

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W.H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

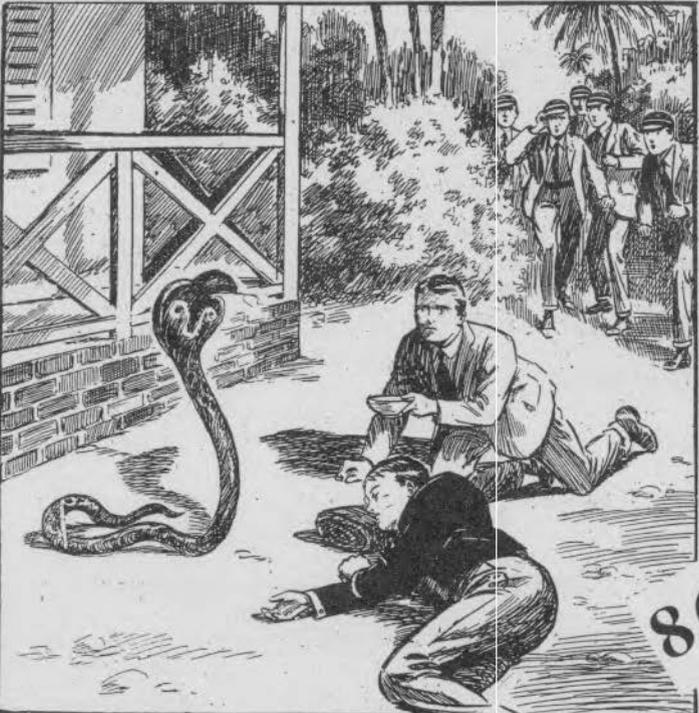
Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

S.P.C.D.: Edited and Published 1959 - January 1987 by Eric Fayne

Also
"DEEP-SEA GOLD!"
A New Story of a Wonderful Submarine Motor Car.
By
REGINALD WRAY.

The GEM

LIBRARY VOL. 6. No. 192.



86p

LURING THE PERIL FROM HIS SLEEPING CHUM!
Tom Merry held the bowl of milk firmly in his hand and crept towards the cobra. The reptile coiled away from D'Arcy, and Tom Merry drew the bowl gently back. Inch by inch, the head of the Shell drew the peril further from his sleeping chum.

14/3041

Recent purchase of collection including all BOYS OWN ANNUALS, CHUMS, CAPTAINS etc. Bound; some sold, but still a good stock of these available.

3 vols. DETECTIVE WEEKLY, fine, 254 - 279 Jan/June 1938: 307 - 331 Jan/June 1939: 202 - 227 Jan/June 1937. Maroon cloth binding, gilt lettering on spine. Also UNION JACKS, bound and unbound.

Some bound old series NELSON LEE.

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VOL. 45

No. 536

AUGUST 1991

Price 86p

The Editor's Chat



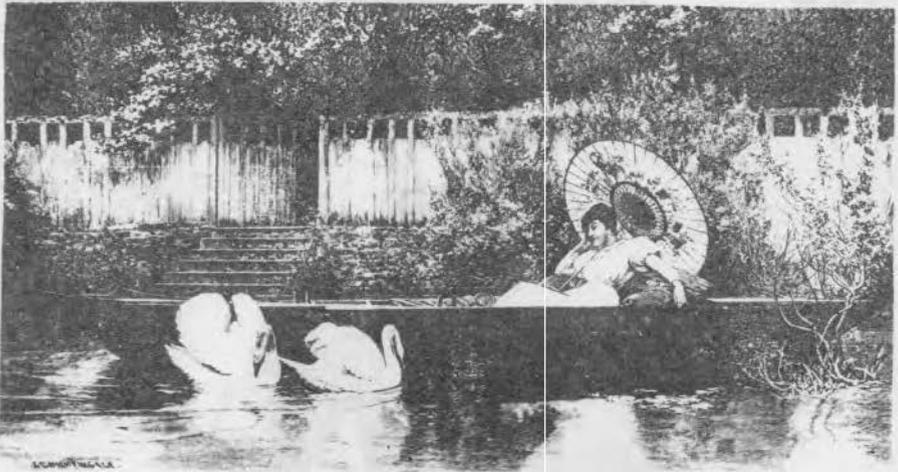
In seasonable mood, this August edition of the C.D. includes two articles that focus on the River Sark, which provided many hours of summer delight for the Greyfriars juniors - and of course for Magnet readers. Some of my earliest memories of Frank Richards's stories are of Harry Wharton & Co. - and indeed of Marjorie, Clara and Bessie - enjoying golden half-holidays on the river. With the sun dappling the shadows made by the willows overhanging the waters, and our heroes and heroines at peace with the world (even though Coker, Ponsonby or Sir

Hilton Popper might at any moment erupt to disturb their idylls) we could experience the glowing mood of the English summer at its best.

As I write this (during a rain-drenched Wimbledon tennis week!) I have to admit that, so far, the summer of 1991 has provided little opportunity for real-life enjoyment of river trips. However, one lives in hopes, and when summer suns fail to glow, and skies and waters remain drearily leaden, we can always take a trip in our imaginations on the wonderfully appealing rivers which flow so lusciously through the *Magnet*, *Gem* and *Nelson Lee* or *The Wind in the Willows*, *Three Men in a Boat* and so many other favourite books.

Happy holidays, and happy reading!

MARY CADOGAN



Your Editor says—

It helps the C.D. if readers advertise their WANTS and FOR SALE book and story-paper items, etc. in it. The rates are 4p per word; a boxed, displayed ad. costs £20.00 for a whole page, £10 for a half page or £5 for a quarter page.





AN ATTRACTIVE OFFER

This offer appeared on the inside back cover of the Nelson Lee Library, Old Series, Nos. 72, 73, 74, 75 and 76. Was the circulation in need of a boost in those early days? One wonders to what extent it was increased by this certainly very attractive offer and who the lucky winners were (no winners were shown in the weeks following). The reproductions being twice the size of the actual covers by Arthur Jones would have been really handsome if framed.

They were all excellent covers, particularly No. 75 showing Eilenn Dare being swept over a weir from a burning house-boat, bound hand and foot, and No. 76, showing Jim the Penman making an audacious escape from the carriage roof of an express train taking him to Portmoor Prison.

by Jim Sutcliffe

GREAT PICTURE COMPETITION!

The Artist's Original Water-Colour Painting

Of the Front Cover of

The Nelson Lee Library,

minus the title lettering, and signed by Mr. Arthur Jones himself; suitable for framing, will be presented to the reader who sends in, not later than November 29, the largest number of New Readers enlisted by himself. Each of these new recruits must sign the form below and give it to the prospective competitor.

Thus, for instance, if one reader enlisted a certain number of new recruits, he would be required to send in the corresponding number of signed coupons, not later than the given date, to: The Editor, "The Nelson Lee Library," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.

Everyone will, I am sure, make an attempt to win such a prize. As to the picture itself, it suffices to give the measurements—15 in. by 11 in.

No matter how many readers you get, send their names and addresses in, accompanied, of course, by your own. No one boy or girl stands any better chance than another.

I (Name)

Of (Address)

Have read No. of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY," introduced to me by my fellow reader, whose name and address are written below:

No. 75—November 11th, 1916.

The Editor's Decision is Final.

* * * * *

MORE UNUSUAL SERIES

by C.H. CHURCHILL

In a recent article I pointed out that E.S. Brooks was noted for producing series with unusual plots. I quoted the Servants' strike of spring 1920. I would like to jump a little to the summer of 1924 and old series Nos. 471/476.

This series is certainly out of the ordinary and would be more appropriate to the present day. The reason is drug taking!! In this case it was Mrs. Stokes, wife of the new Headmaster Mr. Beverly Stokes. She had succumbed to the wiles of a drug pusher as we now call them, in this case a Chinaman. Fancy! Drugs at a public school in 1924!

