library for forty years. Bill then turned to Richmal Crompton's William, a very topical subject because November will see the centenary of Miss Crompton's birth.

Darrell then gave a most interesting talk, with personal reminiscences of meeting them, on 'Helpers of Frank Richards'. He dealt particularly with Hamilton's hard-back publishers, Charles Skilton and William Howard Baker, and his devoted housekeeper, Edith Hood. Both of our speakers were listened to with absorbed attention, and both talks were full of fascinating detail. Questions and some discussion followed.

Geoff had brought along and displayed his complete set of Holiday Annuals. He filled in the short time remaining before tea with a few words on this celebrated publication. The last hour of the meeting was spent in pleasant, informal conversation over the truly sumptuous tea which Christine had prepared. Enthusiasm was expressed on all sides for the new arrangements.

NEXT MEETING: Saturday, 29th September at 2.30 p.m. at the Blackheath Public Library, with Mary Cadogan talking about her own collecting interests, and hopefully, Terry Jones as our other guest speaker.

GEOFF LARDNER

**Editor's Note:** We have given fairly full details of this meeting as it represented a virtual re-launch of the Midland Club. To mark this, Geoff Lardner has produced an interesting Club Newsletter: his address, for further details of this and of meetings, is Georgian House, Broad Street, Littledean Cinderford, Glos. GL14 3NH.

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## **STOPS AND STARTS 50 AND 100 YEARS AGO - ANNIVERSARIES LIST**

by Brian Doyle

- DETECTIVE WEEKLY finished on May 25, 1940, after a run of 71/4 years (379 issues).  
MODERN WONDER finished on March 16, 1940, after a run of nearly 3 years (148 issues).  
THE MAGNET finished on May 18, 1940, after a run of 321/4 years (1683 issues).  
THE THRILLER finished on May 18, 1940, after a run of 111/4 years (589 issues).  
TRIUMPH finished on May 25, 1940, after a run of 151/2 years (814 issues).  
THE SCHOOLGIRL finished on May 18, 1940, after a run of nearly 11 years (564 issues).  
COMIC CUTS began on May 17, 1890, and ran until September 12, 1953, after a run of 63 years (3006 issues).  
FUNNY CUTS began on July 12, 1890, and ran until July 3, 1920, after a run of 30 years (1566 issues).  
GOLDEN COMIC finished on May 18, 1940, after a run of 21/2 years (135 issues).  
CHIPS (actually titled ILLUSTRATED CHIPS) began on July 26, 1890, and ran until September 12, 1953, after a run of 63 years (3003 issues).  
LARKS finished on May 18, 1940, after a run of 121/2 years (656 issues).  
PUCK FINISHED on May 11, 1940, after a run of nearly 36 years (1867 issues).  
TIGER TIM'S WEEKLY finished on May 18, 1940, after a run of over 20 years (1059 issues).  
JESTER finished on May 18, 1940, after a run of 38 years (over 2000 issues).

11 famous and popular papers were axed in 1940, with no fewer than 7 being dealt the death blow on the same day - May 18, 1940; these were THE MAGNET, THE THRILLER, THE SCHOOLGIRL, GOLDEN COMIC, LARKS, TIGER TIM'S WEEKLY and JESTER. Two more - DETECTIVE WEEKLY and TRIUMPH - went a week later, and another - PUCK - a week earlier. The start of World War Two and the resulting paper shortage were the official reasons for the mayhem, which caused many a sad tear. And still does.

If you want a pair of 60th Anniversaries, both SKIPPER and STARTLER began their runs in 1930, the first for more than 10 years, the second for 2 years.

And the magazine you hold in your hands is approaching its 44th Anniversary and has appeared for well over 500 issues.

