

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 46

No. 551

NOVEMBER 1992

No. 3 OF A NEW PAPER! £130 IN PRIZES! GIVEN FREE GRAND PLATE!

The Schoolgirls' Own



2^d

96p

BETTY AGAINST THE SNOBS!
(See "The Friend She Found!" in this issue.)

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FLIPS PAGES



(INCORPORATING NORMAN SHAW)
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Hi People,

Varied selection of goodies on offer this month:-

1. Many loose issues of TRIUMPH in basically very good condition (some staple rust) £3. each.
2. Bound volume of TRIUMPH Jan-June 1938 £80.
3. GEM - bound volumes - all uniform -
581 - 620 (29/3 - 27.12.19) £110
621 - 646 (Jan - June 1920) £ 80
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4. 2 Volumes of MAGNET uniformly bound:-
October 1938 - March 1939 £ 60
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7. EAGLE - many issues of this popular paper, including some complete unbound volumes at the following rates: Vol. 1-10, £2 each, and Vol. 11 and subsequent at £1 each. Please advise requirements.
8. 2000 A.D. - many copies (would you believe, 30,000 - no kidding!) available - please advise wants.
9. Lots more goodies to hand, including recent comics like VICTOR, NEW HOTSPUR, BATTLE, WARLORD, SMASH, POW, WHAM, WHIZZER & CHIPS, COR, WHOOPEE, MONSTER FUN, BUZZ, TOPPER, BEEZER, TV COMIC, and many others. Please advise requirements.

That's it for now, except to say that Norman sends his best wishes to all his old customers. Have fun! Callers always welcome, but please make an appointment as I sometimes have to be out and I would hate you to have a wasted journey.

BRITISH AND AMERICAN COMICS, STORY PAPERS, ANNUALS, NEWSPAPER COMIC SECTIONS, DAILY STRIPS, PULP MAGAZINES, GAG AND EDITORIAL CARTOONS, HUMOUR MAGAZINES AND ILLUSTRATED BOOKS

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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W.H. GANDER

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BUNTER BARRED

There have been several press articles recently reporting the fact that a proposed Greyfriars TV series has been turned down, apparently mainly on the grounds of 'stoutism', with particular reference, of course, to Bunter who is always seen by the media as the epitome of Greyfriars. Socio-literary criticism and repudiation seem to be the temporary lot of many popular authors: 'out-dated' attitudes have been fastened by critics, reviewers and social commentators onto a wide range of wonderful story-tellers including Kipling (whom several publishers nevertheless rushed to reprint as soon as he came out of copyright recently), Frank Richards, W.E. Johns, John Buchan and Richmal Crompton. Frequently reprints and their popularity defy such critics, and let us hope that

Bunter - who is, after all, used to being kicked and vigorously cut down to size in the stories! - will roll back with his usual resilience and appear not only in books but on our TV screens.



OUR ANNUAL

The Fat Owl and his friends are certainly featured prominently in our forthcoming Annual. Les Rowley has provided another of his warmly atmospheric vignettes, BROUGHT TO ACCOUNT, which shows Quelch at his most astute in dealing both with recalcitrant pupils and some of his stuffy

colleagues, while Peter Mahony has contributed a fascinating assessment of the relative academic attainments of Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood. Other mouth-watering attractions are Ernest Holman's memories of his early days of GOING TO THE PICTURES, C.H. Churchill's appreciation of Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi, Michael Rouse's dip into many TREASURED COMICS and Dennis Bird's further insights into NOEL RAYMOND, DEBONAIR DETECTIVE. All branches of our hobby are covered - including Blakiana in a very unusual Christmassy item by John Bridgewater. Further forthcoming delights will be discussed in next month's C.D. It only remains for me to remind those of you who have not yet ordered your Annual to do so: the price, including postage and packing, is £8.90 for U.K. readers and £10.00 for those living abroad.

Happy Browsing,

MARY CADOGAN



THE MAN FROM OCCUPIED FRANCE BY ANTHONY PARSONS

by Ian H. Godden

In the twenty years from the mid 1930s onwards, Anthony Parsons wrote 99 stories for the Sexton Blake Library. Before he started on Blake he wrote magazine stories for the likes of Wide World, Blackwood's, Nash's, Strand and Royal, many of them based on his early life in the Army, and later the R.F.C. during the First War, and his subsequent adventures as an ivory hunter in Africa. For most of his writing life Parsons wrote fiction for women's magazines using a dozen different names and this, along with the Blakes, must have been his main source of income. He said in 1955 that, in order to meet his commitments, he had to work virtually every day and had to write 6,000 words every day, a prodigious output by any standards.

There is no doubt whatsoever in my mind that Parsons was the best of the later Blake writers and one of the very best ever. His Blake stories were of a uniformly high standard, always extremely well-written and with strong plots. He seemed to be equally at home with both thrillers and detective stories; so far as the latter are concerned it would be hard to find a better mystery than that which he thought up for The Euston Road Mystery, No. 148, Third

Series, one of his many yarns featuring the egotistical Supt. Venner of Scotland Yard. I can honestly say that I have never seen a Blake story by Parsons that was less than highly satisfactory.

Parsons used to complain that the SBL editor, Len Pratt, always used to find a new title for his stories, discarding his own and coming up with something less satisfactory, and I think that is what happened with *The Man From Occupied France*, No. 8, Third Series, because the title is quite inappropriate to the contents. A young woman working for an aircraft manufacturer in wartime Britain is imprisoned for espionage and it soon becomes obvious that she has been the victim of a 'frame-up' perpetrated by German spies operating a large-scale spying operation. Blake is called in to try and trace a British soldier who can 'alibi' the imprisoned woman. During the course of this exciting story we meet various Parsons 'regulars' such as the British Secret Service ace, Beltom Brass, Esquire and his French opposite number, Mademoiselle Yvonne de Breselieu. The great Venner himself makes a brief appearance. This is an exciting story with plenty of action and is vastly readable from first page to last.

Anyone interested in Anthony Parsons and his work is referred to Victor Colby's moving tribute to him in CD 212, August 1964 which appeared soon after Parsons passed on in June 1963 at the age of 69.



**MORE ANSWERS, TO MESSRS CHURCHILL (SEPT. C.D.)
AND ALLNATT (AUG. C.D.) from E. Grant-McPherson**

I am happy to say that my very good friend Charles Churchill's memory, is, despite his quoted lack of material, as Archie would say "Working in top gear". His first page-full of answers, as one would expect, could not be improved upon.