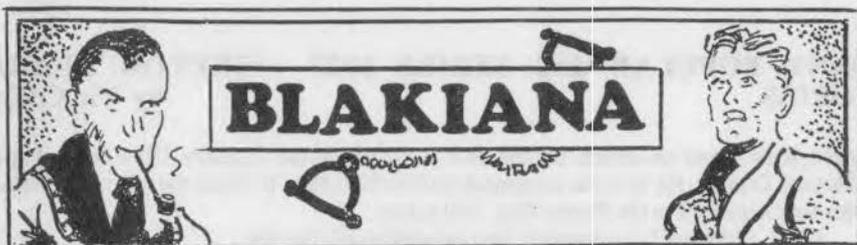
Some of the Moor View girls became involved in the action and we had quite a bit of drama. It was a short series of six tales and very enjoyable. I recommend anyone wishing for a good read to borrow these from the St. Frank's library run by Roy Parsons for the London O.B.B.C.

In the June number of the C.D. Mr. H. Heath pointed out how outstanding was the Mr. Trenton series of 1921/2, Nos. 336 to 348 old series, which included a barring out. I heartily concur with his views about this series. Another E.S.B. success.

It is rather odd that in the above Dr. Stafford was given a drug unknowingly while in the Mrs. Stokes one she was taking drugs willingly but, of course, under pressure. All this goes to show how E.S.B. seemed to be able to write about events that, however unlikely at that time, came to pass in the future. Just think of old series No. 104, "The Hovering Peril", about a newly invented aircraft that could hover above a target. Today we have helicopters. Then think of old series 366/374 of 1923, a holiday series. The St. Frank's party saved by a huge aeroplane. The Golden Rover, which could carry dozens of people. A forerunner of Concorde?

I could quote many other cases of this nature in his writings but space forbids!

WANTED: by Collector. JOHN HAMILTON: Pre-War hardbacks, any title with or without D/W, including 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.

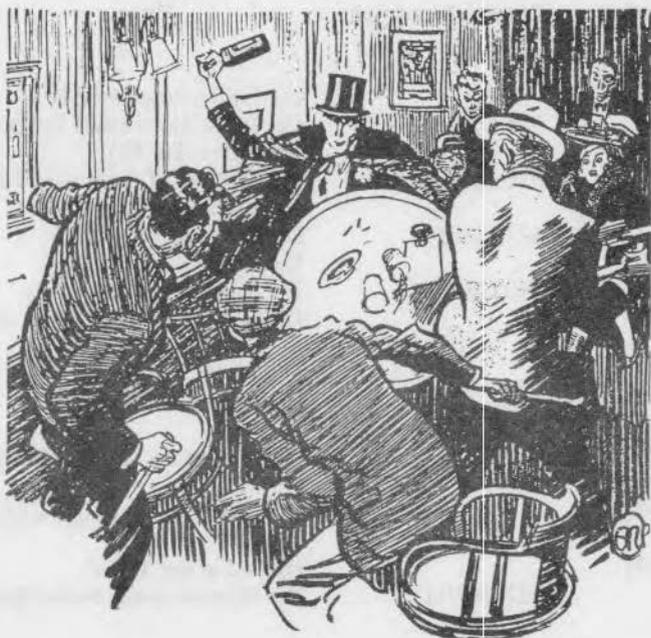


SEXTON BLAKE AND DETECTIVE WEEKLY by J.E.M.

Number 6

For the sixth in this series, we are back with Anthony Skene, this time with the fabulous Zenith the Albino himself. *The Box of Ho-Sen* (DW 8) is as exotic a story as the albino's creator ever wrote.

Early in the first chapter, Zenith smokes opium, drinks Turkish coffee from a porcelain cup and tells his servant, Cyani, that he has had sad dreams and needs to amuse himself. He is soon attired in his customary top-hat, tails and opera cloak and we know that we are now in for that special excitement that only the albino can provide. At the centre of all the fun is the mysterious Box of Ho-Sen with its priceless contents ... and its deadly secret. To tell you more, as the best blurbs and trailers say, would be to spoil this exuberant and really quite irresistible yarn. Eric Parker's drawing of Zenith in action beautifully hits off its mood.



PENNY POPULAR 2nd SERIES 1927 - SEXTON BLAKE STORIES by Vic Colby

Ray Hopkins wrote an article on the above subject in the January 1991 Story Paper Collectors' Digest. He is to be congratulated for his effort to trace the source of Blake stories that appeared in the Penny Pop. 2nd series.

I now add what I can towards the completion of this task.

The Sexton Blake stories appeared in Penny Popular 2nd series Nos. 434 (21/5/27) to 450 (10/9/27) inclusive.

Without exception they were adult stories, and did not feature Tinker: with the exception of Nos. 438 to 442 inclusive, they were all reprints of the Penny Pictorial.

I have examined every Blake Story that appeared in Penny Pictorial and its companion paper "Answers", and could not find one that would match any of those in Penny Popular Nos. 438-442.

It will be seen from the following table, that no provision was made to fit in Penny Pops 438-442 in the orderly progressive use of The Penny Pictorial Blake stories.

Were Penny Pop 438 to 442 original stories? Were they from other sources? Remember, these were adult stories and did not feature Tinker. This limits the sources available.

Hopefully, some of you erudite readers of S.P.C.D. will succeed where I have failed. Please let us know, through Blakiana, the result of your researches.

SEXTON BLAKE STORIES

Penny Popular 2nd Series	Penny Pictorial	Title
{ 434 (21/5/27)	624 (13/5/11)	The Helderstone Pearls!
{ 435 (28/5/27)		The Helderstone Pearl Robbery
{ 436 (4/6/27)	626 (27/5/11)	The Stolen Tie-Pin!
{ 437 (11/6/27)	627 (3/6/11)	The Mystery of the Stolen Tie-Pin
{ 438 (18/6/27)	630 (24/6/11)	The Black Hand!
{ 439 (25/6/27)	*	The Black Hand Mystery
{ 440 (2/7/27)		The House Boat Mystery!
{ 441 (9/7/27)	632 (8/7/11)	The Naseing Lock Mystery
{ 442 (16/7/27)		The Case of the Artificial Rubies
{ 443 (23/7/27)		The Mystery of the Forged Cheque!
		The Colonel's Guest!
		The Case of the Missing Sapphires
		The Secret of the King's Keep
		Tricked in the Train!
		The Mystery of the Stolen Banknotes

{ (444 30/7/27		The Mystery of the Theatre Box!
{ (445 (6/8/27)	633 (15/7/11)	The Mystery of Box B.
{ (446 (13/8/27)	635 (29/7/11)	The affair of the Shooting Party!
{ (447 (20/8/27)	636 (5/8/11)	The Quinton Park Tragedy
{ (448 (27/8/27)	639 (26/8/11)	What the Office Boy Saw!
{ (449 (3/9/27)	644 (30/9/11)	The Problem of the Missing Bride
{ (450 (10/9/27)	715 (8/2/13)	The Case of the Goona Pearls
{	712 (18/1/13)	The Goona Pearl Mystery
		The Three Sovereigns!
		The Mystery of the Three Sovereigns
		Diamond Cut Diamond!
		When Greek Meets Greek
		Proved Innocent!
		The Marfield Jewel Mystery.

* P. Pop 438 Did not come from P.Pic 453 "The Jewel Maker". These stories are entirely different.



YOUNG BRITAIN AND ITS SLEUTHS

by Len Hawkey

In common with almost all other boys - and, indeed girls - papers, *Young Britain* which lasted from 1919 to 1924, featured detectives in its varied stories: unlike some of its rivals, however, the paper did not make them play a large part. They numbered only three in all - or maybe four, if one counts Derek Drake, who appeared as a "sporting" sleuth in many "Tom Topping" tales.

Prompt on the scene - in the first issue, on June 14th 1919 in fact - was Lord Marcus Buller, a young aristocrat *and* millionaire. Fresh from the Great War in which he had served, naturally with distinction, his batman, Tim Berks, stayed with him as an assistant. Chief Detective Inspector Pelham Webb of the C.I.D. often sought his help, as did the Secret Service, and seemingly almost every Headmaster in Britain! Buller specialised in solving mysteries at Public Schools, and Colleges, and he was frequently the guest of some distraught dignitary at a distinguished seat of learning, or country house.

