

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOLUME 46

No. 544

APRIL 1992

THE Boys' Herald 1^d

A Healthy Paper for Manly Boys.

No. 154, Vol. III.

EVERY THURSDAY—ONE PENNY.

WEEK ENDING JUNE 30, 1906.

THE THREE DETECTIVES

QUONG HA

DR. MESSINA

STANLEY DARE

A THRILLING
NEW DETECTIVE STORY OF
DR. MESSINA, STANLEY DARE & QUONG-HA

96P

UNION JACK, Jan. - June 1926: July - Dec. 1926: fine, dark green binding. Also July - Dec. 1928, maroon binding, lettered on spine. All in excellent condition £80 each, and some singles.

GRAND MAGAZINE, 2 Vols., publisher's bindings - Vol. 17 1912-13: Vol. 18 1913 - slight damp marks bottom of spine. The two vols. for £15.

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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Between You and Me and the Joystick



You will see that this month I am heading my editorial with a slogan used by Captain W.E. Johns for his wartime aviation articles in the *Girl's Own Paper*. The aeronautical mood seems appropriate, as I wish to announce the publication by Macmillan, towards the end of April, of my new book, **WOMEN WITH WINGS: FEMALE FLYERS IN FACT AND FICTION**.

It has been a truly fascinating book to research and write. My interest in aviation began in the 1930s when Amy Johnson's exploits stirred the imagination of the world and inspired many exciting flying stories in girls' books and weekly papers. **WOMEN WITH WINGS** celebrates the achievements of female flyers from eighteenth-century balloonists to today's astronauts. It covers the early girl barnstormers on both sides of the Atlantic, the several aristocratic English ladies who piloted their private planes from continent to continent during the 1920s, and of course, the abundance of record-makers - Amelia Earhart, Amy Johnson, Jean Batten, Beryl Markham and others - during the 1930s.

It was especially interesting for me to chronicle the period of the Second World War when British and American women ferried fighters and bombers

from factories to airfields, and the Russians sent nine quadrons of girl flyers into action against the Luftwaffe. Women's post-war speed, distance and endurance air records eventually helped to open up opportunities for them in several countries in commercial flight, space exploration and with the air-forces. I was particularly pleased during the course of my researches to be able to interview Flight Lieutenant Julie Gibson, the first woman pilot to be trained and to achieve her wings with the R.A.F.

Throughout the book, fiction - ever a source of fascination for me - is considered in parallel with real life events. The galaxy of flying fictional heroines includes, amongst many others, Ida Melbourne's Flying sisters from the SCHOOLGIRL, W.E. Johns' Worrals of the W.A.A.F.S. from the GIRL'S OWN PAPER, Dorothy Carter's Marise Duncan, space-girls and superwomen from British and American comics and surprisingly intrepid aviatrixes from Mills & Boon romances and the stories of Judith Krantz.

I do hope that some of you will enjoy reading WOMEN WITH WINGS as much as I enjoyed writing it. There are lots of lovely pictures in it, both in half-tone and black and white line. The book's cover is reproduced on the back page of this month's C.D. though regrettably its vibrant colours cannot be conveyed.

JENNIE - THE LITTLE FLOWER GIRL

In childhood I used to love the pink papered comic LARKS especially for its cartoon strip 'Peggy the Pride of the Force' and its heart-tugging text stories of 'Jennie - the Little Flower Girl'. I've recently been re-reading LARKS and can't resist reprinting a Jennie story for you all to savour (she is, of course, drawn by Leonard Shield whose wonderful illustrations did so much to bring vivid life to the Greyfriars boys in the MAGNET and the Morcove girls in the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN).

MARY CADOGAN

WANTED: ENID BLYTON/W.E. JOHNS/CROMPTON. First editions in wrappers, all pre 1960 ephemera. £20 each offered for Biggles "Boys Friend Libraries". £5 each offered for "Thriller" nos. 88,116,157,176,280,286,392,393,469,583,586.

NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 EASTBURY ROAD, WATFORD, WD1 4JL. Tel: 0923 32383.

A VISION
by Ted Baldock

The green-ness of the playing fields,
Long shadows by the elms,
Athwart my memory gently steals
These dear and happy realms.
We shall recall those days of yore
Long after youth has fled,
In our minds an open door
See what our schooldays bred.
To see old Coker striding by
Belligerent and grim,
With head upheld towards the sky,
See how the fellows grin.
With his renowned "short way with fags"
He wades in with a will.
This causes countless fearful "rags"
He always foots the "bill".
These are pictures cherished yet
and as the years drift by,

There's just a hint of fond regret,
The echo of a sigh.
I see old Gosling's crusty face,
His keys - his horny hands,
And hear the clock chime on apace
As by the gate he stands.
Dimly as the shadows fall
And lights begin to gleam
A figure, fat, sees fit to call,
(A cake the Owl has seen).
The study fire is burning bright,
The table groans with "tuck"
To Bunter it's a wondrous sight,
With him - I fear we're stuck.
Thus flows the dear old Greyfriars tale
As Summer follows Fall
A legend which will never fail
Whatever else befall.





ERNEST HUBBARD: a tribute to an artistic 'thriller' by J.E.M.

Just as Eric Parker's illustrations set the visual seal on the old Sexton Blake periodicals, so the work of Arthur Jones became inseparably linked with *The Thriller*. Yet even his warmest admirers will concede that Jones was no draughtsman. His dark, sinister backgrounds and lurking figures undoubtedly created a memorable atmosphere. But his command of perspective was shaky, to say the least, while those sinister chaps with their extraordinary wide-brimmed hats and outside automatic pistols rarely convinced us of their reality. Indeed, they often came close to being downright comic. Jones's success, in short, lay in the triumph of mood over technique.

GRAND NEW CRIME PUZZLE GAME—INSIDE!



In a totally different class was the work of Ernest Hubbard who illustrated all the Raffles stories to appear in *The Thriller*, a number of Leslie Charteris's 'Saint' yarns, as well as the work of many other well-known authors like Sydney Horler, Roland Daniel and Richard Essex.

Hubbard's mastery of technique is obvious to the least tutored eye; his backgrounds, perspective and human figures totally convince. His capture of the dramatic moment is always just right and there is a general stylishness about his work which brings real distinction to the page.

The Thriller was not the only beneficiary of Hubbard's talent. This polished artist also contributed to the *Union Jack* as well as *Detective Weekly* in which he illustrated the 'Spies Limited' series. Intriguingly, he also drew the famous 'Jane' strip cartoon in the *Daily Mirror* for some years. For me, however, and I don't

doubt many others, Hubbard will always "belong" to *The Thriller*.

Lofts' and Adley's famous and indispensable listing of *Thriller* stories surprisingly makes no mention of Hubbard in its otherwise excellent introduction, so perhaps we can make some small amends here by reproducing one or two of his illustrations. As ever, the reduction in size from work already reduced for its original appearance must lead to some loss of impact but, even in this modest form, there can be no denying the confident draughtsmanship and engaging style. I can only urge interested hobbyists to go back to original copies of *The Thriller* containing Hubbard's work.



Illustrations: *The fetching young lady in cape and mask featured in "The Secret Seven" by Richard Essex, a "Slade of the Yard" story from 1934. The other illustrations are from "Raffles and the Mystery Accomplice" by Barry Perowne, published the same year.*



REMINISCENCES

by Edward Allatt

The first current issue of the *Nelson Lee Library* that I remember buying must have been towards the end of August, or in the early part of September 1928. I had just started my first job after leaving school, in a newsagents as it happens, and I continued to purchase the paper every week from then on until it ceased publication. Of course I was aware of the existence of the *N.L.L.* before that date; I was in possession of copies of earlier issues, probably through the 'swapping' tradition that existed at that time. After accumulating several further copies I suppose I must have made the decision that I would set myself the task of building up a collection of the *Nelson Lee*. With that in mind I actively engaged in searching for back issues, scouring the shops and market stalls that specialised in second hand comics, more 'swapping', getting friends to let me have their copies, for a price of course, watching out for advertisements and also advertising myself.