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## A QUESTION OF NAMES

by Harold Truscott

"What's in a name?" asked the Bard and, in effect, his answer amounted to Paul Daniels's colloquial phrase "Not a lot". But, as we know for Hamilton, disagreeing with Shakespeare, there was quite a lot in names. In fact, he tells us that his first step towards designing a new character was to find the appropriate name. And one must admit that, in a remarkable way, the names he chose do somehow go with the characters. This aspect of his work has, in the past, been very potent in its effect on me. For instance, until I was introduced to the Magnet and the Holiday Annual - I was eight at the time - I had not encountered the name Skinner. When, later, I did meet someone whose name was Skinner I looked with deep suspicion on that person, until reason told me that this was foolish. But even now mentally I associate that name with a mean, caddish nature; and, to this day, names chosen by Hamilton often play their part mentally when I come across one of them in real life. I have to make a distinct effort to dissociate the real from the fiction.

This has always been the case with me. When I first went to school one particularly uncouth boy there, a bullying lout much bigger than his age would suggest, but very low on brain, was named Albert Wheeler, and the name Wheeler has always had a repelling effect upon me. One of my favourite comedians was Bert Wheeler of Wheeler and Woolsey, and I always wished his name had not been Wheeler.

There is a different effect on me when I see my own name, Truscott, used as a character's name, which has happened in the past in films and occasionally of late on TV, or belonging to someone I know is no connection of mine. I remember the surprise with which I discovered, many years ago, that Ray Milland's real name is Reginald Truscott-Jones. Now how, I wondered, did the Truscotts ever get mixed up with the Joneses? Truscott is a West Devon and Cornish name; it is particularly found, in a variety of spellings, in the Plymouth area, from which my father's family came. I have no bias against the Welsh accent, but I cannot imagine it mixing with the West country burr. At any rate, my own branch of the Truscott family can claim no connection with the Joneses; and this is a good thing - we don't have to keep up with them.

The only real life Loders of whom I know are an English composer of operas, songs and chamber music named Edward, who was born in 1813, his cousin, Kate Fanny Loder, who was a concert pianist, and the English film actor, John Loder. I know nothing against any of these, and much to their credit, and yet, of course, Hamilton has made the name Loder synonymous with evil, as he has the name of Ponsonby. This man Hamilton is pernicious and will not go away!

At the beginning of the Magnet saga the really unpleasant Sixth form prefect was Carberry. In issue No. 107 Carberry was expelled, and Loder replaced him. The latter was first mentioned in Magnet No. 66, and was not then a prefect. Following Carberry's expulsion Dr. Locke made one of the rare mistakes of his

career, and Loder became a prefect; but Hamilton had to have his Sixth form cad, and he had to be a prefect.

There has been much argument as to why Hamilton got rid of Carberry, and why Loder was substituted, and this is always on the basis that one is dealing with two characters. Of course, one is not; one is dealing with one character only. I think Hamilton made one of his rare mistakes in naming Carberry. It is a name that leaves me cold, and always has done. It does nothing for me, either good or bad; it is neutral, something no Hamilton name for a character of importance should ever be. I think, too, that Hamilton began to realise this and, having Loder in the wings, as it were, realised that **that** was the name he should have used from the beginning. So, to keep the books right Carberry, since he was obstinately there under that name, had to seem to disappear (in other words, to be expelled) so that Loder could step in. In fact he did not disappear at all; he merely changed his name. Loder is Carberry, but with a really convincing name, a name that would echo infamously down the corridors of Greyfriars every time he wanted a fag and as long as Greyfriars existed and there was evil to be plotted against Wingate or the Famous Five. At last, Hamilton has corrected his one mistake in names.

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**WANTED:** by Collector. JOHN HAMILTON: Pre-War hardbacks, any title with or without D/W, concluding the 'Ace Series' 'Airmans Bookcase' 'Flying Thrillers' 'Sundial Mystery' and Adventure Library, and Airmans Bookclub editions in Dustwrappers. W.E. JOHNS: Any Pre-War hardbacks, with or without D/W, and Paperback editions of 'MOSSYFACE' (by William Earle) and any 'BOYS FRIEND LIBRARY' Editions, any condition considered. JOHN TRENDLER, 7 Park Close, Bushey, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD2 2DE. Tel. (0923) 31608.

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Editor: Mary Cadogan, 46 Overbury Avenue, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 2PY.  
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