These stories were by Richard Essex, whose real name was Richard Starr, and who had himself just left the Royal Flying Corps. He was a prolific writer, and, under one pseudonym or another, wrote a good proportion of all the *Young Britain* issues. He had about 50 novels published also, and lived to be over 90, dying in the early 1970s. His Buller yarns were quite short, 4 or 5 pages at most, moving rapidly, easy to read, but short on actual deduction. Buller himself was never described in detail, but thanks to the excellent illustrations of J. Louis Smyth, we see a debonair and athletic young man, smartly dressed and sporting a monocle - a bit like a grown-up Arthur Augustus!

Time-honoured schools and noble estates figured largely in tales like "The Elkin Shield", "The Smugglers Tunnel", "The Wrong Pocket- Book", etc. but after six unbroken months, the series terminated and did not resurface.

For about a year there was virtually a complete absence of detective stories, then for a few months in 1921 the paper featured "The Exploits of Neil Dare". There had already been a Stanley Dare (The Marvel, 1904), a Daisy Dare (Dreadnought, 1912) and a Diana Dare (Funny Wonder, also 1921) but Neil does not appear to have been related to any of these others. Indeed, he is a very vague figure, as no author was given, and the brief, two-page yarns carried no illustrations, beyond a heading. This, again, was by Louis Smyth, with the detective on one side, and his young assistant, Ted Scudder on the others. Neil was a dead ringer for Marcus Buller, sans monocle, and the writer could well have been Richard Essex, Judging from the swift-moving style. Preliminaries were excluded and most tales started at the very scene of the "crime", a favourite gambit of this author.

COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.

By **RICHARD ESSEX.**



Illustration by J. Louis Smyth



NEIL DARE.

The Exploits of Neil Dare Detective



TED SOUDDER.

No. 4.—A DOUBLE HAUL.

A J. Louis Smyth 1921 picture-heading

Neil Dare only lasted a month or two, and there followed, in March 1922, the most important of the Young Britain sleuths - Maxim Law. His debut was in a serial running for five months, called, simply, "Maxim Law - Detective", and written by Frank Godwin - in fact, Richard Starr again, under a different pen-name. Law was a youngish Canadian, rich from inheritance from his British parents, and prudent oil investments. He came to London seeking adventure, and keen to exercise his "Man-hunting" talents, having served a spell in the North West Mounted Police.

He soon found himself pitted against the "Silent Twelve" a sinister, subversive gang, akin to the "Criminals Confederation", and led by the infamous Shaddo Burke. One by one, Law rounds the villains up, assisted by a young woman, Della Railton (believed to be Burke's abandoned daughter), and by Inspector Archer Dale, of the yard. Burke himself is eventually cornered, and dies from his own villainy, stung by a deadly snake he has hidden inside his shirt! It transpires that Della is really the daughter of Lord Dorrimore (no relation, Lee-ites!). The nobleman's supposed offspring, Lady Betty, is a changeling, but Della insists that the truth is kept from her.

Shaddo Burke does a "Moriarty" and returns from the grave with a new gang, thus creating a second serial "MAXIM LAW versus the AVENGERS". This also was quite lengthy but good was inevitably triumphant, and there then followed at intervals, complete stories, mostly short, but one or two running to 12 or more pages. In these a London urchin, "Billy the Kid", and a Great Dane, "President", were added to the cast to help Law.

The original serials were both illustrated by an old "Warrior" of the Amalgamated Press, Vincent S. Daniel, then probably in his 50s, and past his best. He drew the detective as a young "matinée idol" - square-jawed and curly-haired - suggesting Owen Nares or Francis X. Bushman, if those names mean anything, nowadays. A better artist, Lunt Roberts, drew most of the later stories, which petered out in August 1923, issue 220 - "The Yellow Hand". This had some splendid illustrations by J.H. Valda, as did

one or two tales of 'Ju-Ju Malleson' a so-called "Sea-Detective", which were adventure, rather than detective, stories.

That really brought down the curtain on Young Britain's cast of Detectives, although, including a New Series (which was largely only a change in the colour of the cover) the magazine tottered on until August 1924. It is puzzling to know why it failed so dismally when the "Champion", which was almost identical in style and content, inexplicably lasted until 1955, 1729 issues, against a humble 271!

An Amazing Detective Serial by Frank Godwin,



Della Railton and Maxim Law.

Illustration by Vincent S. Daniel, 1922

WANTED: £20 each offered for "Boys Friend Libraries" featuring BIGGLES. £15 each offered for 1950's Biggles and Famous Five jigsaw puzzles. £3 each offered for "Happy Mags". £15 offered for B.F.L. no. 204 "Crooked Gold". Original artwork of Bunter, Tom Merry, etc., always wanted.

NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, WD1 4JL.

THE EMPIRE LIBRARY

(An Echo of "Danny Looks Back".) (Second Half) by Eric Fayne

As a result of comments by our Danny concerning Gordon Gay and his adventures at Rylcombe Grammar School, near St. Jim's - a series which introduced us to the writer Prosper Howard, yet another pen-name of the inimitable Charles Hamilton - I was moved to browse contentedly through my volumes of the Empire Library.

In a previous issue of C.D. I discussed the first 36 issues of this paper which had published its first number in mid-February 1910. As I said then, it was very much a Hamilton paper, and it was obviously intended to cash in on the success of the Gem and the popularity of Tom Merry.

The last long Grammar School story appeared in No. 32, and now we were introduced to "Panther Grayle, Detective", in stories credited to Jack Lancaster. The detective's name is kind of familiar, so he may have been reasonably well-liked, though whether I ever read one of those tales I cannot say. And, running at the same time, was the Charles Hamilton serial "The Rivals of St. Kit's", reprinted from PLUCK. In passing, I have three presentations of this St. Kit's story in my bookcases - one in Pluck, one in the Empire, and the third in the B.F.L.

And so we come to No. 36. In this issue, the Editor made an "Important Announcement". The Empire was to be Enlarged. Possibly with tongue in cheek, the Editor said the "enlargement" was at "the earnest request of thousands of readers", and we were supposed to accept that it was due to the immense popularity of the Empire Library. From now on, right till the end, the paper was re-named The Empire Enlarged Library.

Actually the old Ed. was leading us up the garden path. The format was certainly changed, and, in those days, for those of us who were inclined to be sceptical, a change of format really indicated that the paper was not doing too well. So, hoping for the best, the Editor changed the format. The "enlargement" was rather misleading, too. The Ed. was a wily old fellow. True, the page sizes were doubled. The Empire, originally of Gem and Magnet measurements, now changed to Boys' Friend and Boys' Realm sheet-size. But the original Empire had consisted of 20 pages. The new enlarged Empire consisted of 8 pages (which would have been only 16 in the previous format) and it was printed on white paper throughout.

A New and Interesting Story for All.

(Continued from the front page.)



**COUSIN ETHEL'S
SCHOOLDAYS**

A TALE OF TOM MERRY'S CHUM
BY MARTIN CLIFFORD

Drop a line to
the Editor and
tell him how
you like me.
—Cousin Ethel.

So, at the end of October 1910, the Empire started again at No. 1, new series. Panther Grayle was on the cover in a large illustration by the Gem artist, R.J. Macdonald. But the big attraction was, apparently, the start of a wonderful new serial, by Martin Clifford, entitled "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays." It is described, throughout its run, as "a tale of Tom Merry's Chum." This was not really accurate. Ethel was Figgins' chum, if my memory is not playing tricks. Once again it was cashing in on the popularity of Tom Merry.

A thought or two on "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays." Some years later it was re-serialised in the Gem, and then appeared as a complete story in the B.F.L. So, once again, I have 3 versions of a Hamilton story in my bookcases.

With No. 9, the Grammar School stories, by Prosper Howard, were resumed, and these continued till No. 26. In No. 11 there commenced a NEW (the capitals and underlining were those of the Editor) School serial by Charles Hamilton, entitled "The Rivals of St. Wode's." (The Editor placed a comment under the heading to the instalments, viz, "The best school tale I have ever read.")