Regarding 'Anyone for Tennis' I am certain he was correct and this phrase did not appear in the stories mentioned, but I will read the series again, just to confirm matters. About the 'Black Box', the episode referred to is probably the crux of the first Ezra Quirke series, and the removite to be 'conned' was the Hon. Douglas Singleton (O.S. 542-9).

Handforth did not leave St. Frank's under a cloud. With the assistance of his chums, he cleared his name, and was asked by the Head to return to the school; meanwhile his father had arranged for him to join St. Jim's, and,

No. 2 OF A GRAND NEW PAPER!

The Boys' Herald 1^d

A Healthy Paper for Manly Boys . EVERY FRIDAY

No. 2. Vol. I.

EVERY FRIDAY—ONE PENNY.

WEEK ENDING AUGUST 8TH, 1903.

NELSON LEE'S PUPIL

A STORY OF THE FAMOUS DETECTIVE
BY MAXWELL SCOTT



At the same instant, Wipper nerved himself for the jump, but the coachman's hand shot through the open window and held him dangling in mid-air. (Nelson Lee's Pupil.)

when he tells Handy that this would not now be necessary, his son says that he would still go to St. Jim's as he would not stay where he had been doubted. He did not really mean this of course but Sir Edward, playing him at his own game, tells him that if that is the case he will go to the new school. At the same time he gives Dr. Stafford a covert glance, unnoticed by Edward Oswald.

There were actually five Gems containing the adventures of Handforth at St. Jim's, but the last one, No. 1063, was not listed in the original guide by the late Bob Blythe. There was also a condensed version in S.O.L. 224.

The Atlantic Crossing by Archie's brothers, Bertie and George, was in New Series No. 109 and it was Little Side. Queerly enough, the 1923 Nelson Lee No. 440, also entitled 'Armistice Day at St. Franks', again features Archie's brother Bertie, who this time flies to the school to do a few stunts for the boys. Unfortunately he comes a little too low and touches a tree top, which causes him to crash, happily without doing much damage, and with no hurt to himself. This time, however, it is on one of the meadows just outside the school, and not Little Side.

It is hoped that these few additions to Charles' list of answers will prove of interest.



DEREK LAWSON - PRIVATE DETECTIVE

by Bill Lofts

Harold J. Garrish, Director of all the juvenile publications at Amalgamated Press Ltd., who had been at the firm since it commenced way back with Answers (over 60 years) once told me that it was the black and white Penny comics that had built the firm up to a billion pound concern, one of the largest in the world.

Chips and *Comic Cuts*, for instance, once had a sale of over a million copies each, the former with Weary Willie and Tired Tim on the cover having an unbeatable formula. The Penny Comic with its blend of comic strips and short stories was an ideal, entertaining paper to be read quite cheaply by adults and children alike - especially those of the working class for whom it was intended.

Included in the reading matter was almost certainly the short detective story which had proved to be very popular. Based on the successful Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee private detectives, these comic sleuths nearly always

had boy assistants, often doubles of Tinker or Nipper. An Inspector of Scotland Yard would also feature in the tales to give them some authority.



Derek Lawson, the famous detective, proved himself very human when someone stole the little invalid girl's dog and, taking the law into his own hands, he dealt out drastic punishment to the thief.

Most detectives were editorially created, then handed over to teams of various writers. Often an established author would be commissioned to write a serial, which would enable the editor to stock-pile well in advance these single one page stories.

Stories were very easy to write. Jack Le Grand of *Film Fun* could write a Jack Keen tale in his lunch hour, whilst Ernest L. McKeag wrote three in one evening featuring Colwyn Dane for *Champion*, when he wanted to be in advance for a coming long holiday.



Squib Baxter.

Some detectives had short runs, whilst others ran for years becoming almost an institution in their own comics. One such sleuth was Derek Lawson of *Funny Wonder*. Written by Harry Bellfield who seemed to specialise in detective short stories (he had penned Falcoln Swift tales in *Boys Magazine* as well as Colwyn Dane in *Champion*) this private detective had a believed 30 year run. His assistant was Squib Baxter, whose youthful exploits had him at times dominating the whole stories. Evil characters were sometimes introduced such as 'The Claw' and 'The

Advenger' in serials, with a long one 'They Prowl by Night' probably concluding the series. An Inspector Davidson of Scotland Yard was sometimes introduced.

THE BENBOW STORIES

by Peter Mahony

I have the complete run of 1938-1939 Gems which contain the reprints of the Benbow stories by Owen Conquest. They began in Gem 1588 (July 1938) and ended in Gem 1649 (September 1939) 61 stories in all, the first entitled *The Bucks of the Benbow*, the last *Homeward Bound* (from the West Indies). They were enjoyable yarns, particularly up to Gem 1620. After that the school sailed to the West Indies and the stories became rather melodramatic.

The "Jack Drake at Greyfriars" yarns were reprinted in Gems 1650 to 1663 (September to December 1939) when the Gem ceased publication. I cannot be sure that all the Drake stories were reprinted. Certainly, his

meeting with Ferrers Locke was not one of these reprints. The 12 stories, with their Gem titles, were: Jack Drake at Greyfriars; The Study-Jumpers; The Greyfriars Lunatic; Coker's Catch; Foes of the Remove; Jack Drake's Hat-Trick; From Foes to Friends; Pulling Bunter's Leg; Skinner's Revenge; His Black Sheep Brother; The Boy who wouldn't Fight; The Fag's Fear. No stories were published in Gems 1659 and 1660 because the "Biggles" story needed more space in these weeks.

OPENING YARN OF A POWERFUL SCHOOL SERIES FEATURING A WEALTHY SCHOOLBOY WHO SUDDENLY FINDS HIMSELF A PAUPER!



Lightheartedly Jack Drake went off with his pals to have a gay time—little guessing that a crushing blow was about to fall upon him!