As time went on I built up a very sizeable collection, the bookshelves in my room were filled with Lees. I read, and re-read, these fine stories right through my late teens, and even into my early twenties. Getting married meant departing from the parental home and leaving my precious collection behind until such time as room could be found in my new home. Alas this did not happen, I went off to war and after I had sorted out that business I returned home to find that my mother had disposed of the collection. I only hope that it went to a good home and that some young person had the same enjoyment from reading the stories as I had.

After a brief period of mourning my loss, I got on with my life, earning a living and bringing up a family, until gradually all thoughts of Edward Oswald Handforth, Nipper, etc. were expunged from my memory. My interest in *Nelson Lee* was rekindled in the early 1970s when I saw an advertisement that the Howard Baker Co. were publishing facsimile copies of the *N.L.L.* Post haste I sent off for copies of the books which had already been published, and was soon wallowing in a veritable orgy of nostalgia, reading again some of those tales that I had so enjoyed over five decades earlier: *The Barring Out at St. Frank's*, a facsimile of a *Monster Library*; *The Haunted School*, the series featuring that oddball character, Ezra Quirke; *The Secret Societies of St. Frank's* when Bernard Forrest got his come uppance and was drummed out of the school; *The 'Death' of Walter Church*. Then I waited in eager anticipation for further books to be published. Correspondence between myself and the Howard Baker Co. had indicated that this was to happen, but I waited in vain; no more copies were published so my interest in the *N.L.L.* waned yet again. Another ten years passed before my interest was again revived when the *Book & Magazine Collector* was first published in 1984, and, by glancing through the ads at the back of it, I found that back issues of the *N.L.L.* were for sale from several book-sellers. Once again I started acquiring a few copies and

was soon immersed in the old nostalgia kick. Then came retirement which brought its own financial restraints, so I now look longingly at the ads, note the inflationary prices of the *N.L.L.* and just sigh for the good old days and wish that I could shed sixty years and start once again to build up my collection. My on and off interest in Nelson Lee was given yet another lease of life when I came upon Alan Pratt's letter to the editor in the February 1992 issue of the *Book & Magazine Collector* and, in an exchange of letters with Mr. Pratt, I found out about the existence of the *collectors' Digest* and its regular Nelson Lee Column. Mary Cadogan was immediately contacted, she sent me some sample copies of this excellent paper, and I take this opportunity to thank her for this kindness. So once again I am immersed in St. Frank's sixty four years after it all started.

POSTSCRIPT

There is a kind of sequel to all that is narrated above. I guess that the collecting 'bug' has always been inside me. For over forty years I have been a collector of books by one American author, and my collection became so large and comprehensive that one of our well known universities became interested and acquired my collection. It is now housed in the prestigious John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester and is kept in its own room at that library in Deansgate, Manchester with a carved plaque on the door carrying the words *The Edward Allatt Upton Sinclair Collection*. Curiously enough Upton Sinclair (1878-1968) started his writing career in his early teens with 'boys stories', but, instead of his tales being set in English Public Schools, action was centred on American military academies like West Point, and Annapolis. For these 'dime novels' he used pseudonyms, just as Edwy Searles Brooks sometimes did.



MORE CHINESE DETECTIVES

by Len Hawkey

"... for ways that are dark, and tricks that are vain,
The heathen Chinese is peculiar..."

Thus wrote Bret Harte more than a century ago, and his sentiments are certainly echoed in the world of boy's fiction. Some time ago, Mr. Hardinge entertained us in the C.D. with recollections of Yung Chang, and several oriental sleuths of former days, thereby tempting me to recall a few others.

The Funny Wonder of the early 1920s featured a strange combination - a "cowboy" detective, Ken Carr, like his film star counterpart, Tom Mix, a very "natty" dresser, but with a Chinese assistant, named Julep. This yellow-skinned lad was usually dressed as a Red-Indian, which must have been somewhat confusing to the local ranchers! Actually,

his presence in the "Old West" was not so unusual as, during the construction of the trans-continent railroads, thousands of orientals settled in the Western states. In addition to being a crack shot, Julep was an adept ventriloquist, and, with these two talents, he and Ken Carr always got their man! No author was ever shown for these stories, but illustrations throughout were by Steve (C.H.) Chapman.



This Week's Story: THE SEA OF SILENCE.

Julep, despite his accomplishments, differed considerably from Grip, the Chinese dwarf, who helped that great detective-mystic, Marcus Track, who was aided, additionally, by two Japanese servants, a parrot, a white dove, and a raven (for obvious reasons, not bearing the name of Barnaby Rudge's pet). E.S. Turner, by the way, (in "Boys will be Boys") refers to the sleuth as Martin, instead of Marcus, and this error seems to have been repeated by other writers. Otherwise, Turner describes most amusingly Track's bizarre lifestyle in his Gothic castle, and his cases were just as fantastic, as such titles as "The Snare of the Octopus Plant", "The Case of the 5 Gorillas" etc. testify. His adventures ran in the *Dreadnought* throughout 1912 - all illustrations were unsigned: the artist's style was suitably "gothic", but is one of the very few to whom I cannot put a name.

Earlier, in the *Boys' Herald* of 1906, there had appeared a more fully-fledged Chinese sleuth, the inscrutable Quong-Ha, who joined forces for a while with the already established scientific-investigator, Dr. Julian Messina, and the equally popular schoolboy detective, Stanley Dare. The cover of the *Boy's Herald* that marked the first appearance of the Three Detectives was by Harry Lane, but all subsequent illustrations were by H.M. Lewis, very similar in style, and, like Lane, a far finer artist in those days than in the 1920s or '30s.

By coincidence, the trio find they are all after the same villains - "The Vultures" - who operate, uniquely, from a strange submarine, which enables them to move speedily to all parts of the globe, and also holds the vast wealth accrued from their many daring robberies. Ultimately, the three detectives unmask the Vulture chief - a famous millionaire and pillar of society - and recover the ill-gotten gains. There seems to be no other record of Quong-Ha, but Messina and Stanley Dare featured in several other periodicals.

These three detectives were all the creations of the prolific Alec G. Pearson. Others were assisted by brown or black-skinned helpmates. Righton Keen (Big Budget) had the stealthy Gundra Lal; Sapolino, a giant Negro, supported Gordon Grey (The Marvel), while an equally huge Nubian, Akbar, guarded Adam Daunt in *Fun and*

Fiction. One should not forget Wee-wee, the great Sexton Blake's right-hand, in his early days. What became of him? Did he perchance join forces with Hamilton Cleek's more conventional Cockney lad, Dollops? The imagination boggles!

The last of our true Oriental sleuths came from Sydney Drew's pen. Ching-Lung may be remembered by some older readers as being one of Ferrers Lord's companions, adventuring round the globe with the famous millionaire, discovering lost worlds and hidden cities everywhere! These exploits had been recorded in *The Boys' Friend*, and other A.P. magazines since the 1890s and subsequently transferred to a dozen or more B.F. Library issues.



In "Ching-Lung, Detective" the Chinese Prince played the leading role, supported by the little Eskimo, Gan Waga, and other Sydney Drew regulars, including Rupert Thurston, and, latterly, Lord himself. This serial qualifies as a detective story (and its eponymous hero as a detective) only for the first few instalments. Ching-Lung sets out to investigate the murder of an old retainer, to recover a family treasure - an ancient gong - and to apprehend the culprit. From Limehouse in London, the story moves to distant climes, and becomes a typical Drew adventure, even including a "lost" city, Darasis!

It is a well-told, fast-moving saga, but the real mystery, to the writer, lies in the illustrations. These, throughout, are by the excellent Arthur H. Clarke - the serial ran from January 4th to May 3rd, 1913 (finishing just nine days before said writer made his first appearance). Yet we know, mainly from his association with *The Magnet*, that Arthur Clarke died, alas, in 1911. What is the explanation? Had the tale appeared earlier in some other A.P. publication - or had it been held back for almost two years? Strangely, it is almost the only Sydney Drew serial **not** to appear subsequently in *The Boy's Friend Library*. Why?