So now the Empire contained two serials by Charles Hamilton ("Rivals of St. Kit's" was drawing to its close now): a Grammar School story by Prosper Howard, and a serial by Martin Clifford. Very much a Hamilton paper, as I mentioned before.

And other stories made up a full programme. An unusual and rather dubious serial, one would think, was "The Dark Lantern", a story of Charles Peace.

Right across the front cover of No. 23 was the announcement: "Special Message from Tom Merry of St. Jim's!" (see page 187).

That message appeared in the Editor's Chat, named "Shoulder to Shoulder" in the Empire. A grand new serial was announced to appear in the Empire. It would be "Tom Merry's Island" by Martin Clifford - starting very shortly. And the "message from Tom Merry" followed, in an enclosed section:

"My dear Empirites, - Those of you who have not met me already in 'The Gem' will be introduced to me in the Empire soon. I hope my adventures on the island will prove jolly exciting reading; but, of course, Gussy makes an ass of himself as usual! Your chum,

TOM MERRY."

And the page footnotes throughout that issue read "Look out for Tom Merry in this paper."

But that was the last mention of "Tom Merry's Island" in the Empire. Readers must have been suprised, the following week, that there was no mention of the coming fine new serial.

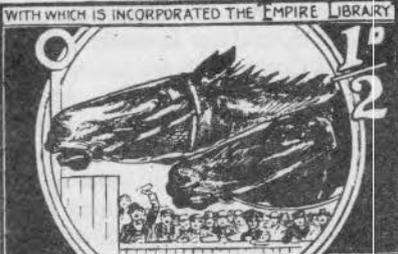
In fact, just 5 weeks later, the Empire folded with No. 28 (new series), dated May 8th 1911. And "The Boys of Slapton School", tales of Teddy Lester, had just started. I have a vague feeling that, years ago, some C.D. readers had happy memories of Teddy Lester, though I never read of him myself.

The Empire was now amalgamated with THE FOOTBALL & SPORTS LIBRARY, and Teddy Lester was running in that paper.

A mention of that elusive serial "Tom Merry's Island", which was promised to Empire readers but never appeared. This clearly was adapted and appeared, later in 1911, in the Gem in a very fine 3-story series, under the consecutive titles of "The Mysterious Document", "Tom Merry's Treasure Island", and "The Schoolboy Castaways." I loved that series as a youngster (and still do!) never realising that it had a fascinating little history.

And so the Empire passed into history after 64 issues - a run of a few months over a year. And now - there are probably very few who knew that it ever existed. Very definitely a Hamilton paper to charm the youth of 1910 - 1911. Today it is unknown - or merely forgotten - except, maybe, by just a handful who never forget.

I am uncertain whether the Hamilton story "Rivals of St. Wode's" was ever reprinted in some other paper. Anyone know? It probably appeared as a complete novel in the B.F.L., but, if so, I do not seem to have that one in my own collection.

<p>THIS IS THE LAST NUMBER of THE 'EMPIRE'</p> <p>But—</p> <p>All the Grand Stories which appear in this Number will be continued in To-morrow's Issue of</p> <p>"THE 'B.R.' FOOTBALL & SPORTS LIBRARY."</p> <p>BE SURE YOU GET IT!</p>	<p>THE FOOTBALL & SPORTS LIBRARY.</p> <p>WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED THE 'EMPIRE' LIBRARY</p>  <p>ONLY A STABLE LAD A SUPERB NEW SPORTING SERIAL</p>  <p>The CRUSADERS IN AFRICA A TALE OF FOWKES & CO. ON TOUR</p>	<p>No Need to Wait a Week Because—</p> <p>in To-morrow's Grand Issue of "THE 'B.R.' FOOTBALL & SPORTS LIBRARY," all our Grand Stories are Continued.</p> <p>The Price is One Halfpenny.</p> <p>BE SURE YOU GET IT!</p>
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WANTED to purchase: H.B. Book Club vol. 1. 'The Worst Boy at Greyfriars' and H.B. Vol. 18 'The Stacey Special'; also The Gem's 'Black Box/Silver Swallow' series (nos. 1625 - 1634 inclusive of 1939) and the Gem's 'Silverson' series (nos. 1647 - 1663 inclusive of September 1939). All postage will be paid. Must be in reasonably good condition. Write with offers, to: Naveed Haque, 152 Spadina Road, Richmond Hill, Ontario, L4B 2V2, Canada.

A RIVER SCENE

by E. Baldock

Charles Hamilton's love of rivers is evident in much of his writings. In his Autobiography he states that whenever he had a problem to solve or a decision to make he automatically made for the water. Afloat, these situations and their answers became clear in his mind. The Sark is never far from the central theme in many of his stories, with the familiar tow-path and that house of doubtful pleasure, the 'Three Fishers', in its bosky surroundings. Popper Island - a much disputed fastness in the wider reaches of the river plays a far from minor part in the Greyfriars saga.

The Sark on a summer 'halfer' was the mecca for many fellows displaying a wide diversity of skills and prowess both on and in the cool green water. The scene would be incomplete without reference to waterspouts discernable in the distance signalling the presence, and the manful but lamentable, rowing activities of Horace Coker, together with Potter and Green, who are sitting fuming and saturated in the stern. There were times - quite a number of times - when Coker's oars missed the river completely. On these occasions his comrades escaped relatively lightly. It was when Coker's oars ploughed deep into the Sark that trouble - and water - arose much to the discomfort of his companions. Coker's dulcet tones would re-echo along the quiet willow-shaded banks as he expounded endlessly upon his own impeccable rowing techniques and the dismal ignorance of all lesser fellows disporting themselves on the river at the time.

There were occasions when, had a plank been available, Potter and Green would have happily made their leader walk its length and drown his eloquence in the green depths. That is wishful thinking. There is no plank. Even had one been aboard it is very possible that Potter and Green would have been the victims to proceed along its swaying length. Horace Coker's 'short way with fags' had a considerable elasticity which not infrequently extended itself to senior fellows. It is on record as having been inflicted upon lordly members of the sixth form to their collective outrage.

Over the years notable river engagements have been recorded between Harry Wharton and Co. and the great Horace. These affairs were wild and woolly while they lasted. Both parties would emerge in a deplorable state at the termination of hostilities, which usually resulted in Coker's craft being boarded, and the great man being hurled without ceremony into the river midst shouting and cheering from an appreciative audience on the tow-path.

Here also would be seen Vernon Smith cutting speedily through the water in his skiff, making barely a ripple, while Wingate, Gwynne, Sykes and - yes, Loder surging by in the middle of the stream, made a formidable four practising for the coming water sports.

It was with such scenes as these that Charles Hamilton excelled. This has been the summer background to Greyfriars over many years.

Even the uproarious and less than dignified battles waged between the heroes of the second and third forms in the reedy shallows by the boat house will, one hopes, leave an echo, a happy memory in the minds of those young warriors which will perchance surface long years ahead when their Greyfriars days are no more. In such a way are traditions built and legends born.

GREYFRIARS AND THE SARK

by Colin Cole

I refer to the article sent in by Mr. John Lewis on page 28 of the Collectors Digest, June 1991 issue.

The "Popper Island Rebels" series of 1934 (Magnets Nos. 1374 to 1382) contains a good deal of information concerning the flow and direction of the River Sark.

In particular, Chapter No. 2 of Magnet No. 1382 relates how Harry Wharton watches a barge from the landing-place on Popper's Island. It reads, "Barges passed the island every day, coming up from Pegg to Courtfield or going down from Courtfield to Pegg". This indicates that the mouth of the Sark is in Pegg Bay. Peter McCall refers to this in his "Greyfriars Guide".

As the flow of a river determines which is the left or right bank of the river, Greyfriars, Popper Court and the Three Fishers are all on the left bank of the Sark. This would tally with the reference in Magnet No. 1528 (1937) when Bessie Bunter says "There's Greyfriars".