The "Bucks" of the Benbow!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

One or two loose ends were left. Drake was proving a serious rival to Wharton for the leadership of the remove. Dick Rodney, Drake's pal, disappeared from the Remove without trace. Drake, obviously, became Ferrers Locke's assistant - but how did that come about? Did Charles Hamilton have to get rid of Drake because he threatened the balance of power in the Remove? Intriguing, to say the least. Certainly, Wharton showed up pretty badly in dealing with Drake: once again the dear lad couldn't keep his temper! Perhaps there were other problems too. Drake and Rodney, both excellent sportsmen, would have commanded places in the teams. Characters like Nugent and Hazeldene would have had to make way for them. 'Nuff said!

FOR SALE: 330 Old Series *Nelson Lees*. S.A.E. envelope please.
ANGUS, 8 Holme Hall Crescent, Chesterfield.

DANDY BEANO-FAMOUS FACES FROM THE COMICS

published by D.C. Thomson & Co. Ltd. at £6.20.

Reviewed by Norman Wright



This is the fifth volume in the 'Dandy Beano Fifty years' series and once again the editor has managed to find a new slant to keep everyone happy. The book spans the characters featured in almost all of the D.C. Thomson comics, so if you never read Beano or Dandy, but preferred Topper, Beezer or one of the other Thomson comics you are bound to find a reference to at least one of your favourites here. The book is divided into sections, each featuring a particular type of character. 'Here Come the Boys' includes Roger the Dodger, Calamity James, Dirty Dick, Ginger and more. Most of the characters are introduced with a sentence or two giving a brief history. The 'Fur 'N' Feathers' section includes such all time favourites as Charlie the Chimp,

Biffo the Bear and Freddy the Fearless Fly. Working my way through the book I came across a number of characters who were unfamiliar to me. These were mainly from the 1970s, a time when I was rather out of touch with the Thomson comics. Nevertheless many of them displayed that unique brand of humour that has always flowed from the Dundee firm and I found myself laughing almost as much at the antics of Fred the Flop and Tricky as I did at Grandpa and Ali Ha-Ha.

Most of the great Thomson artists are represented in the book and it is interesting to compare the styles of such masters as Davy Law and Leo Baxendale with that of the artists who have continued to draw their original creations in more recent years. For my money Baxendale, Law and Watkins win hands down everytime. Another of my favourite artists is Ken Reid and he is well represented in the book with examples of Grandpa, Roger the Dodger, Ali Ha-Ha and his most memorable character Jonah, that menace of the seas who found more ways to sink a ship than you would have thought possible!

Unlike previous volumes in the series the strips do not appear to have been 'doctored' with extra colour and as far as I am concerned this is a big plus factor. Having said that it must be mentioned that all but a dozen or so

BIBLIOMANIA AT AN EARLY AGE: MORE FROM THE MEMORY OF AN OCTOGENARIAN BOOK COLLECTOR

by Fred E. Snowden

My first volume of *Chatterbox* was dated 1919, and the serial story that remains clearly in my memory was "The Lost 'Reynolds'" by W. Rainey - the adventures of two Boy Scouts chasing the thief of a valuable painting from London through Holland. Like all serials in *Chatterbox* there were two full page illustrations to each instalment, and these added much to my enjoyment of the stories. Unfortunately, very few of the illustrators signed their work, although the standard was very high, and many of the leading artists of the day contributed, and their style is recognisable.

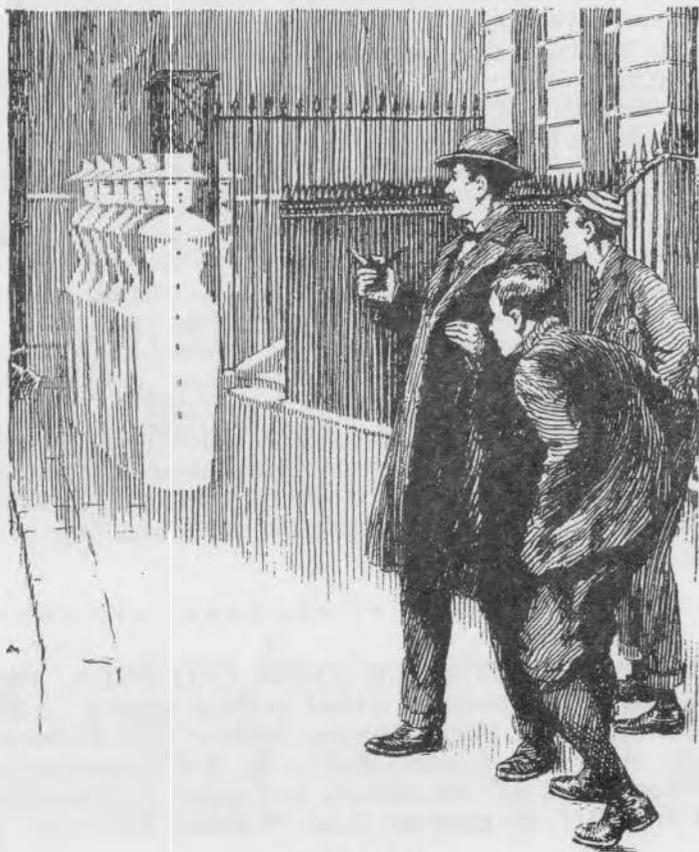
CHATTERBOX.



"The business of getting in and out of the cars had to be negotiated with skill."

I had some later volumes, but my only other clear memory of this pleasant annual dates from a conversation with a schoolfellow when I was twelve. We were comparing our literary tastes - I was then taking *The Boy's Own Paper*, *Chums* and *The Scout*, and the occasional copy of *The Magnet* and *Gem*, and had read a lot of Dickens and Conan Doyle as well as Jeffery Farnol, "Sapper" and Wodehouse. I must have mentioned *Chatterbox* when disdaining "kid's books", when my friend said he had just read a most unusual and very "creepy" tale in his young brother's 1924 *Chatterbox*. He lent me the book. "The Wooden Heads" by C.L. Hales and illustrated by E.S. Farmer certainly justified his description. I have read it again recently, and still experienced the same slight "frisson" as when I first read W.W. Jacobs' "The Monkey's Paw".

CHATTERBOX.



* They came to a halt.*

It tells of a London family who had returned from holiday very late the previous day and woke to find the town empty of all people and animals except for birds and a few stray cats. It appears that this has been effected by shadowy skittle-like creatures, with no apparent limbs, who glide and surround their victim who immediately becomes invisible and dematerialized! Too far-fetched one would think, yet it is written in such a way that disbelief is suspended. Today I am struck by the difference in the way of life less than seventy years ago compared to attitudes now - the stolid, matter-of-fact, meticulously honest way a normal middle class family in this story is determined to get on with everyday life, despite most abnormal circumstances.