Can anyone supply the answer to these puzzles, and thus assist us to "hit the wooden skewer on its thicker end", as that eminent Chinese storyteller, Kai Lung, might have said?



JENNIE the Little Flower Girl

Another Delightful Story of the Little Girl with a Heart of Gold.

A Holiday Adventure.

ALTHOUGH it was Easter, and many of her regular customers had gone away for a holiday, Jennie, the little flower girl, felt happy as she stood beside her basket outside the railway station.

She had started early on Saturday morning with a large basket of flowers, and had done so well with passengers entering and leaving the railway station, that by twelve o'clock she had sold half her stock.

Suddenly she saw Mr. Olton, one of her best customers, turn the street corner, staggering under the weight of three heavy travelling bags, and she smiled as he lowered the bags in front of her basket and mopped his perspiring forehead with his handkerchief.

"You are loaded up, sir!" she exclaimed. "I suppose you couldn't carry any flowers as well? The roses are lovely to-day, and they're very cheap."

"I do want some, as a matter of fact," replied Mr. Olton. "I'll have two bunches of roses, but you'll have to carry them to the train for me. I'm going to my sister's place, and she loves roses."

"I'll carry them with pleasure, and one of your bags as well, sir," smiled Jennie, wrapping the roses in some tissue paper whilst her customer lit a cigarette. "I hope you have a nice holiday."

It took Jennie but a few minutes to carry the case and flowers to the train for Mr. Olton, but in that short time Fate played the little flower girl a shabby trick. As she came out of the railway station she paused with a low gasp of surprise and dismay.

Her flower basket was on fire. The lighted

match which Mr. Olton had carelessly dropped had set light to the wicker basket.

As Jennie descended the station steps two at a time a tall, smartly dressed man ran out of a shop on the opposite side of the road, and the little flower girl's hopes rose as she saw that he was carrying a pail of water.

"Oh, thank you, sir!" cried Jennie, as the man tipped the pail of water over the basket and extinguished the fire. "It's very kind of you!"

"But I'm afraid it's too late," said the man, gazing at the contents of the basket. "You'll never sell the rest of your flowers now, my dear."

Jennie turned away to hide the tears which rose to her big grey eyes. It was a bitter blow to her hopes, for she had saved all she could to give her invalid mother a day in the country on Easter Monday.

"Look here, my dear, I think I can help you."

Jennie turned eagerly to the smartly dressed man who was writing something on an envelope.

"I'm going away for a fortnight," he went on, "and by the time I return the tulips and daffodils in my garden will have died off, so you might as well go and cut what you want. Take as many as you like. If anyone says anything to you show this note signed by me, Mr. Crane, giving you permission to cut the flowers. The address is the Gables, Tintern Avenue. And now I must run, or I shall miss my train."

He was gone before the little flower girl could find words to thank him, and, having disposed of her burnt basket, Jennie went home for another, and set out for the Gables, which turned out to be a big house with well-stocked flower-beds in the front garden.

Putting her basket on the path, Jennie set to work with a pair of scissors cutting the best of the flowers, which were the largest daffodils and tulips she had ever seen.

A heap of flowers was soon lying at Jennie's feet, and she was about to tie them into

bunches, when the door of the house opened and a short, dark-featured man ran down the path towards her.

"Hi! What are you doing?" demanded the newcomer.

"It's all right," said Jennie quickly. "The gentleman who lives here has given me permission to cut all the flowers I like. Look, here's the note he gave me."

"What are you talking about?" cried the man. "This is my house. Let's have a look at that note. H'm! So that's the game, is it?" he went on, glancing up after scanning the note.

"I don't know what you mean," said Jennie, becoming alarmed. "Mr. Crane lives here, doesn't he?"

"No; and you know very well he doesn't!" snapped the man. "You must have written this yourself."

Jennie protested her innocence, but all in vain. Despite her protests and pleadings, the man seized her arm in a none too gentle grip and marched her across to a glass summer-house in the corner of the garden.

"Get in there," he said curtly. "You can stay there till I've telephoned to the police. They'll know how to deal with you."

The door was closed and locked, and through the glass Jennie saw the man return to the house.

With a feeling of despair in her heart, the little flower girl glanced slowly round the summer-house, and as her wandering gaze encountered a delivery label lying on a potting-bench beside her, she picked it up and glanced idly at the name and address written upon the label.

A low gasp of surprise escaped the little flower girl's lips as she read the name and address, and then she glanced round the summer-house again.

"Now I wonder," she mused, as she suddenly realised that there was another door to the summer house. "If it is open it will just prove for certain that I'm right."

Jennie crossed the floor and turned the handle, and a smile broke over her face as the door opened.

Swiftly Jennie removed her hat and coat, and then, dropping on to her hands and knees so that no one in the house should see her, she opened the door and crept out, closing it again behind her, and continuing on her hands and knees behind a row of bushes which screened her from the house.

It was the work of a few moments to pick her way through the shrubs to the other side of the garden, and, climbing over the wall, Jennie dropped lightly down into the next garden. Once out of view of anyone in the Gables, she lost no time in making for the street, where she was fortunate in finding a policeman, who listened with a frown to what Jennie had to say.

"It looks as though you're right, miss," said the constable at length. "Look here, you pop back and watch the gate of the Gables while I telephone through to the station."

Ten minutes later the policeman returned in company with a sergeant and another constable, and the three were about to enter the gate of the Gables when the sergeant heard voices in the garden, and held up his hand for silence.

"What about that kid you locked in the summer-house, Joe?"

"Don't worry about her," came the reply. "She'll get out somehow."

Little did the speaker dream that Jennie had already made her escape, and that what he could see was merely her hat and coat, which she had draped round a garden rake in the summer-house.

Suddenly the gate of the Gables was thrown open by two men carrying large suitcases. In a flash the constables had sprang forward and seized the men, whilst the sergeant examined the contents of the cases.

"Well, you were right, miss," said the sergeant to Jennie. "These cases contain a nice collection of stuff obviously stolen from Mr. Crane's house."

The dark-featured man scowled darkly at the little flower girl.

"How the deuce did that kid know I wasn't Mr. Crane?" he growled.

"Well, you see, she had faith in the man who did her a kindness and then gave her permission to cut those flowers," said the police sergeant. "Then, again, she found this delivery label in the summer-house, and what finally told her that you were not Mr. Crane was the fact that you didn't know there were two doors to the summer-house, and that one of them was unlocked."

The dark-featured man looked at his companion and grunted.

"Didn't I tell you it would be best to let the kid alone?" he growled at his companion. "She would have taken the flowers she wanted and cleared off."

The sergeant chuckled with amusement, and turned to the little flower girl as the policemen led their prisoners away.

"Well, my dear, you had better cut your flowers now," he said. "I shall try to get in touch with Mr. Crane and report what has happened. No doubt you'll hear from him."

The sergeant was right, for that night Mr. Crane returned, and after thanking Jennie for the part she had played in the capture of the thieves, he gave her a large Easter egg filled with chocolates—an Easter present that the little flower girl shared with her invalid mother when Mr. Crane kindly took them out in his car on Easter Monday.

(Don't miss the delightful story of Jennie, the little flower girl, in next Saturday's LARKS. Order your copy to-day.)

RADIO FUN

by Ray Holmes

Radio Fun was launched on 15th October 1938. The aim was to bring the comics of the air waves into the hands of readers young and not-so-young.

With a cover price of 2d, No. 1 came complete with "A Unique Safe-T Dart Board With Special Dart". It also featured Big Hearted Arthur Askey, then the star of radio's most popular programme, Band Waggon.

Radio was never more popular than in the thirties and forties with such shows as Band Waggon, Monday Night at Eight and ITMA.

The publishers obviously thought the market could take another paper built on similar lines to Film Fun. With a life of more than 20 years their reasoning was proved right. Inside the 28 pages of the first issue could be seen Flanagan and Allen, Ethel Revnell and Gracie West, Will Fyffe and Sandy Powell. So that the more serious of its readers could be accommodated, we were offered Clark Gable and Tom Keene, a popular cowboy of the day.