When one looks at the maps mentioned by Mr. Lewis, it is rather surprising to find Lantham Woods on the opposite side of the river bank to Popper Court Woods. I can only suggest that Lantham is in a different direction from Courtfield and Greyfriars to the placement of Lantham indicated on the maps. From my reading of the Magnet, my impression of the location of Lantham Woods is that they are some distance from Lantham. Magnet No. 1522 refers to the Lantham side of the river and the fact that the area between the Lantham Road and the River Sark is well wooded. The woods either extend to the river or, they can be seen on the high downland between the town of Lantham and the river.

WHO WAS BLUEBELL COURTNEY?

by Tommy Keen

A male reader of the C.D. wrote to me some time ago asking if I remembered a character known as 'Little Bluebell' at Morcove.

Indeed I remember the character he mentioned; she came into prominence at the time when the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN had celebrated its first anniversary. The series in which she was to appear featured an unpleasant Sixth Former called Laura Turner. This girl was a vicious bully, being particularly vindictive to Betty Barton and her chums of the Fourth, and, from being a tyrant, she becomes a thief. Laura tampers with a cash-box, and then steals Madge Minden's bracelet, which Madge had left on the piano in the music room. During the next half-day, Betty & Co. see Laura leaving the pawnbroker's shop in Bamcombe, and discover that it is Madge's bracelet, that she has handed in.

Rather than face disgrace at Morcove, Laura runs away, and through sheltering in a truck belonging to a circus, is discovered by the circus owner - a Mr. Samways - who, though not entirely sympathetic to Laura's plight, allows her to stay with the circus.

Now for one of those amazing reformations that take place in our favourite stories. Laura repents of her past misdeeds, and is allowed to perform in the circus ring as a Spanish Dancer, inventing the name of Donna Carlotta. Enter 'Little Bluebell', a frail, but beautiful fair haired girl, who is really the circus drudge, a girl who was evidently stolen as a child, not even knowing her surname. Laura takes pity

on Bluebell, and they become great friends, but then, to Laura's dismay, she learns that the circus is to stay for a few days in Barncombe. However, with dyed hair and a Spanish Costume, she hopes she will not be recognised by any Morcove girls, should they be at a performance.

A Mr. Courtney visits the circus grounds, runs into Bluebell, and is utterly charmed by her. He tells her he has been to visit his two nieces at Morcove School, Cora and Judith Grandways, these girls being the avowed enemies of Betty Barton & Co. Then things happen quickly. Betty & Co. (and other girls) are at one of the performances with their Headmistress, Miss Somerfield.

The Schoolgirls' Own Library No 109



THE CIRCUS-GIRL OF MORCOVE

by
MARJORIE
STANTON

A STORY OF AN EARLY ADVENTURE
OF BETTY BARTON & CO
Introducing Bluebell the Little Fairy Dancer.

0/11/20.

They are enthralled by the magnificent dancing of Donna Carlotta, and watch spellbound as Bluebell rides around the arena on a horse, having to leap through a hoop of fire. But there is a mishap, and Bluebell's flimsy dress is caught by the flames. Panic everywhere, but into the ring rushes Donna Carlotta with a cape, with which she beats out the flames on Bluebell's dress. Donna becomes a heroine, and is cheered by the Morcove girls, not even recognising her at close quarters. Mr. Cyril Courtney is also there and now, as Bluebell is very ill, it is arranged with Miss Somerfield that the little circus girl should go into the sanatorium at Morcove. Bluebell calls for Donna Carlotta, and that girl is brought to Morcove. There she confesses that she is really Laura Turner, but, through her braveness in saving Bluebell's life, she is allowed to return to the Sixth Form.

Now, problems for Bluebell. Mr. Courtney becomes her guardian, much to the disgust of the Grandways girls, and she becomes a member of the Fourth Form. Paula Creel asks Bluebell to join her in her study.

Bluebell (like Jimmy Vivian of Greyfriars, and various other waifs and strays) has speech problems, and is soon derided by Cora and Judith and minor other characters in the Fourth. Also, through mischief caused by the Grandways, but much to the distress of Paula, Bluebell is 'Sent to Coventry'. Worse is to come. She is accused of theft, and, now entirely friendless, she (like Laura before her) runs away from the school. Mr. Courtney arrives at Morcove, hears of Bluebell's 'disgrace', and decides to solve the problems. He interviews Cora and Judith separately, who tell conflicting stories, each giving the other away, and Mr. Courtney realises that it is his own nieces who are to blame for all the trouble that has befallen Bluebell.

To find Bluebell is the next problem, and Paula Creel thinks the girl may have returned to the circus.

In Miss Somerfield's car, the Headmistress, Paula and Mr. Courtney go in search, and Bluebell is found, as Paula surmised, at the circus. All is now cleared up. Bluebell returns to Morcove, and, learning that the Grandways girls are to be expelled, pleads on their behalf, and they are allowed to remain.

Evidently Mr. Courtney was the brother of Mrs. Grandways, but neither he, nor Bluebell was heard of much more. For the next year or so, Bluebell's name occasionally cropped up, and then she vanished completely from the scene. An early SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY, by Marjorie Stanton, had Bluebell playing a prominent part, but this was possibly her swan-song, as she was not even listed in the 'Morcove Who's Who' in the 1928 SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN ANNUAL. With a name like Bluebell, she had probably had her day!

350 Various Boys Papers, 1960s - 1970s offers, or exchange for pre-war Boys papers (pro rata).

WANTED: Hotspur No. 187, Champion No. 1506. Also Sexton Blake Annual (Market Scene on cover). K. TOWNSEND, 7 North Close, Willington, Derby, DE6 6EA. Tel. Burton-on-Trent (0283) 703305.

WHY DO WE READ?

by J.E.M.

The short answer to this question, as our Editor and Ian Godden made clear in June's Digest, is primarily for enjoyment. Instruction or enlightenment always come second. And this is as true for the highbrow as for the rest of us. The loftiest-browed reader does not tackle difficult works in order to make himself miserable. Even if his interest lies only in analysis and criticism, this is surely the exact source of his enjoyment. Why else would he bother? When we read for academic purposes we are not likely to pass many examinations if we don't derive some real interest or pleasure, however small, from our text books.

Mary Cadogan also hits the nail firmly on the head when she refers to changing literary values. Yesterday's pot boiler can so easily become today's "classic" Charles Dickens, for one, provides a good example. Popular from the start with the "ordinary" reader, his writing was long sneered at by the highbrow. However, since intellectuals of our own century like Dr. Leavis "discovered" him a whole army of critics have praised Dickens to the skies, his work being compared with that of almost every great writer from Aristophanes to Franz Kafka!

And things have moved on, even from Leavis. Many modern critics - including a recently appointed Professor of Literature at Oxford - now question whether there can ever be fixed and certain values in fiction, and challenge the whole idea of "superior" literature as it has been traditionally taught (the so-called "canon"). This is surely a sensible approach, though of course it does **not** mean there are no important differences between BEANO and the Bard!

What concerns me far more about **any** writing, highbrow or low, is whether it has any moral content - whether, in short, it is at some point concerned with "good" and "bad". And I am not arguing for a lot of what our old story-papers called pi-jaw or sermonising. A newspaper critic recently referred to the decay of our ideals and the increasing violence which now accompanies that decay. How true. Books and films - fiction of every kind - are full of decay and violence. The moral pill which Charles Hamilton (and many others) so skilfully administered to us when we were young did give us standards which, whether we lived up to them or not, would hardly be understood by many present-day young readers of the wham-bam-pow school of comics and pop fiction whose chief attraction is violence. A good many years ago, I recalled in a Digest article a short story which made a most powerful impression upon me when I was about ten years old and I should like to refer to it again. Part of a collection by Herbert Strang under the title *By Land and Sea* (and how I wish I still had that wonderful book!), it was entitled *The Cheat* and concerned a boy called Harold Linkman. In the opening episode, he is caught cheating in a school examination room and, of course, duly disgraced. The incident closes with the words, "Harold Linkman had

cheated for the first time". His subsequent life is marked by a series of dishonest acts, each one of which ends, "Harold Linkman had cheated for the second (third, etc) time".