I find that collecting periodicals gives me the chance to compare life's changes over the years. Just take *Chatterbox* for 1900, 1910, 1920 and 1930 and see, not just the differences in the contents such as type, layout, illustrations, etc., but fashions, attitudes and morals which show up clearly.

Illustrations have always seemed important to me. I believe that the reason I never became very enthusiastic about *The Magnet* or *The Gem* was due to the - in my opinion - poor illustrations. When compared with the work of, say, J.R. Burgess, T.H. Robinson and T.M.R. Whitwell which enhanced the school stories in *B.O.P.*, *The Captain* and "*Chums*", apart from Bunter (who was depicted as a grotesque caricature) most of the other characters were given rather less individuality than Lowry's matchstick men!

But to return to my childhood reading. At the age of seven I moved with my parents to Aldershot and I had to be taken to have my hair cut. Being both shy and cowardly, the thought of such a visit to the torture chamber appalled me but, being bribed with the promise of the purchase of a comic on my way home "if I did not make a fuss", I survived the ordeal and chose "*Tiger Tim's Weekly*". I think this was the first issue under that title - it had been running since 1st June 1919 as "*Tiger Tim's Tales*".

If I am allowed, I hope to devote a further article to the memories of the periodicals of my early teenage years. In the meantime, if anyone can furnish any information on the second series of *The Captain* issued from May 1934 I shall be most grateful. (My address is on the inside back page of June 1992 "Collectors' Digest.")

WANTED: ENID BLYTON, W.E. JOHNS, CROMPTON. First editions in wrappers, and ALL ephemera related to these authors. ANY original artwork related to Bunter, Blyton, Biggles, Eagle or other British comics and boys papers. ALL Boys Friend Libraries by W.E. Johns and Rochester. Many "Thriller" issues and first editions in wrappers by Charteris required. NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, WD1 4JL. Tel. 0923 232383.

SOME D.C. THOMSON ANNUALS (3) ADVENTURELAND 1935 (PART 1) by D.J. O'Leary

ADVENTURELAND was the first D.C. Thomson story paper annual to be issued, just as *Adventure* was the first of its "Famous Five" story papers. *Adventure* appeared in 1921 and ran till 1961. ADVENTURELAND ran from 1924 to 1941 and differed in several respects from the other Thomson annuals which followed.

Priced at 5 shillings, that is twice the price required for their other pre-war annuals, it was of large format, 10 inches by 7½ inches, and had 188 pages. It was well illustrated with black and white drawings, colour plates (6) and photo-picture features. Cartoons and picture strips also featured. I have been told that these annuals were originally published in dust-jackets but I have never come across any examples of this.

Just as *Adventure* was my least favourite Thomson story paper (*Skipper* had disappeared before I started reading story papers) so ADVENTURELAND is the only one of the annuals I have never sought to collect with great enthusiasm. Nevertheless, one of my favourite "reads" since boyhood has been provided by the 1935 ADVENTURELAND.

I don't know how I got hold of it. Probably from a school friend during the war. I do know that I read it over and over, until its stories and pictures became deeply rooted in my memory although I later forgot their origin. I kept my eyes open, looking for a title - "The Cheetahs of Chunga Das" - a story about a boxer who disguises his fighting style, and a striking photo showing Niagra Falls frozen solid. When I did find the annual I was surprised to find how much I remembered.

The annual was published in September 1934. Like all Thomson annuals until about 1960 it carried no date, so it was not till the publication of the essential identification guide by Lofts and Adley that collectors were able to assign dates with confidence to these Thomson annuals.

This annual consisted of 188 thick "cardboard" paper pages. There was a cover picture of a healthy young hiker on the top of a crag with a sign saying "Bill Jones, First Up". The spine bore a picture of a clipper ship under full sail. The front and end papers showed a world map with its stories indicated on their respective countries. The frontispiece colour plate showed an Eskimo in a kayak battling with a polar bear. After the contents index came the varied stories and features. There are 11 stories, 9 photo-plates (totalling 16 pages) and 2 whole page cartoons.

The stories are as follows:

1. **THE CHEETAHS OF CHUNGA DAS** by Jack Ballantine: 20 pp.
Two British lads are pursued through the jungles of Sumatra by the hunting cheetahs of a villainous Rajah. They need all their strength and cunning to destroy their enemies with the aid of a herd of elephants.
2. **THE "CLOUD" THAT CLEARED JIM PALMER** by Arthur Radcliffe: 26pp.
In his amazing helicopter, the "Hoverer", Captain Q and his dumb negro assistant use unorthodox methods to right an injustice.
3. **THE FLYING IDOL** by Bertram Manby: 16pp.
The railway engineers driving a new track into Abyssinia from Kenya are halted by the giant stone sculpture of a lion which guards the only possible route and is sacred to the fierce natives. But Dynamiter Jim, the explosives wizard, causes the lion to "fly" back to its original site on the mountain top, with the help of two truckloads of gelignite! The railway goes through, and the natives return to a healthier home above the marshy valley.