Issue No. 2 provided a free Potato Gun, and no doubt many a mother was minus a spud or two in those lean days of 1938. But this was all in a good cause, and the happy youngsters of the day tucked *Radio Fun* into their jacket pockets to the delight of its editor, Stanley Gooch.

Strangely, *Radio Fun* had a strip called George the Jolly Gee-Gee on the front page. What this horse had to do with radio comedy was never explained but, at that time, many comics had an animal character occupying their leading position.

The war years saw the number of pages cut progressively to 12, but the cover price stayed at 2d until 1945, when it was raised to 3d.

Characters came and went but, in the 1950s, Arthur Askey was still there, joined then by Norman Wisdom and Petula Clark. Tommy Handley and Tommy Trinder had also been featured. Even the American Forces Radio was acknowledged, with a strip depicting the antics of Bob Hope and Jerry Colonna. Nor was the Radio Brains Trust forgotten: Prof. Piffle, Dr. Dunbrown and Admiral Penny-Forem usually gave question-master Ivor Poser more than he bargained for each week.

With television becoming a mass medium in the 1950s, the sale of comics began to decline, and one based on "steam radio" was especially vulnerable. The publishers hoped an expensive free gift scheme would halt the sagging of sales. *Radio Fun* readers had "Bumper Photo Albums", wallets of photo-cards and a "Buzzing Bee" toy offered to them in its pages. But these only slightly delayed the inevitable. By the time the end came, on 18th February 1961, *Radio Fun* was running strips featuring Popeye, O'Hara of Africa and Wagon Train.

What connection these had with radio comedy was left to the imagination. No doubt regular readers looked back with sadness to the days when opening their favourite comic meant what it said, lots of Radio Run.

WANTED: Modern Boy 324, 335, 337, 338, 339. Any reasonable price paid. ROY PARSONS, 'Foinaven', Church Hollow, West Winterslow, Salisbury, SP5 1SX.

RADIO FUN³

No. 221.
Jan. 2nd,
1943.

BIG-HEARTED ARTHUR AND DICKY MURDOCH EVERY THURSDAY



IT'S THAT MAN AGAIN! TOMMY HANDLEY CALLING!
*There was I, captured by cannibals! Oh, what did I do?
 Well, blow a baseball backwards, I nearly got in a stew!*

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE "GREYFRIARS HERALD"?

by Eric Fayne

In a recent month I tried to summarise the history of "The Greyfriars Herald" after it reappeared in the shops as a separate entity in the late autumn of 1919, a year after the end of the war. On that occasion I got half-way through that fascinating bit of history. Now I propose to look at the second - and final part of that history.

After only a few months it became obvious that they were abandoning the illusion that we were reading a school magazine, produced by the boys of Greyfriars. Harry Wharton left the editorial chair, to be replaced, with no fanfare of trumpets, by the editor of the Magnet and Gem. And slowly the stories, telling of school life, were replaced by adventure tales.

However, the delightful little yarns of Herlock Sholmes came back to appear regularly, though they were now "by Dr. Jotson" instead of Peter Todd. It had been a surprise that these popular little tales were not there in late 1919 when the re-birth of the "Herald" took place. Charles Hamilton once told me that we wrote every one of the Sholmes tales. Whether this included the later ones I am uncertain.

The main attraction of the paper, from 1919, was the series concerning "The Boys of the Benbow" - the school on a ship - with the additional information "By Owen Conquest".

Then, after many months of excellent school stories, the Benbow was "fitted out", and sailed for the West Indies, taking the school on an educational trip presumably - so the school stories became adventure yarns for many months. Then, in No. 61, when the paper had been appearing regularly for well over a year, the Benbow returned to England. The school was closed down, and the pupils and staff were scattered.



THE "BOYS' HERALD" BOYS. No. 3.-SKINNER, The Sneak of the Greyfriars Remove.

The two leading characters, Drake and Rodney, went to Greyfriars. All the Benbow tales had been by "Owen Conquest", so one would really have expected Drake and Rodney to go to Rockwood. But nay!

And the first of these tales was "How Jack Drake Came To Greyfriars" by Owen Conquest. A typical Greyfriars yarn. It closes with the Drake bagging a brake and horses from Coker, and, in a race with the Famous Five in another brake, driving back to the school from the station. Drake turns his brake over in the quad, before the Head, and himself lands at the Head's feet. The tale ends:

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Dr. Locke in amazement. "What - what --"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Drake.

He was sitting on the lowest step without knowing quite how he had got there. The horses were trotting on round the drive, followed by the brake, which had a list to starboard. Jack Drake looked up dazedly at a severe and astonished face that bent over him.

"Boy, what - who - how ---" stuttered the Head.

Drake staggered up, and touched his cap.

"Please, I - I --" he gasped. "I - I -- I've come - I - I've come to Greyfriars."

That was the last of these stories under the name of Owen Conquest. All the following stories of Drake at Greyfriars appeared without the name of any author being given. Maybe Frank Richards took them over?

At any rate, they were all excellent stories. Much shorter than the Greyfriars stories in the Magnet, this group comprised tales similar to the length of the Rookwood tales then featuring in the Boys' Friend, or slightly shorter. They were well constructed and many were pleasantly original in theme. Usually they ran in series over two or three weeks. I have no doubt that they came from the pen of the Grand Old Master himself.

Drake and Rodney were placed in Study No.3, and, at first, they were not made welcome by Ogilvy and Russell, who also shared that study. But soon we find Drake heading the new Co. of four, in rivalry to the Famous Five. One excellent series told of Drake and Vernon-Smith in conflict. In another, Drake and Nugent were in conflict over the latter's obnoxious younger brother, Dicky.

These tales of Drake at Greyfriars ran for many months and, during that time, Drake and Rodney made appearances in the supporting cast in the Magnet.

I have not checked thoroughly, but I cannot recall that the stories of Drake at Greyfriars were ever reprinted anywhere. This is really surprising, when one considers how much reprinting of the Hamilton tales was done down the years.

In passing, while the Greyfriars tales were running, they also ran a Portrait Gallery of Greyfriars' boys. These were well-drawn, and depicted character, though they seemed a little foreign to our ideas of the boys as illustrated by the Magnet artists. Who the artist was for this new series I cannot say, but he does not seem to suggest any of the well-known ones. In a corner of one or two of the pictures were the initials C.H.B. What name did they indicate?

But adventure was taking the place of school tales. With No.75, dated April the First 1921, the magic word Greyfriars was dropped from the title, and the paper became "The Boys' Herald".

At Greyfriars there came a series in which the detective, Ferrers Locke, was called in to solve a mystery at the school, and he was assisted in his investigations by Jack Drake.

SPARKLING NEW SCHOOL SERIES STARTS TO-DAY!

THE BOYS' HERALD

ON SALE EVERY TUESDAY. APRIL 12, 1922.



HAMPERS FILLED WITH TUCK, GIVEN AWAY EACH WEEK!

So - shades of Tinker and Nipper with other famous tecs - Ferrers Locke suggested to Drake that he, Drake, might become the assistant of the great Ferrers Locke. And Drake agreed. And that was the end of Greyfriars in the Boys' Herald.

And now, towards the end of the year 1921, there began a new series of detective stories starring Locke and his assistant Drake.

And these new tec stories were "by Owen Conquest" again. History is quite fascinating in its details, isn't it?

During the run of the Herald there were a number of series which, I'm sure, I never read. There was "Marzipan of the Japes", a series about a giant ape, by Sidney Drew. There was "The Terror of the Range", a series of the Wild West, "adapted from the Pathé serial of the same name now showing in cinemas all over the country". And "The Courage of Dick O'Dare", a series from an anonymous author. And "Tales of St. Antony", a "great new school series", this one also being anonymous. And, in a serial and then a series, the story of "Stringer,

the Demon Bowler", by Walter Edwards. I have a feeling that Stringer was quite well-known and popular for a time, though I think I never read his adventures myself.

And what happened to "The Boys' Herald" eventually? Issue No. 126, dated March 25th 1922, bore the following ominous message at the top of the cover: "Important Editorial Announcement. See page 14".