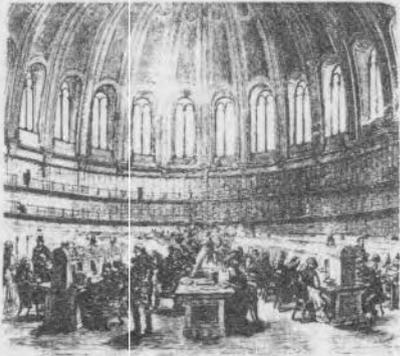
Now a wretched young man, he joins the French Foreign Legion and finally saves his commanding officer's life by deliberately wearing his uniform and getting killed in his place. As the last line of the story has it, "Harold Linkman had cheated - for the last time".

What a wonderful little parable of moral redemption - selfishness and dishonesty finally atoned for by a conscience that had never been entirely destroyed. Whether this story helped me (or anyone else) to become a better person is open to question but, like so much wholesome fiction of our childhood, it did bring home some important moral truths. At the same time, as my memory of it shows, it also gave me much enjoyment. "Great" literature? I doubt it and I don't think it matters. I only wish young people had access to more such writing today.

"READER'S TICKET"

by Dennis L. Bird

When I began writing for the "C.D." and its annual a few years ago, I based my articles on my own collection of the old papers. However, this is a limited resource, and earlier this year I began to wish I had access to some complete runs of particular titles. I think it was Mary Cadogan who suggested the library at the British Museum, so I wrote to them for a reader's ticket. The ensuing saga may be of interest to "C.D." enthusiasts.



For about six weeks I heard nothing; then I got a letter and an application form - followed a week later by another, identical letter. Anyway, they were helpful because they told me the Shelf Number (vital information, I discovered) of the old "Schoolgirls' Weekly", which I wanted to see for Valerie Drew stories.

I filled in the application form, in which you have to state your reasons for wanting a ticket. The Library like you to go to some other source if possible, because of pressure on their services - but of course there is nowhere else to go for our kind of material. I took my form along to the British Museum, up the steps to the vast, classical portico and through the main hall to a little corridor. Here you hand in your form and are shown into a small waiting room - like the dentist's. I found that getting a ticket is quite a lengthy process. The room was full of people, and although you are encouraged to take a numbered card (like you do at cheese counters at a supermarket), no one had bothered to do so. Accordingly I had to try to remember who was already there when I walked in, and also to note who came in after, so that I took my proper turn. Each interview seemed to take about 10 to 15 minutes, and there were eight or

nine people ahead of me. When I was eventually called, I explained why I needed to have access (fortunately, writing for "C.D." was apparently a sufficiently academic reason). I was then given a friendly run-down on the British Library's services, rules, and so on. Then I had my photograph taken, twice. At last I was given my reader's ticket, with picture; the whole thing had taken about an hour. Incidentally, there is no charge.

I then went into the famous circular "Reading Room at the British Museum", underneath its huge dome; I thought of Karl Marx brewing up his political diatribes there in Victorian times, and the author of "Three Men in a Boat" discovering that he had all the diseases known to medical science apart from housemaid's knee. I decided to take advantage of the advance booking service, and filled in a request for the 1938 "Schoolgirls' Weekly" to be available for me five days later.

On the due day, I went to the enquiry desk; they sent me to the Book Reservations office, who in turn told me to go to the gallery of the North Library, through a tunnel. The lady there looked at my reservation form, and sent me back to Book Reservations. They said it was nothing to do with them: go to the Book Delivery Service in the main room. So I besought the aid of a helpful young lady there, who disappeared for a quarter of an hour. She came back and said that the books I needed were in the North Library now. So back through the tunnel, up the spiral staircase, to be given a large blue volume. "The Schoolgirl", not the "S.W.!" Mistake pointed out - North Library Lady sends me back to Book Delivery - supervisor comes to my aid, and is most helpful and efficient. Together we check the Shelf Number in the index; I had indeed ordered the right number, the mistake was in the Delivery Service. Another 15-minute wait - then at last the desired books arrived. This had all taken 50 minutes, and about 400 yards of walking.

My second visit just over a week later was equally fraught with difficulty. This time I decided not to risk the advance reservation system, but to chance my luck by just arriving and sending in a request - this time for Noel Raymond stories. I arrived about 12.30 and ominously was told "It's nearly lunchtime - this could take two hours." That was an accurate forecast! Having tackled four crosswords and read all the newspapers, I waited until 2.45 without anything arriving. Once again I sought assistance, and yet another helpful lady apologised for the delay, and went off to get what I needed herself. I finally left well satisfied at 4 p.m. having been able to make photocopies of 11 of the stories (cost 16 pence a page). You are allowed to use the copier yourself provided the books are checked by staff and judged suitably robust to be handled by the public. More fragile items have to be copied by the Library's own service, at a much higher cost.

"Third time lucky", they say, and so it was. Next time I telephoned on a Friday with the Shelf Numbers I wanted; I went along the following Wednesday - and everything worked like a dream. There were the books I wanted, and I soon had another 10 N.R. stories and a complete Valerie Drew serial to add to my collection.

I suppose when you consider how many thousands - perhaps millions - of items the British Library has, it is not surprising that there should be occasional hiccups in gaining access. And the staff are unfailingly courteous and eager to help. I look forward to many more visits.....

May I - belatedly - take issue with J.E.M., in connection with a piece he contributed to your August 1990 issue [No. 524]? He says: 'And how memorable and authentic are Eric Parker's brilliant illustrations. This drawing which inevitably suffers through reduction in size, is still distinguished by the superb detail of its background.'

When I was editing children's books back in the fifties, Eric Parker drew many illustrations for me. None of his work suffered by being reduced in size. Indeed, Eric, being an illustrator of long experience, always drew with the knowledge that his work would be reduced in size. He usually worked twice up, and the resulting reproduction gained considerably from its reduction in size. Eric's impressionistic style was ideal for such treatment, especially in his later years, when his eyesight required that his work should be drawn to even larger scale.

The illustrations are taken from 2 Biggles stories which Eric Parker illustrated for me in the 1950s. I worked then for the Daily Mail, editing and writing various books and publications. W.E. Johns wrote several Biggles stories for me - none of which has appeared elsewhere, to my knowledge. Eric Parker was an old friend and neighbour of mine, and he illustrated a number of items.

Editor's Note: I think that when J.E.M. referred to Eric Parker's pictures suffering through reduction in size, he had particularly in mind the fact that illustrations used in the C.D. have often to be fairly considerably reduced.



BIGGLES walked into his office at Scotland Yard, tossed a sheaf of papers on his desk, dropped into his chair and stared moodily at the spiral of smoke rising from his cigarette.

"Now what's the trouble?" asked Ginger, who knew the signs.

By Captain W. E. Johns

DAWN PATROL

A Biggles Story

BY CAPTAIN W. E. JOHNS



*After a brief "She's Okay",
he strode briskly to the
Operations Room*

WANTED: The Gem No. 57, The Ranger - 1931, The Thriller 1937-38, The
Champion 1940, The Triumph 1940, Girls Own Paper 1940-1947, Collins Magazine
for Boys and Girls 1950, The Junior Mirror 1954-1956:- PAUL MARRIOTT, 8 The
Heath, Leighton Buzzard, Beds. LU7 7 HL. Tel. 0525-382669

THE HOTSPUR BOOK FOR BOYS 1937

(Part One)

There were a number of books around our house as I grew up, mostly those of my elder brother and sister. Later on I would come to share their enthusiasm for the William books although never agreeing with their admiration for P.G. Wodehouse. I will always be grateful, especially, to my brother who stopped me from contributing a rather ordinary-looking book to a waste-paper drive. "Worth reading; a good story," he said. It was. It was Rider Haggard's "Allan Quatermain", the finest adventure story I've ever read.