4. **THE BATH-CHAIR BANDIT** by J.G. Robertson: 11pp.
Tim Cotter of the Mexican police rescues a stubborn American from the consequences of his own folly and thereby cleans up a nest of bandits.
5. **MICROBE MARNEY'S FIVE-POUND CHECK - a tale of Red Circle School** by C.A. Bright: pp.13.
"Microbe" Marney's attempt to use his plentiful pocket money to exploit the troubles of a fellow-pupil at Red Circle is foiled by the Fourth Formers led by "Dead-Wide" Dick Doyle, and a villainous money-lender is well and truly "scragged"!
6. **CASEY'S LAST COP** by R.M. Fraser: 16pp.
Captain Mike Casey of the New York police is due to retire at mid-night still dissatisfied over his failure to catch one wily safe-cracker, Chicago Charlie. Just as it seems that Charlie has made his first mistake and is in Casey's grasp, the two men have to unite to rescue a boy from a blazing building. As mid-night strikes Casey, no longer a cop, releases Charlie and the two men decide to become partners in the chicken-farm Casey has lined up for his retirement.
7. **TIM'S GREAT BEAR STAR TURN** by Warwick Anderson: 18pp.
Tim Brannigan is left behind on his father's sealing ship while the rest of the crew make one last effort to catch a specimen of the rare and valuable tiger bear, a type of Arctic polar bear distinguished by a crimson "collar" of fur. He is forced to leave his post and the dish of molasses he is cooking to save the ship from a drifting ice-berg. On his return he finds the ship over-run by tiger bears, attracted by the smell of molasses. By agile quick-thinking, Tim captures the bears and achieves a successful conclusion to the expedition.
8. **THE BLACK MASQUERADER** by J. Lawrence Cooper: 12pp.
Rockhill School's snobbish and anti-sport attitude changes abruptly when old boy Joshua Blunt enrolls a new pupil there. "Babe" Torrance, a boyish-looking professional boxer, soon gets the boys interested in sports and "persuades" the odious Headmaster to resign. Rockhill is saved!
9. **THE CROCK OF THE CORDOVA** by Gordon Drew: 10pp.
Trouble-prone cadet, Dougie M'Nair, excels himself when he smuggles a crocodile aboard his luxury liner. When the brute escapes there is tremendous confusion but Dougie and his pal Dick manage to capture it and not only avoid blame for the croc's misdeeds but are rewarded for their resourcefulness.
10. **BEST FOOT FOREMOST** by Crawford Kaye: 21pp.
(Discussed later, in Part II of this article.)
11. **AFTER YOU PLEASE!** A tale of Wellfield F.C. by Gilbert Chester: 11pp.
United's directors are worried. To win the championship they need a skilled inside forward to support their ace centre-forward Willie M'Intosh. The arrival of Rab M'nab, a conceited young man who announces himself as the best footballer in the world and a great chum of Willie, changes everything! With his talent tested and confirmed, United's problems seem at an end. But it turns out that Rab and Willie are old rivals more intent on outplaying each other than scoring goals. When faced with an open goal after baffling the opposing team, each insists on passing to the other! Only through a white lie, convincing Rab of Willie's need for a goal record, are the pair's talents harnessed for the good of the team.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

PLUS CA CHANGE, PLUS C'EST LA MEME CHOSE

by Ian Hewson

I recently re-read the well-known article by George Orwell entitled "Boy's Weeklies", along with Frank Richards' spirited defence ("A boy's writer answers a critic"). I was struck initially by the fact of the former being somewhat superficially researched and the latter being very well constructed and argued.

However, that aside, the central theme of Orwell's criticism of "the mental world of *The Gem* and *Magnet*", namely that "everything is safe, solid and unquestionable. Everything will be the same for ever and ever" seems to me a profoundly interesting and significant contribution.

An essential attraction of Greyfriars for most adult readers lies in its idealised nature. Its world is enshrined in the landscape of Constable, and the sentiment of Betjeman. A gentle, comforting evocation of a place which never quite existed. The morality is firmly set in late Victorian England, forever reflecting the "fair play's a jewel" ethos of that well-to-do cricketering gentleman.

All of which, of course, is absolutely delightful for today's reader staring back from an age in which the primary concerns are with greed, violence, and "self". Nonetheless, on reflection these are certain disquietening shades of opinion expressed in the Hamilton narrative which may lend some modicum of support for the tone of Orwell's article.

Hamilton insisted vehemently that politics should never intrude into a boy's paper like *The Magnet*. It seems to me, however, that his writings contain far more political comment than would ever be countenanced today in a similar medium, were it to exist.

The Greyfriars code, quite naturally for the time, was firmly entrenched in establishment ethics with an explicitly right-wing, pro-monarchy creed. The time when it would become fashionable to decry and deride all things British was still some decades away.

That said, the author did permit himself the occasional self-indulgence. Witness the not infrequent complaints concerning government fiscal policy in the 1930s, invariably voiced by an omnipotent narrator or (worse) by one of the "model", influential boys (Wharton, Cherry, etc.) or adults (Colonel Wharton).

Magnet 1255:- "Taxation has been carried to such reckless lengths that it is practically killing the goose that lays the golden eggs."

These (political?) views are presented to the young reader as representing the accepted and acceptable face of national opinion. The question is not whether this view is fair, reasonable or representative but whether *The Magnet* is an appropriate forum for such comment.

Similarly, the St. Jim's Parliament in *The Gem* served as a medium for (light-hearted) political debate. Way back in 1907, the cause of socialism was espoused by the activities of Skimpole. Is it possible that activists in the General Strike some two decades later had their formative views or prejudices ignited by their innocent boyhood reading? But no, that way madness lies...!!

There are other resonances in the old papers which, down the long passage of time, now seem to sound an uncomfortable note. Whilst all Hamilton's "decent" characters possess a laudably respectful attitude towards the poor or servants, the terms of a proper relationship between the public school man and the outsider were always clearly defined. In short, the various layers of the social strata were fixed, and any blurring of the edges would invariably cause difficulties for all parties.

In *Magnet 1436*, for example, the butler at Portercliffe Hall utters an expression which implies a degree of familiarity which is strictly impermissible.

"Wharton looked at him. It was the first time that the Portercliffe butler had forgotten his manners... "I think you forget yourself, Chandos" said Harry Wharton."

A line had been crossed, and it was imperative that the rules be re-affirmed.

Hamilton may not be telling his reader that he is "a shabby little blighter, his world a dirty, muddled rotten sort of show", but he is demonstrating the seemingly inherent inaccessibility of the world inhabited by Harry Wharton & Co. You can look, but you can't touch...

Magnet 1349 goes still further, when a servant's very livelihood is tossed aside when Colonel Wharton executes summary justice to Thomas, the faithful page.

"You have repeated your foolish and disrespectful conduct, and caused misunderstanding between friends. You will leave this house tomorrow."

Needless to say, Thomas is innocent and Colonel Wharton graciously re-admits him into service when this becomes apparent. (Fortunate, perhaps, not to face a claim for wrongful dismissal, lodged in Brussels!) The old papers constantly and unashamedly supported, reinforced and defended the Victorian class system in its most rigid form.

There are several quite subtle psychological insights expressed in the 1927 *Magnet* Christmas series (Bunter the Philanthropist). Attempts at helping the poor by giving them money may appear superficially worthy and well-intentioned, but they are seen to be quite useless. The needy here are largely shown as being artful and cunning with a healthy, much merited contempt for the benefactor. It seems that we are being encouraged to believe that we must all accept the status quo, howsoever that disadvantages certain classes, because there **never** can be an alternative. (A sobering message in today's world, where so many are dying of starvation whilst the developed societies look on, sympathetically.)