Only a month or two earlier the price of the Herald had risen from 1 1/2d to 2d. Increase of a halfpenny. (In these days they stick a price up by fivepence, (a bob), and, thanks to decimalisation, they think nothing of it. Which is why my newspaper in 1992 costs nine bob a day and ten bob on Saturdays.)

That message in No.126. Well, it was that "next week the Boys' Herald will unite with the Marvel. So, ask for the Marvel, and give me the same support there that you have in the past, for I am the Editor of the Marvel. So, it's "Au revoir" then - till next Tuesday in the Marvel.

And so "The Greyfriars Herald" became "The Boys' Herald" and then died and was buried in the Marvel. Such is life!

FREEBIES AND FILM-STARS

Margery Woods's article "Freebies!" in the February C.D. has stimulated some lively and extremely informative letters from readers. Margery's statement that few of the stars featured in the Schoolgirl's give-away photos "recall memories today" is vigorously challenged by Regina Glick of Leeds, Peter Peatfield from Leighton Buzzard, Reg Hardinge of Wimbledon and Bob Whiter from Los Angeles. The information which they give is really very interesting, and I would be prepared to devote several pages to Dolores Costello, Laura La Plante, Dolores Del Rio, Clive Brook, Norma Shearer and Ronald Colman in a future issue, if this would find favour with readers. Do let me know what you feel about this. (Ed.)

A TRIBUTE TO DON WEBSTER FROM BOB ACRAMAN

I must say how shocked we were to receive a letter from Elsie Webster, telling us of the sad loss of her dear husband, Don, on 22nd February 1992 at the age of 87. He had suffered from bronchial pneumonia, and passed away at home during the night.

Don will be sadly missed by us all, as he was one of the real old cornerstones of the hobby as well as being a valued personal friend. He never missed a club meeting if it was at all possible for him to attend; the excellent quizzes he produced at meetings showed his very deep knowledge of - and love for - the hobby. He has attended innumerable meetings of both the O.B.B.C. and Greyfriars Club which we have hosted several times a year over the past 25 years and more, at Friardale, Courtfield and Kingsgate Castle - even journeying with us to Birmingham to attend the Midland Club meetings - and a keener and more enthusiastic supporter of the hobby would be hard to find.

Our sincere sympathy and condolences go to his wife Elsie, son Peter and other members of the family.

R.I.P. Don.

STORY LISTS

I have just completed a catalogue of the cases of NOEL RAYMOND, the debonair young male detective of the "Girls' Crystal"; between 1935 and 1951 he appeared in 549 short stories (some of the reprints) and 4 serials.

I am now working on a listing of the first series of "SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY" (the monthly "yellow books"), 733 of which were published between 1922 and 1940.

It occurs to the Editor and myself that some readers might be interested in having copies. If you are, could you please write in and state which list would you want? (Perhaps both.) We shall have to make a nominal charge to cover the cost of photocopying the typewritten sheets.

DENNIS L. BIRD

(Editor's Note):

I should mention too that before the sad passing of Derek Adley last year, he and Bill Lofts completed another of their wonderfully comprehensive and helpful indices.

This large work is a complete list of all the Cliff House and Morcove stories in the weekly papers, monthly libraries and Annuals, with details of when various series began and ended as well as lots of other fascinating information. It includes a fine article by Bill on the men who wrote the girls' stories in the A.P. papers, together with a list relating characters and pseudonyms to the appropriate authors. I feel that such a catalogue should, if financially feasible, be properly printed and bound - it would make a book about the size of one of our C.D. Annuals, I imagine. It would be helpful if C.D. readers would indicate whether such a volume would be of interest to them: at this stage it is difficult to estimate the price as this, obviously, would depend on the number ordered and printed.

CLIFF HOUSE ANNALS

by Margery Woods

A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF ELIZABETH GERTRUDE BUNTER

One way in which Cliff House differed from other famous fictional schools was in the number of authors who in turn took on the pseudonym of Hilda Richards during the thirty or so years of its existence. Created by Frank Richards as an adjunct to the Greyfriars stories, the school gained its independent status, so to speak, in 1919 when SCHOOL FRIEND was launched. Subsequently at least four authors took over during the following two decades so it was inevitable that some characters would fade out, new ones arrive and those who survived right through from their inception in the early days of THE MAGNET would change with various degrees of perceptibility as each new writer added his own touch of individuality to these famous schoolgirl characters.

Of them all, perhaps Miss Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter, otherwise known as Bessie, Fatima, Duffer and other nicknames of a mostly affectionate nature, changed most. Originally she arrived on the scene virtually as a female clone of her even more famous brother, Billy. At first she was exactly the same in nature; fat, greedy, unscrupulous and unintelligent, apart from the ability to latch on to anyone who could supply tuck, cash or the general wherewithal needed at the moment. However, once launched on the schoolgirl readership market, she proved unpopular, and the gradual transformation of Bessie began, until in the thirties John Wheway finally made Bessie into the hapless, loveable character we visualise today when we think of her. Perhaps her great appeal lay in the fact that Wheway retained many of her original traits; she was still fat, still greedy, still found difficulty in distinguishing what was strictly right from wrong when somebody else's tuck was concerned. But she now thought of her friends, adored Babs and loved the rest of the little coterie of chums, and managed to invoke ever more complicated disasters through her attempts to help. And so these changes or additions to her characterisation gained her the most essential quality in fiction; she became appealing. Sometimes she could be infuriating and the chums often lost patience with her, finding it essential to keep her in the dark whenever secrecy was needed during the course of an adventure. Of them all, Babs had the patience of a saint, as the reader would be groaning at the way Bessie was yet again about to get in the way or give away the whole vital game.

She had many great years, and played her part almost weekly in the adventures. It was a rare week when she failed to appear at all. In 1933 she achieved great fame on the films, first with a film series at the studios near Cliff House and later full Hollywood treatment in an exciting summer holiday series in California with the Chums. The

following year she is threatened with expulsion in *BESSIE BUNTER'S FEUD*, and is sent to Coventry in *THE VERDICT OF THE FORM*, not such a good year for Bessie. In 1939 she left Cliff House, leaving the chums trying to imagine what on earth Cliff House was going to be like without her. Bessie was going to a future of luxury and good times abroad with her aunt and uncle, even though her rich uncle has another niece, Lucy, who is not at all pleased with the advent of Bessie and is determined to discredit the fat duffer as soon as possible. But it is Bessie herself who in the end suddenly realises that lording it with untold wealth has a hollow joy when her own beloved chums are not going to be there to share it with her. And so she turns it all down to stay at Cliff House with the friends she loves and trusts. Bessie's own Bluebird of Happiness leads her home on this occasion.

This was not the first time Bessie got rich. In 1937 Bessie receives a letter from her Aunt Anne informing her that she is coming home from New Zealand and has put a sum at Bessie's disposal on which she can draw at the local bank. Bessie, of course, goes quite berserk, running up bills here, there and everywhere, standing feeds to all the toadies who tend to crawl out of the woodwork at times like this, and is aided and abetted by her new friend Olwyn, whose motives, naturally, are suspect. But rich Aunt Anne has put only fifteen pounds into poor Bessie's bank account, and it has all been in the nature of a test to see how Bessie would deal with the responsibility of handling money. But worse is to come. Bessie is going blind, and at first only Babs realises that something is desperately wrong with Bessie's sight. Fortunately, the false friend, Olwyn, proves to have a conscience after all and she is instrumental in bringing the great eye surgeon who can save Bessie's sight. And in view of all this tragedy Aunt Anne has to forgive Bessie her foolishness. Also in 1937 Bessie is threatened with the greatest shame of all, being sent down into the Third Form. She does try to study and make up the backlog of knowledge she's failed to take in. But her efforts become involved with her new friendship with Ena, a little Gypsy girl she has met and wants to help. Connie Jackson, the most unpopular prefect at Cliff House, is also involved in the plot, to which is added the mystery of the missing Courcy pearl necklace. Ena's grandfather is a most respected Gypsy and a very talented musician who has taught all his children to play a musical instrument. At this big house where they are playing to the guests Ena has seen a girl in a green dress with the pearls, which have just snapped. Ena is accused of stealing the necklace, and Bessie is determined to stand by her. Babs finds a small pearl on the floor of Connie's study and becomes suspicious,



which leads to Connie being even more difficult than ever over poor Bessie's efforts at study. Fortunately for all of them Babs gets at the truth, of how Connie had simply been tempted to try on the necklace, which had snapped, and had taken it to be repaired, hoping to avoid any blame to herself. Connie, being Connie, couldn't care less about anyone else getting the blame for her sins. Miss Primrose gives Connie the benefit of the doubt -- that Connie had only "borrowed" the necklace -- and also, Primmy being a very wise lady, decides that perhaps Connie had not given Bessie fair treatment over her exam paper, so the dreaded shadow of relegation to the Third is removed from Bessie, at least until the next time!