I am sure that he'd already forgotten his other contribution to my list of "all-time favourite" books. In a cupboard I had discovered an annual which must have been his: THE HOTSPUR BOOK FOR BOYS. The cover picture caught the attention immediately. On a desert island beach a band of ragged schoolboys intently watch a native in loincloth and mortar board instructing them in lighting a fire, using a pointed stick and dry wood. Looking on disapprovingly is their teacher, cane in hand.

The spine illustration shows a cricket match with a native batsman swiping away the ball with a spiked war club and on the back cover is the English schoolmaster tearfully peeling onions into a cooking pot! Straightaway you are intrigued. What story lies behind these pictures? (Actually, "The Headmaster of Kanaka" but more of that later.)

This annual was issued in the autumn of 1936 for the year 1937. It was the third Hotspur Book to appear; the story paper had begun in 1933. It was in the format that would be followed in the first eight annuals until 1943. (Then they ceased except for one, reduced in size, for 1949. The annuals recommenced in the sixties in picture strip style, and continue so up to the present.) It measured 10 inches by seven and a half inches, and was printed on thick paper. There were 117 pages with a full page colour plate as frontispiece. There were many line illustrations. The stories (10) varied from 8 to 14 pages in length and, unlike the 1926 ROVER BOOK which was the subject of my first article, it featured cartoon comic characters and a general interest article on schools in other lands, in picture form. It cost two and sixpence.

The front-end papers' full page cartoons (by Chick Gordon?) featured the popular Cheery Chinks and the Coal-Blacks (negroes like those from the Wizard's Spadger Isle). The back end-papers also featured full page drawings of the same characters.

The coloured frontispiece is an illustration to the first story in the volume, "The School of Terror". It shows a young schoolboy gazing in horror into a secret torture chamber beneath his school. Around a glowing brazier, where sinister irons are heating, are teachers and schoolmates bound in chains.

Opposite the frontispiece a full page title-page spells out on rifle-range targets THE HOTSPUR BOOK FOR BOYS; "A Bullseye every time". Four youngsters are taking careful aim at the targets. One of the lads is wearing a kilt.

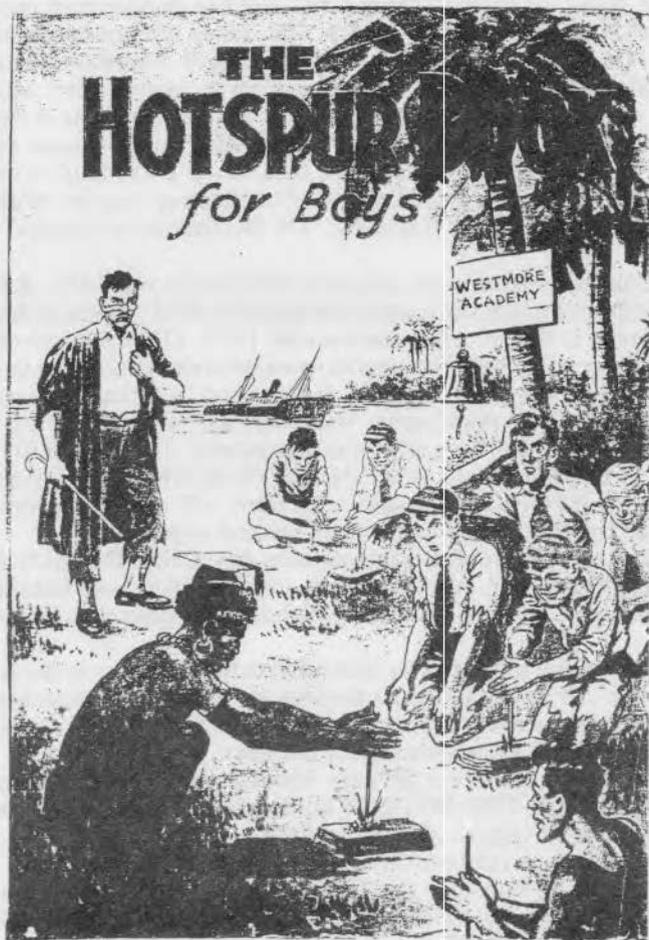
The two full-page cartoons in the main body of the annual are also school related. In one, Silas Snatcher the Truant Catcher, ten frames show the comic discomfiting of Silas as he officiously tracks down school dodgers. (No artists are credited but it is almost certainly the work of the great Allan Morley, creator of many

Thomson favourites like "Nosey Parker", "Keyhole Kate", "Freddy the Fearless Fly" etcetera. See Alan Clark's fascinating book *THE BEST OF BRITISH COMIC ART.*)

The other full page cartoon, entitled *THE BAD EXAMPLE*, shows naughty schoolboys sliding their school bannisters and swinging on a rope. A master comes by and punishes them but is so taken with their idea that he tries it himself. In no time, as disconcerted boys look on, a line of masters take it in turn to follow their "bad example"! No artist is credited, unfortunately.

The general interest feature, not surprisingly for the school-obsessed Hotspur, is *FUNNY FORMS*, drawings with text of unusual schools around the world. They range from flying lessons in the U.S.A. to Arab classes beneath date-palms.

(To be continued)



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Facsimiles. All V.G./F. Each £5.00

Bound Volume, Boys Realm, No. 267 to 282. Fine £55.00

Schoolboys Own Library No. 1 (30/4/25) V.G./F. £15.00

Dick Turpin Library. V.G. Each £2.00

Detective Story, 1920s (N. Lees) Each £1.00

Champion Library 1930s. V.G./F. Each £3.00

Boys Friend Library 1930s. G. V.G. Each £2.00

Sexton Blake Library, 1920s. G. V.G. Each £2.00-£2.50

Tip Top 1930/1940 Each £3.00

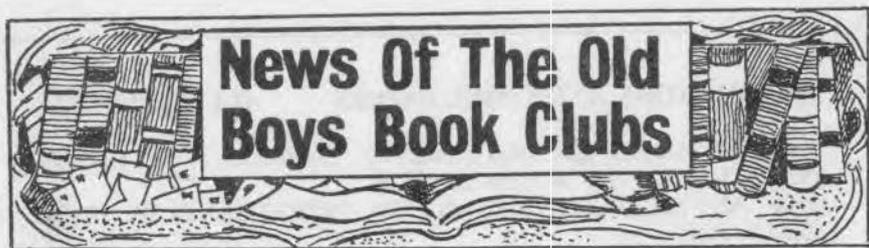
Jingles 1940. V.G. Each £3.00

Schoolboys Own Library. V.G. F. Each £2.50

Magnet, Gem, Topper (Reading copies only). To clear at 70p each discount for large order. Collectors Digest dating back to the 1940s 3 for £1.00.

M.J. SHIPLEY, 13 Compton Grove, Kingswinford, West Midlands.
DY6 9NR. Tel. 0384 292037.

WANTED: Sexton Blake Annuals 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941. A very good price paid for the set of all four in good condition. Alternatively, if desired, an exchange for part cash and a number of SBL 1st, 2nd or 3rd series (or Magnets) can be negotiated. Terry Beenham, 20 Longshots Close, Broomfield, Chelmsford, CM1 5DX. Tel. 0245 443059.



News Of The Old Boys Book Clubs

LONDON O.B.B.C.

Our June meeting was held at Eric and Betty Lawrence's home in Wokingham. Eric started things off with a cryptic quiz, 15 brainteasers leading to the names of famous fictional schoolboys. Joint winners were Don Webster and Roger Jenkins.

Following a break for tea, our old friend Eric Fayne entertained us with one of his popular elimination games. The first four correct solutions were received from Roy Parsons, Mark Taha, Don Webster and Roger Jenkins. Phil Griffiths then read an amusing story 'Aunt Jane's Treat' (from *William the Fourth*) and Bill Bradford read from Newsletter No. 224 concerning the meeting held in June 1971. Members were then asked to give a brief account of how they became members of the O.B.B.C. Warm thanks were expressed to Eric and Betty for their hospitality.

The July meeting was held at the Chingford Horticultural Society Hall in Larkshall Road. Don Webster showed us once again that there are "things we didn't know we didn't know" with another of his Frustration quizzes covering not only the hobby but also a wide range of other topics. Winners were Brian Doyle, Mark Taha and Alan Pratt. Tea followed, complete with strawberries freshly picked from the garden of Tony and Audrey Potts.