There are other views expressed by leading characters which may now arouse certain misgivings. Bunter's overt racism (he frequently refers to Hurree Singh as a nigger or darky) may be defended on the grounds that any opinions attributed to the fat owl are invariably seen to be foolish and misguided. Orwell was largely correct, however, when he condemns Hamilton's caricature treatment of foreigners; with a few notable exceptions the reader is presented with a gallery of stock types, all serving to reinforce and perpetrate traditional prejudice. (Americans are greedy and grasping; Chinese are polite, inscrutable, and ruthless; Eurasians are cunning and untrustworthy; Yorkshiremen are stolid and reliable(!) etc.)

There was always a tremendous amount of physical violence in the stories, with frequent fights, assaults and bullying. Most contentious, perhaps, is the universal acceptance that fist fights were an entirely reasonable, honourable and brave solution to virtually any type of conflict. All the "bloods" were tremendous fighting men; the only consistent exponent of peaceful persuasion was poor Alonzo Todd - scarcely the stuff of an authentic role-model!! (Even Alonzo became a bully when presented with the requisite physical attributes, in the "strongman" series of 1935.)

Charles Hamilton was, in my view, a very fine writer. He has entertained generations of children and adults, and remains a much-loved author. What frustrated and depressed Orwell so much was that from its inception in 1908 to its demise in 1940, the society in microcosm as portrayed by *The Magnet* never really altered at all. Despite a world war and consequent social, economic and political upheaval, despite the

desperate poverty and civil unrest in the 'twenties and 'thirties, despite everything that happened, Greyfriars continued on its contented way in a complete vacuum.

Ironically, it may well be **because** rather than **despite** this perceived shortcoming that Hamilton will continue to be read and loved.

WANTED: Greyfriars Book Club volume No. 1 'The Worst Boy at Greyfriars', and No. 4 'Harry Wharton & Co. in India'. Must be in fine to very good condition. State your price please. **FOR SALE:** Greyfriars Press 'Magnet' volumes Nos. 10,11,21,24,25,52 - and Greyfriars Book Club No. 13. Write for details. W.L. Bawden, 14 Highland Park, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 2EX.



*"Now don't forget
to order your
C.D Annual!"*

MEMORABLE INCIDENTS in the LIVES of CLIFF HOUSE GIRLS



The bargain sale is going on :
Angelica declares
That she is quite resolved at last
To part with all her wares.
She holds a basket in her hand
(It looks more like a lid !)
And, grinning, Bessie's hand goes up
A halfpenny is her bid !

Ah, here's a most ill-natured trick,
Yet what you might expect
From girls who hesitate, from fear,
To say the thing direct !
They've dressed a dummy up in rags
To represent a scholar ;
No wonder that the sight astounds,
And raises nice girls' choler !



What stirring days when, gowned
and robed,
And looking so intent,
The Fourth Form met officially
And held their Parliament !
The interfering monitress
Who came along to grouse
Was, to her very great surprise,
Just " ordered from the
House " !



MEMORABLE INCIDENTS in the LIVES of CLIFF HOUSE GIRLS



A show of daring in the gym,
That nobody expected,
And when the mistress turned around
'Twas very soon detected!
The Fourth are good at "gym,"
and of
This fact they're rather proud,
But when the "Bull" is taking class
Such frolics aren't allowed!

A study locked—and no reply!
That was a stirring day!
They plied a form with all their might
It was the only way!
Headmistress and Miss Bullivant
Had knocked, but knocked in vain;
A strange experience for all
They may ne'er have again.



It wasn't fair! They all agreed
That Violet Cutter's rule
Was not what they expected from
The Captain of the School.
Some protest must be made, and Babs
Evolved this little plan;
With posters they made their
complaint
As only posters can!

AN AMERICAN DREAM

by Geoff Lardner

"Send Master Harry to me!"

Like virtually all of us alive today, I am far too young to have seen this famous opening passage before the arrival of the facsimiles. However, another, equally arresting opening caught my attention at the period of my life when I was probably most devoted to the Magnet - about the age of ten:

"Tom!"

No answer.

"Tom!"

No answer.

'What's gone with that boy, I wonder. You Tom!'

The old lady pulled her spectacles down and looked over them, about the room; then she put them up and looked under them. She seldom or never looked *through* them for so small a thing as a boy."

"The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" took one into a world utterly removed in every way from that of Greyfriars. If you have never read this classic of Mark Twain's, I urge you to do so. Set in a small American town on the banks of the Mississippi in the middle of the nineteenth century, it has everything imaginable to gladden a boy's heart: Tom fights with other boys, gets into scrapes at home and at school, falls in love with the little girls, creeps from the house in the middle of the night to engage in daredevil activities and has a friend (Huckleberry Finn) who lives free of adult control, never washes or goes to school, smokes a corn cob pipe and is utterly disreputable. He runs away from home with Huck and another boy to camp on an island in the Mississippi; later they witness a murder, he gets lost in an underground cave with his little sweetheart, sustains her and leads her out by his courage and resourcefulness and finally discovers a fortune in hidden treasure.

The tale swings along from incident to incident, sometimes funny, sometimes dramatic, and supported by the dry, whimsical style of which Mark Twain was a master. For example, after his heroic efforts in the cave we learn that:

"Tom was a glittering hero once more - the pet of the old, the envy of the young. His name even went into immortal print, for the village paper magnified him. There were some that believed he would be President yet, if he escaped hanging."

An immortal passage, one of the most celebrated in all children's literature, is that in which Tom becomes a confidence trickster. Faced with a gigantic Saturday task of painting a fence, he persuades his friends to pay for the privilege of doing it for him. The following is a highly abridged version of that chapter.

"Saturday morning was come and all the summer world was bright and fresh, and brimming with life. There was a song in every heart; and if the heart was young the music issued at the lips. There was cheer in every face and a spring in every step..."

...Tom appeared on the sidewalk with a bucket of whitewash and a long handled brush. He surveyed the fence and the gladness went out of nature, and a deep melancholy settled down upon his spirit. Thirty yards of broad fence, nine feet high! It seemed to him that life was hollow, and existence but a burden...