Bessie wound up 1937 with a fun packed story for Guy Fawles, when she decided to set up a Fireworks Fund for the poor kiddies in the neighbourhood. In this story her enemy is Agatha Cresshampton of the Lower Fifth, and Bessie stands accused of spending the fireworks fund, when actually her fabled postal order has turned up at last. But Cliff House has heard so much and so often of Bessie's rich and titled relations that nobody will believe her. Sarah Harrigan is the "bitch" in this story, but in the time-honoured fashion of happy endings all is revealed at the end and the great fireworks affair takes place. Bessie queened up, lavishing largesse from her stall on the junior population of half of Kent, judging by the scene described vividly by one of Cliff House's greatest authors. What a miss our Bessie would have been; thank goodness they didn't let her go off with her wealthy relations! Cliff House would never have been the same without the plump and lovable Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter!



BOOKS

Reviewed by Mary Cadogan

THE SECRET CHRONICLES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES by June Thomson (Constable £12.99)

A first collection of Conan Doyle pastiches (THE SECRET FILES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES) by June Thomson, the well-known crime-writer, received much justified acclaim a year or so ago. Her second collection of Doyleana, THE SECRET CHRONICLES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, which is now available, conveys a similar air of authenticity and style. Once again, the 'case-histories' have been rescued

from the battered tin dispatch-box which has painted on its lid 'John H. Watson, M.D., late Indian Army'. To whet your appetite for this engaging book, I list the episodes below:

The Case of the Pardol Chamber: A return from the dead. *The Case of the Hammersmith Wonder:* The death of a French Nightingale. *The Case of the Maplestead Magpie:* A meeting of Smith and Wesson. *The Case of the Harley Street Specialist:* A journey to an unknown address. *The Case of the Old Russian Woman:* The secret investigations of a deaf-mute. *The Case of the Camberwell Poisoning:* An open and

shut matter of 'inheritance powder'. *The Case of the Sumatran Rat*: The PM receives a blackmail note from The Pied Piper.

THE PENGUIN BOOK OF BRITISH COMIC STORIES compiled by Patricia Craig (Penguin £6.99)

I am pleased to announce that this bumper 520 page book by my friend (and several times my co-author) Patricia Craig is now available in paper-back. Some of its stories make the reader laugh out loud: others stimulate gentle - or wry - smiles; all are attractive and entertaining. The items have been chosen from a wide range and a long period. School and juvenile stories are well represented in episodes from Kipling's *STALKY & CO.*, Richmal Crompton's *WILLIAM'S CROWDED HOURS* and J.I.M. Stewart's *OUR ENGLAND IS A GARDEN*. Many favourite authors of popular fiction are featured, from P.G. Wodehouse and H.E. Bates to Elizabeth Bowen and Fay Weldon. A jolly good read, and a wonderful bedside book!



D. JAMES MARTIN (Southampton): I was particularly interested in the January C.D. article by Ray Hopkins 'Literary Ladies in Disguise'. Meredith Fletcher (Mary Fletcher Kitchin) was a cousin of my grandfather, and the daughter of Dr. Kitchin. I had no knowledge of *The Pretenders* or of a fourth title (not given). I do have a much treasured autographed copy of *Uncle Bob* as well as *Every Inch Briton* and *Jefferson Junior* - all three enjoyable tales. I must keep an eye out for the two missing titles. I have also in my collection my mother's copy of *Betty's First Term* by Lilian F. Wevill (Blackie 1908). It was my mother's reading to me of this that set me on the way of reading school stories and the GEM and MAGNET. I understand that there was a sequel to this book but have not traced it.

DAVID URCH (Milton Keynes): I was interested in the remarks about Bessie Marchant, a writer I put very high on my list of favourites. I have heard her described as 'the girls' Henty', which I consider grossly unfair - I would rather describe Henty as 'the boys' Bessie Marchant'. I got involved with Mrs. Comfort (Bessie Marchant, of course) because my mother (now in her nineties) had a number of her books which, with a plethora of others, formed the nucleus of my collection of early nineteenth century juvenalia. Of her "boys" books I don't have first editions. Certainly *The Mysterious City* (1905), *Altrabasca Bill* (1906), and *Darling of Sany Point - A Tale of Tierra del Fuego* (1907), a 1920 reprint of which I bought in London last week, all have "Bessie Marchant" on the covers. Of course she also wrote early books suitable for nursery readers too ...

(Editor's Note: On the subject of women writers for boys and girls, I would like to mention that much interest has been expressed in the articles on Ethel Talbot by Bill Lofts and John Beck.)

DESMOND O'LEARY (Loughborough): Nice to see another Biggles article by Jenny Schofield, and also to see a cover from the CHAMPION on the cover of the February C.D.

NAVEED HAQUE (Canada): I have just finished reading the first Wharton Rebellion series of 1924/4. It was splendid. I tend to agree with the opinion of our former C.D. Editor, Eric Fayne (see p.21 of C.D. 342, June 1975), that this series was the most adult study of boyhood ever 'penned' by Charles Hamilton. To those who do not yet have this tale in their collections, I would strongly recommend a rectifying of the omission. This series is one of the 'pearls beyond price' of Hamiltonia! How did Frank Richards do it?

ROY PARSONS (Salisbury): I was most interested in Eric Fayne's article in the March C.D. on the GREYFRIARS HERALD, post World War I. His unrivalled knowledge and wide interests always make his articles of special interest to Hamiltonians. There was one point in the article, however, which puzzled me. In commenting on the Benbow stories he said that he thought none had been reprinted. But I have recently been reading GEMS from the 1939 period which **do** contain St. Winifred's (Benbow) stories. Are these not the stories from the Greyfriars Herald? I do not have the necessary copies of either publication to make a detailed comparison. Perhaps Eric could be prevailed upon to do so?

R.J. LEWIS (Uttoxeter): As Hurree Janset Ram Singh came from India, I can easily believe he was the Lower School's finest bowler. Likewise I assume Inky could play a good game of tennis and Polo. Also if the Remove had fielded a hockey team, he would probably have been its best player. However, I cannot accept that his soccer ability was of a standard sufficiently high to warrant his automatic selection for the Remove Eleven, as football would have been a very alien game for the Nabob of Bhanipur.