Norman Wright then launched into a presentation on Biggles with the aid of colour slides. Norman traced the emergence of the character from a space-filling short story in *Popular Flying* through to his immense popularity as a premier fictional boys' hero. In sharp contrast, Mark Taha then read to us from George Macdonald Fraser's "Flashman in the Great Game", a sequence in which Flashman is horrified to discover that his sins at Rugby have been recorded for posterity in "Tom Brown's Schooldays."

Warm thanks were expressed to Tony and Audrey Potts for arranging the venue and providing another excellent tea.

ALAN PRATT

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

On 13th July, a fine, sunny and pleasant afternoon, a convivial party assembled at the home of Geraldine Lamb and family in Macclesfield, Cheshire for an informal summer break and barbecue.

John Lamb with his brother James, managed to light the barbecue (after some consternation and hilarity!) and in no time steaks, burgers and sausages were being cooked - John taking on the role of chief cook. Despite claiming that he had never

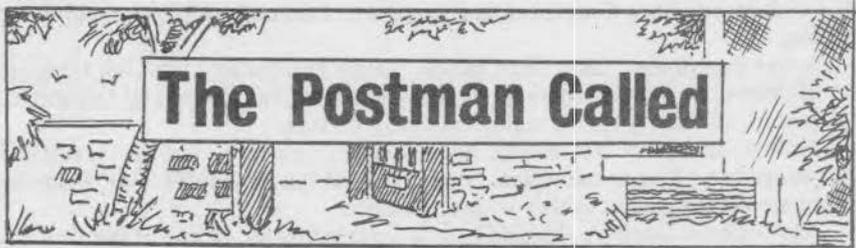
cooked on a barbecue before, John must have equalled the expertise of Bunter who was renowned for cooking sosses on the study fire!

Geraldine supplemented the meat course by providing hot bread - plain and garlic varieties - hot chili spare ribs, a selection of salad and relishes and hot baked potatoes. A selection of three of her delicious sweets followed, along with goblets of wine, and the barbecue was a great success.

In the house, we were again enthralled by the large collection of books, papers and comics that seemed to cram every corner. During our informal chat over drinks of the soft and not so soft variety, we were able to look at the "dummy" library catalogue prepared by Mark and Paul, and it was just a case of designing the covers and getting the printing done. An excellent job of work on behalf of the two members concerned. We noted with interest and anticipation that there would, after all, be a possibility that the further Magnet reprints in the Howard Baker Press programme would be published.

A rousing vote of thanks was made to Geraldine, John and James before we all departed for home at 9.20 p.m. An excellent meeting in lovely surroundings with good weather and a warm and friendly welcome.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR



IAN J.R. BENNETT (Leicester): Re. your article in the June C.D. on THE COCOCUB NEWS - what memories! My younger sisters and I were enthusiastic members in those long past days. I can vividly remember the paper with the Coronation covers which you featured. Concerning the badge, 'MFBEPF' was Cococub Code for 'LEADER' (just use the letter after that required in each case: the first code I ever came across - great fun!). But I can't remember how one qualified for 'leader'.... Thanks for keeping C.D. such a delight!

COLIN PARTIS (Great Grimsby): Re. John Beck's note in the May C.D., he may be interested to know that the Sparshott publishers, William C. Merritt, ran a companion series by Charles Hamilton under the Hilda Richards name. These books are THE GIRLS OF HEADLAND HOUSE, UNDER BECKY'S THUMB and WINIFRED ON THE WARPATH. Headland House was near Sparshott, and the boys featured in the first story. W.C.M. also published five love stories by Hamilton, as Winston Cardew. I can only remember two titles. LOVE WINS AT LAST and FOR LOVE OF A LAND GIRL. They also published DEATH IN THE DARK, the first of a crime series by Hamilton as Michael Blake. I don't think any more in these series were published.

I was interested in your article about the Cococubs. I too was a member and still have my badge. I had the leader bar, and under that a star with a V on it for veteran member. You could get this after, I think, being a member for two years. As there is a hole in the metal of the bottom of the veteran star, there may have been something further you could go on to. I remember the magazine also used to feature a message from the Red Indian Chief, Big Chief Hoskinonton.... they also ran a programme on either Radio Luxembourg or Radio Lyons..... I still have another badge, which I vaguely remember as that of the 'Choc Tocs', which I think might have been some joint promotion by the Sunday Express and Bourne Vita.....

Perhaps some reader would put me right about this?

CLARICE HARDING (Sidmouth): A quick note to say how much I enjoyed the latest C.D., especially the Cliff House cover, the pictures of Clara, and the Silent Three adventure.

PETE HANGER (Northampton): Roger Jenkins doesn't seem to think much of 1937 as far as the Magnet is concerned. I am inclined to agree with him, except for the Spring/Summer period (1516-1540). This short period of 6 months has always been a firm favourite of mine, and if ever I was foolhardy enough to stick out my neck and proclaim a Golden Age then this would be it. If one wanted to choose a Magnet period with which to introduce Greyfriars to a youngster, I do not think one could do better than then.

It has everything I like: short series, mostly humourous, but with their proper share of drama; the whole panorama of Greyfriars and Cliff House and Highcliffe laid out before us, and nearly all the major characters 'on stage'.

Holiday series are not among my favourites generally, but the Seaview Park Easter series is a pleasant exception. Ponsonby and the Highcliffe 'nuts' figure in the plot, but are not dragged in as they sometimes are....

The series of Quelch's Watch Chain is regarded by me as one of the very best of the shorter series, **chockerblockful** of typically Hamilton humour, with many twists and turns. Not all of these are original, but they are no less enjoyable for all that. A FEUD WITH CLIFF HOUSE had great appeal, and also the series in which Bob Cherry suspects Marjorie of stealing Mauly's tenner.

My Golden Age comes to an abrupt end with Dr. Sin. I have long held the view that this was meant to be another China series but was cut short because of the Japanese invasion of China in July 1937.

BILL LOFTS (London): "Brian Cameron" was actually the identity of John Hunter. He also used the pen-names of Captain John Wetherby, Jack Addiscombe, and John/Jack Worthing, the last three surnames being places where he had lived. At one time he was writing the whole contents of 'Boys Magazine' as well as the Falcon Swift tales. There were other names too, but, as an agent used to handle his vast output, some will never now be known.

Boys Magazine was a highly successful paper in its time, and a collector's item today due to its science fiction material. The above data was gleaned long after John Hunter's death in August 1961, and even after our *Men Behind Boys' Fiction* in 1969.

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A Ballad of Greyfriars School



OLD Gosling greets us at the gate;
 His gaze is sour and surly.
 For Gosling has to work till late,
 And rise each morning early.
 "A porter's life," he sadly moans,
 "Is not a bed of roses!
 The winds of winter freeze my bones—
 Just see how blue my nose is!"

He conjures with his bunch of keys,
 And lets us pass the portals;
 For William Gosling, if you please,
 Is one of the immortals.
 He has the power to shut us out
 Or let us in, at pleasure.
 We toss him half-a-crown; no doubt
 That "tip" he'll always treasure!

Then to the tuck-shop we repair;
 'Tis kept by good Dame Mimble.
 Though silver streaks adorn her hair,
 She's still alert and nimble.
 Beside the counter Bunter stands;
 He's famished, and wants feeding.
 He holds out supplicating hands,
 And starts his piteous pleading.

"Give me a dozen doughnuts, please,
 And six jam tarts to follow!
 I'm faint and feeble at the knees;
 My cheeks are sunk and hollow.
 I cannot face starvation, ma'am!
 You know how much I dread it.
 See what a skeleton I am,
 And serve me now—on credit!"

But good Dame Mimble shakes her head
 As sternly as a warder.
 "I don't believe a word you've said
 About your postal-order!

No, Master Bunter; I insist
 Upon a prompt cash payment,
 For only a philanthropist
 Supplies free food and raiment!"



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