...At this dark and hopeless moment an inspiration burst upon him. Nothing less than a great magnificent inspiration...

(The first boy comes along.)...

'Hi-yi! You're up a stump, ain't you!'

No answer. Tom surveyed his last touch with the eye of an artist; then he gave his brush another gentle sweep, and surveyed the work as before. Ben ranged up alongside of him.

'Hello, old chap, you got to work, hey?'

Tom contemplated the boy a bit, and said:

'What do you call work?'

'Why, ain't that work?'

'Well, maybe it is and maybe it ain't. All I know is, it suits Tom Sawyer.'..."

(After further artistry on Tom's part)

"...'Say Tom, let me whitewash a little.'

Tom considered; was about to consent; but he altered his mind: 'No, no; I reckon it wouldn't hardly do, Ben. You see, Aunty Polly's awful particular about this fence - right here on the street, you know'..."

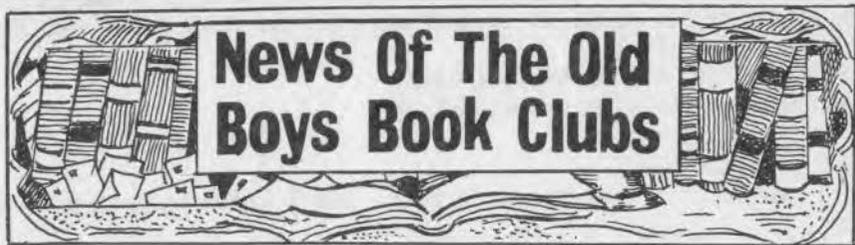
(...and so on until)

"And while (Ben) worked and sweated in the sun, the late artist sat upon a barrel in the shade close by, dangled his legs, munched his apple, and planned the slaughter of more innocents. There was no lack of material; boys happened along every little while; they came to jeer but stayed to whitewash..."

...And when the middle of the afternoon came, Tom was literally rolling in wealth. He had a kite in good repair, a dead rat and a string to swing it with, twelve marbles, part of a jew's harp, a piece of blue bottle glass to look through, a spool cannon, a key that wouldn't unlock anything, a fragment of chalk, a glass stopper of a decanter, a tin soldier, a couple of tadpoles, six fire-crackers, a kitten with only one eye, a brass doorknob, a dog collar, the handle of a knife, four pieces of orange peel and a dilapidated old window sash. He had had a nice, good, idle time all the while - plenty of company - and the fence had three coats of whitewash on it! If he hadn't run out of whitewash he would have bankrupted every boy in the village."

My first encounter with this book occurred when someone lent it to me; I read it and re-read it time after time before returning it. Throughout my life the sheer fresh joyfulness of the story has stayed with me. Although not autobiographical the tale is known to be based on the scenes and incidents of

Mark Twain's own boyhood. In 1976 I paid my first visit to America and was taken to the little town of Hannibal, Missouri, the birthplace of Samuel Clemens, alias Mark Twain. There I stood on the bank of the Mississippi and looked out at Jackson Island on which truant Tom camped with his friends, I explored the caves in which Tom and Becky were lost, and where he found the treasure, and stood in front of the fence occupying the site of the one whose painting rights Tom sold to his friends. It was utter magic, a childhood dream world come to life.



THE SOUTH WESTERN CLUB

The S.W. Club meets twice yearly in the home of Tim Salisbury, and is regularly chaired by Bill Lofts. Other Midland Club members who attend from time to time are Una and Brian Hamilton-Wright and Betty and Johnny Hopton. Terry Jones was a regular attender until his worsening back trouble most regrettably made it impossible for him to continue travelling to either club.

Bill kicked off the April 26th meeting with one of his gems (No! Not "Gems", fathead!). On this occasion it was a survey of the practice of giving away free gifts with the magazines. As always it was meticulously researched and enriched with anecdotes. It is surprising, Bill said, how little research has been done into this topic and yet it is one intimately bound up with the history of popular, and especially juvenile, magazines.

Una Hamilton-Wright then opened more windows for us on to the true nature of her Uncle Charley, Frank Richards, in a talk entitled "The Man behind the Mask". This dealt largely with his talents as a poet and songwriter but in so doing gave us an insight into his detestation of hypocrisy and all forms of abuse of power - evils on which he felt very strongly and which he often attacked in his stories.

W. Grant McPherson, at one time a corresponding member of our club, who is an expert on, amongst others, the *Modern Boy* and *Nelson Lee*, then gave a short but interesting talk on E.S. Brooks, leaving Bill to round off the meeting with his second contribution.

This was concerned with the collecting of *Magnets* and *Gems*, how it developed, how the prices have changed and, most interestingly, a few anecdotes of "treasure trove" finds. Imagine lifting seventy-year old lino and finding the underlay to consist of unsold copies of the *Magnet*. It happened in Australia.

It had been a very satisfying meeting, packed with interest.

GEOFF LARDNER

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

It was a very happy crowd that gathered for lunch at 'Under The Clock Tower' restaurant in Wakefield on Saturday, 10th October. Our guest of honour was our President, Mary Cadogan. We were sorry that our Vice-President Anthony Buckeridge had to decline our invitation at the last moment but it was good to have our own member Willis Hall with us - en route after lunch to see the opening of a new performance of one of his plays in Sheffield. Everyone voted our new venue a hit. We assembled after lunch at the home of our Secretary for a relaxing time in the library and lounge, with a splendid afternoon tea provided by Vera.

Our evening meeting at our normal Leeds venue was handed over to Mary. With the aid of slides we were given a most enthralling talk on the character of Rupert Bear. We are now approaching the 100th anniversary of the birth of the artist Alfred Bestall who did so much to bring the saga to life after Mary Tourtel, who created Rupert, stopped drawing the strip because of failing eyesight.

After refreshments, Mary continued by explaining "It All Began With 'The Exchange and Mart'". 25 years ago her husband had shown her an advertisement in that weekly publication announcing the Howard Baker Magnet reprints. From then on, Mary became deeply involved in book collecting. Her writing and broadcasting career developed from her fascination with old children's books and magazines. A lively discussion ensued, with people relating how they had become involved in our hobby and where it had led them. A splendid meeting, with 21 present, and we are already looking forward to Mary's being with us again.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

CAMBRIDGE REPORT

The October meeting of the Club took place at the Longstanton village Old School House, home of our Secretary, Tony Cowley.