ARTHUR F.G. EDWARDS (London): The item by Alan Pratt, 'Match of (Yester)day!' in the February C.D. made me wonder, not for the first time, why some of my favourite characters have not been mentioned since I started taking the DIGEST about six years ago. I well remember Cast Iron Bill and Cannon Ball Sam, the former never letting a goal in, the latter scoring miraculous ones ... Did their teams ever meet? If so, what happened? My Rover/Adventure/Wizard interlude between conversion from Puck to the Magnet and the Gem was brief, and 100% complete by the publication of Magnet 1091, BUNTER-BIG GAME HUNTER. My favourite stories in the Rover featured not C.I.B. or C.B.S. but Wily Watkins. If a story about his activities had appeared every week I might never have deserted it. Like other boys of my generation, by swapping 'comics' I was able to add the Champion and Triumph to my reading list, although I never really enjoyed the latter. My favourite Wizard stories featured THE STORMY ORPHANS, SAM BUCK AND TIM BUCK TOO, also THE WOLF OF KABUL; while from the Champion I remember a cricket series with one Dan Upton (Dudley) who because he had D.U.D. tattooed on an arm was known as the Dud, and a Speedway series, I forget the name of the hero, but the villain was one Bert. In the

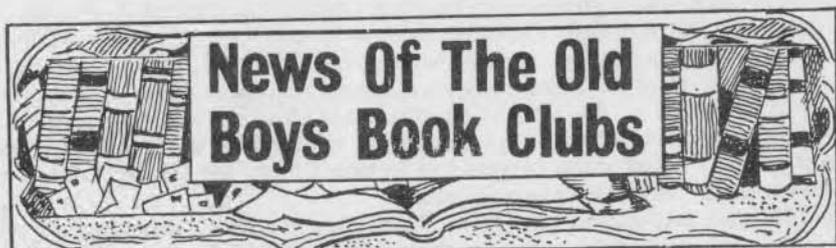
speedway stories the races seemed never league ones but for trophies such as a Golden Helmet.

I know I am looking back to 1927-9 but I am sure that a few of your readers are as old as I am. Was my taste so different from theirs?

PHILIP TIERNEY (Grimsby): (Re: Peter Mahony's Story: 'Levison's Last Match'): Through many memorable stories Levison changed gradually from being one of the worst St. Jim's characters to one of the best, and the idea of his reverting back later in life, and becoming an adult reprobate, doesn't appeal to me at all. The story also gives the impression that, in addition to having developed all the main vices between youth and manhood, he also had a weak nature. And he certainly never had that, even in his early pre-reform days.

MARK TAHA (London) : In answer to Frank Unwin's question (in 'Your Feet's Too Big', February C.D.), I remember Coker described as having 'the biggest feet at Greyfriars' at the end of the Brander series, and Bob Cherry more than once described as having the biggest feet in the Remove.

Could anyone tell me precisely when and in which papers the stories (as distinct from comic strips) of the 'Deathless Men' entitled 'V for Vengeance' appeared? Just the paper and year will do: I remember them in the first half of the nineteen-seventies but can't remember when or where.



CAMBRIDGE CLUB

For our March 1992 Meeting we met at the Linton Village home of Roy Whiskin.

After a Business Meeting - prolonged by discussion of our 21st Anniversary Meeting (to be held in the afternoon of 7th June at our Secretary's Home) - we launched into the afternoon's talks.

Roy gave us a talk - using numerous literature examples - on the life and times of Enid Blyton, one of the most prolific and most translated writers of the 20th century. Her extraordinary private life was often seemingly at odds with her best-known creations such as Noddy and her Famous Five.

Bill Lofts then gave us a very different view of the 1950 Marcus Morris and his Eagle publication. This novel approach considered the activities of certain censorious bodies in the light of horror comics and the new publication. We were amazed at the bias against juvenile publications, even the consideration that Eagle was barely better than the U.S. originated material.

ADRIAN PERKINS

LONDON O.B.B.C.

Twenty-one attended the March meeting, held at the Ealing Liberal Centre. Phil Griffith mentioned an item in Comic Journal, negotiations between Hawk Books and a Sunday newspaper to do a Bunter strip.

Bill Lofts gave an enjoyable talk on collecting free gifts which were given away with the magazines, this practice having thought to have originated with the Penny Bloods. Bill gave some very amusing anecdotes and brought along some specimens, including a 1934 *Pioneer*, which was giving away a spanner with a rule marked on the handle. Phil Griffith read 'William the Reformer', from William Again. Roger Jenkins gave us a word search quiz using Greyfriars characters.

The next meeting on April 12th will be at Chingford Horticultural Society Hall. One topic for discussion will be a comparison between Hamilton and Johns in terms of:- Readability, Plot, Characterisation and Literary Merit.

SUZANNE HARPER

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Chairman Joan welcomed the ten present. A number of apologies for absence were received

Darrell reported that he had recently received a letter from one Frank Richards - not our much-loved author, but a fellow hobbyist who is a keen follower of the saga of Greyfriars. A report was also given of Darrell's recent visit to Hawk Books.

The main item was a presentation by Mark Caldicott on Robert B. Parker. He writes in the style of Raymond Chandler, lives in Boston, U.S.A. and his works are detective fiction (although he has also written on literature and weight training!) At the moment, there are 15 of his Detective Spenser novels - though around 18 of the series are available in the U.S.A. The stories first appeared in 1973 in ARGOSY, an American pulp magazine. The books have a high moral code, not unlike that of the old boys' and girls' A.P. papers. Mark made comparisons between them and the Nelson Lee and Dixon Hawke sagas. An excellent presentation.

Geoffrey then read a short piece from "Three Men in a Boat" where humour gives way to pathos and then quickly returns to the general theme of the story. Then, from a 1949 C.D. Annual, Herbert Leckenby's article "How My First Collection Started" - a very moving item.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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/S 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.

BIGGLES HUNTS FOR TREASURE

by Jennifer Schofield

In the heart of the lost city of the Incas, Biggles, Algy, flight Sergeant Smyth and Biggles' uncle, Dickpa, gazed into the inner sanctum of the temple, too overcome with awe to move or speak. At long last, Biggles drew a slow breath and said simply, 'Well, there she is!' and the Flight Sergeant ventured a nervous comment: 'Looks like money for jam, sir!'

Readers of 'The Cruise of the Condor' (1933) will remember the sight that confronted the comrades: a vast chamber filled with golden objects, including an enormous plate engraved with a face and springing rays representing the sun god, and innumerable ornaments, utensils and weapons, all made of the same precious metal. These were the artefacts that the Incas had been able to hide from Pizarro and his conquering Spaniards, 'a fabulous El Dorado', 'the most famous treasure in the world...'

But there was no time to make the most of the discovery, for this Biggles adventure is W.E. Johns' equivalent of 'Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark', and rivals this famous film of our own time in thrills, spills and cracking pace. Rival fortune-hunters were hot on the airmen's heels, the earth began to tremble and Biggles and his friends took off in their flying-boat not a minute too soon. A gigantic volcanic eruption convulsed the land below them, whilst from above their enemy's plane swooped down, blazing destruction. Biggles longed for a machine-gun to fight back with, but Algy succeeded in destroying the assailants by hurling an oil-drum onto their aircraft. The crew of the Condor looked behind them and beheld a blanket of smoke stretching from earth to sky and 'hiding from human eyes the last stronghold of a mighty empire and the treasure of its murdered king...'

Well - not quite all the treasure. Fortunately Biggles and his team had helped themselves to a few momentos from the fabulous store. The airman himself had a tomahawk with a copper edge and handle of gold, which bore a huge, inset emerald, Dickpa had a 'quipus', a cord construction that served as a means of recording events, Algy had several small golden objects including two llamas, a priest holding a rod surmounted by a ruby, and a sheaf of corn, whilst Flight Sergeant Smyth had a pair of long, jewelled ear-rings, a pearl necklace and, all of gold, a warrior with a sword, a goblet and several tiny animals and birds.

This royal loot seemed to give the airmen a taste for treasure-hunting, for in 'Biggles Flies West' (1933) Biggles and Algy, now accompanied by Ginger, were delighted to encounter a lad with a line on a pirate's hoard. Young Dick Denver showed them a map sent to him by his seaman father, showing the whereabouts of a buccaneer's galleon, and Biggles was quick off the mark: 'Get down the atlas, Ginger, and let's have a look at the Caribbean...'

Soon an aircraft was winging westward, for this tale is Johns' Jolly Roger fantasy and he prefaced the volume with a verse by Alfred Noyes that set the tone of the whole yarn:

The moon is up, the stars are bright,
The wind is fresh and free,
We're out to seek for gold tonight
Across the silver sea...
We're out to seek a realm of gold
Beyond the Spanish Main!

Although the comrades were fully involved in the adventure, it was Dick who brought the quest to a triumphant climax: 'Quickly he stooped again, fingers scooping at the bottom of the hole. They closed over a handful of small, round objects, and his mouth

went dry as he felt their shape. Hardly able to breathe, he leaned against the side of the rock, and opening his trembling hand, stared wide-eyed at what it held! Doubloons! ...'

When the coins were all hauled out of their hiding-place and counted, Biggles estimated that there were between forty and fifty thousand of them - 'What you might call a good day's work!' The treasure was valued in London at £200,000, half going to the crown, and half divided equally between Dick on the one hand and Biggles and his companions on the other. Nor were the airman's fans forgotten; a photograph was included in the book of four 'pieces of eight' in the author's possession, and Captain W.E. Johns walked around with the money in his pocket, so that if he met any young readers he could enable them to handle coins that had probably passed through the clutches of 'gory-handed pirates'.

'The Cruise of the Condor' seems to have many points in common with the style of the later film 'Indiana Jones', but 'Biggles Flies West' looks back to that classic tale of piracy, R.L. Stevenson's 'Treasure Island'. There are many similarities in the plots of the two books, and at one point in the story Biggles called himself Captain Smollett, naming Algy as Squire Trelwany, Ginger as Dr. Livesay, Dick as Jim Hawkins and the principal villain of the piece as Long John Silver. However the next book to feature a treasure hunt, 'Biggles in the Jungle' (1942), relies on historical fact, the reports of the Carmichael treasure.

Arriving at Belize in British Honduras, Biggles teased Ginger by telling him a tantalizing story that had appeared in the newspapers and been discussed on the radio. 'A fellow named Carmichael', travelling in the interior of the country in 1860, had saved the lives of two Indians and in return they had shown him a temple in a city buried in the jungle, where they said that Montezuma had hidden his wealth from the Spaniards. Carmichael cut a mark on the building and returned to civilization for help, but when he set off to fetch the gold he could not even find the city again. All subsequent attempts to locate the legendary hoard had also ended in failure.

Ginger was thrilled by the tale, and guilelessly suggested a trip in the appropriate direction, but Biggles was dampening: 'All you'd be likely to find would be Indians, mosquitos, leeches, ticks, snakes, and a few other horrors. If you didn't find them they'd find you. Tropical forests may sound great fun, but they can be very uncomfortable. Believe me, I know...'

The subject was not discussed again, and when the treasure was discovered it was by accident, and incidental to the main story. Algy, Ginger and their friend, Eddie, were escaping from an evil half-caste and his gang, and had taken refuge in an underground chamber below some ruins in the forest. Ginger disturbed a heap of dusty debris and heard a metallic chink. He seized a handful of small objects and began to laugh hysterically: 'Feel the weight of it! It's gold!'

In great excitement the little band fell to their knees and soon established that there were no coins but an extraordinary collection of carved trinkets, that included flowers, ears of corn and a mug shaped like a potato. They had previously noticed Carmichael's initials on a pillar and as Algy said, 'It's the treasure all right!'

Yet his voice was strained and he continued, 'Unfortunately, it's no earthly use to us at the moment, but it's nice to know it's here... Let's see about getting out of this trap!' For the entrance by which they had come was now sealed, and the heroes had a tough time of it as they went forward into the unexplored regions ahead. They descended from the man-made chamber to a huge cavern full of stalactites and stalagmites, forded a subterranean bog and survived sulphuric gas and tarantulas before seeing daylight again.

When they were reunited with Biggles once more, Ginger told him about their discovery with some relish, but although the airman was surprised, he was not overly impressed: 'I might have guessed it. Well, let's go and look at it...' But now Algy demurred, remarking prosaically that first of all he wanted a square meal and a bar of soap. 'Biggles in the Jungle' is the last of the great novels set in the inter-war period, and it lacks the exuberance of its predecessors, looking forward to the more down to earth approach apparent later in the series.

However, at least the treasure itself proved even more valuable than the comrades had supposed, for there were some fine jewels as well as gold, and altogether it was 'a wonderful find'. Many of the objects were unique examples of the craftsmanship of the early inhabitants of America and were sold to museums, the airmen and Eddie sharing the profits fairly between them.

The next tale relevant to our theme is the title story in a collection of Air Police adventures, 'Biggles and the Pirate Treasure', published in 1954. The coloured frontispiece of the book is in true 'Treasure Island' tradition, showing Biggles and Ginger hiding in tropical undergrowth, watching the unearthing of a mysterious chest, and the story started promisingly. Marcel Brissac, Biggles' opposite number in France, invited his English colleagues to a 'pique-nique' in Madagascar, and a hunt for the secret cache of the notorious buccaneer, Thomas Tew. But Biggles was sceptical from the first: 'I've heard of these boxes of gold before...'

The Air Police and Marcel tracked down a party of men who were hunting for the pirate's hoard illegally, and as Biggles said sombrely, 'Treasure and murder are old friends'. Although Tew's fortune was found it brought no fortune with it; the villains of the piece killed each other for the sake of the gold, and the whole tale has more in common with a morality story about greed and death such as 'The King's Ankus' by Kipling than with a romance by Stevenson. Bertie kept his spirits up - 'I'm all for the jolly old ducats' - but even he had to admit that the adventure was hardly a picnic.

But worse was to come. In 'Biggles Forms a Syndicate' (1961) (surely the most dreary title in the series) the Air Detective was given the opportunity to search for the Queen of Sheba's jewels in ancient Ophir. An old pal, Squadron Leader 'Dizzy', Digswell, had found some likely-looking ruins in Southern Arabia, and a number of ancient tablets and urns in a concealed chamber. The Queen of Sheba and King Solomon must have often visited Ophir - what could be more likely than that they had left some of



A gasp of horror broke from his lips when he saw the tarantulas

From *Biggles in the Jungle*

their fabulous treasure there? Dizzy even produced a silver coin that he had found on the site bearing the head of a king that might well be Solomon.

But Biggles was less than enthusiastic. He reluctantly agreed to support his friend by forming a syndicate to finance an expedition and share the profits, but he refused to take an active role in the adventure, moaning, 'At my time of life I ought to have my head examined before I allow myself to be caught up in any more imbecile schemes.'

Algy, too, shrugged and admitted he was not keen on the mission, and in the end only Bertie and Ginger accompanied Dizzy to 'Ophir'. After such a display of fuddy-duddy cynicism it would be pleasant to report that the comrades were crowned with success and that Bertie satisfied his yen to dangle the Queen of Sheba's bangles. But alas, the venerable pots contained little of value yielding nothing but silver coins and bones. Moreover, Bertie and Dizzy were trapped in the chamber by a rockfall for several days, and sadly agreed that Biggles was right - treasure-hunting was a game for lunatics! Eventually, the Syndicate received a substantial sum for such finds as had been made, but the narrative forms a depressing conclusion to the Biggles tales in this *genre*.

It is also sad that in 'The Biggles Book of Treasure Hunting' (1962) Johns writes of the riches of the Incas in the fabulous city of El Dorado and about the Carmichael treasure, but fails to add that Biggles discovered both these amazing hoards. Yet those early adventures were no dreams! There are tangible proofs of their reality in many a collection.

Although we are not told what happened to the items brought back by the crew of the Condor, I feel quite sure that one day I shall see, within the hallowed portals of the British Museum, a flash of emerald from an Incan axe or a glow of ruby from a golden priest. I suspect that the Flight Sergeant gave the long ear-rings and pearl necklace to Mrs. Smyth but the other items he saved will be on display, his 'money for jam!'

Besides, we do not have to go further than the bookshelf to find Biggles the romantic treasure-seeker rather than the cynical senior citizen. Why read the series in chronological order? Biggles travels continually in realms of gold and finds his El Dorado.

WANTED: Greyfriars Book Club. Volume No. 1 'The Worst Boy at Greyfriars', No. 2 'Loder for Captain', No. 3 'The Making of Harry Wharton', No. 4 'Harry Wharton & Co. in India', and No. 6 'Paul Dallas at Greyfriars'. Must be in fine to very good condition. State your price please.
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WOMEN *with* WINGS



FEMALE FLYERS

FICTION

Mary Cadogan

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

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