After the business part of the meeting, which included our AGM, we watched a video prepared by Keith Hodkinson dealing with the background of our Club.

We then had a long and detailed video appraisal - now with the added benefit of hindsight - of the Club's 21st Anniversary celebration in June. It was a great success, even in retrospect, and will provide material for many future gatherings.

ADRIAN PERKINS

LONDON OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

Alan Pratt welcomed the 17 members present at the October meeting at the Ealing Liberal Centre, our last meeting there, as the centre is being sold.

Brian Doyle told us about the 1988 production of *Bunter* - the musical, at the Northcott Theatre in Exeter, which ran for one month. Bill Lofts talked about three different items: other writers called Frank Richards; early stories by famous authors in pre 1940s' magazines, and Warwick Reynolds. This was followed by Roger's Hamiltonian quiz, which was won by Roy, followed by the two Marks.

Bill Bradford read from *Memory Lane 240* for October 1972, and followed this with a reading from the 1909 *Chums - Yo-Ho for the Spanish Main* by S. Walkey.

The next meeting on Sunday, 8th November will be at the Chingford Horticultural Society Hall.

SUZANNE HARPER



R.J. HOLMES (Grimsby): I read somewhere that the Gem's circulation was down to 5,000 when it ceased publication in 1939. I find this very low figure difficult to believe. Surely no publisher would let a paper go so low. I have often wondered whether the wholesale closure of titles in May 1940, was solely due to the paper shortage.

Can any readers come up with any circulation figures, both highs and lows, for the old papers? They should make interesting reading.

DESMOND O'LEARY (Loughborough): One thing which I'd like to ask Colin Morgan through your "Postman Called" section is about an earlier set of 'V for Vengeance' in the ADVENTURE (before April 25th 1942, No. 1053). These are about a mysterious Britisher at large in Nazi occupied Europe who is known as 'V'. I'd love to know of any connection.

RAY HOPKINS (Oadby): Going back to the July SPCD, your mention of Gladys Peto prompted me to look her up in the British Museum Catalogues and, as both author and illustrator, her list is as follows:

The Egypt of the Sojourner (w/one chap by C.L. Emmerson) (regret I missed the pub. date on this one).

The Four-Leaved Clover and other stories, 1937.

Gladys Peto's Bedtime Stories, 1931.

Gladys Peto's Children's Annual, 1923, etc. (by which I presume they mean there was more than the one).

Malta and Cyprus (w/2 chaps. by C.L. Emmerson), 1928.

Sunshine Tales, 1935.

Twilight Stories, 1932.

Gladys Peto's Girls' Own Stories, 1933.

JOHN LEWIS (Uttoxeter): It would appear, from the pages of the Magnet, that the name of Cecil Ponsonby's home residence was changed at some time between 1933 and 1939. In No. 1338 [p.10, Col. 3] Ponsonby states that his home is called Ponsonby Hall, whereas in No. 1627 [p.12, Col. 3] Vernon-Smith refers to him as living at Ponsonby Place.

Until recently I have considered Mr. Samuel Bunter senior as being a somewhat parsimonious head of the family - a man who kept a strict control of his domestic budget, and who regarded unnecessary expense as anathema.

However, I now think I must reconsider my opinion of this gentleman. Surely the description of a skinflint cannot be applied to a father who is so prodigal as to throw money away on public school fees for his brood of three numbskulls.

PETER MAHONY (Eltham): Matt Marriott

This cartoon strip appeared in the "Evening News" for about 10 years in the fifties and sixties. The artist, Tony Weare, twice won the award for the **World's** best cartoon strip. Marriott was a clean-living, fast-shooting Western hero. His adventures were displayed daily, four pictures at a time. Each adventure lasted about 3 months. In all, there were nearly 50 different stories. The drawing was of a superior standard. Marriott and his side-kick, "Powder" Horn, aged imperceptibly as the strips proceeded. I collected most of them and stuck them in scrap-books. The later, mature Marriott contrasts strongly with the fresh, boyish figure of the early strips. The Western data was convincingly authentic, Marriott's travels taking him all over the States. He hunted buffalo, gold-mined, ran a stage-coach line, met General Custer, brushed with Indians, rustlers and robbers, and shot it out with a variety of well-drawn 'bad' men. Does anyone know (a) whether the strips were ever published in book form: (b) Why were they discontinued, and (c) what happened to Tony Weare?

JOE WILLIAMSON (Wangaratta, Australia): I note your comments in the September C.D. regarding Bob Cherry's assessment of Mr. Prout's age. I remember well when I was 18 and introduced to someone who was 28. I thought 'Fancy being 28!': it seemed the end of the world to me then. Now I am over 80 and view things quite a bit differently. 28 now would be very young, and as you say we cannot take Bob's assessment seriously. However, although I am 81 I think I can fairly say that I am young in heart, and am sure the Greyfriars stories have helped in that regard.

IAN BENNETT (Leicester): My C.D. renewal sub over the past 26 years has always been sent with a note of appreciation, and this year's shall be no exception. I've enjoyed every issue, cover to cover, each month, as much as ever, do let me assure you. Put in its simplest terms, life would just NOT be complete without the little favourite magazine dropping through the letter box every month! So, a Great Big Thank You once more, dear Editress, for yet another year's reading pleasure...

(Editor's Note: Mr. Bennett's kind comments are echoed by many readers, I'm glad to say. I thank everyone who has written to express appreciation of the C.D. Your positive response is gratifying not only to me but to our loyal and dedicated contributors.)

MARK TAHA (London): Glancing through a bound volume of the RADIO TIMES for 1953, I came across a TV serial about Robin Hood - not the Richard Greene one, of course, just a six-part series. Robin was played

by Patrick Troughton and, unusually, the series was not set in the time of Richard I, but a century later in the time of Edward I. Can anyone tell me anything about it? It's just that it's the only time I can think of when Robin's adventures were not set in the period of Richard I or King John, leaving aside a couple of 'Son of Robin' films set in the time of Henry III.

FRIEND --- AND FOE!

by Margery Woods

"When two Englishmen meet, their first talk is of the weather."

So pronounced Dr. Samuel Johnson more than two centuries ago.

Dr. Johnson's famous observation still holds true today, and this peculiarly British idiosyncrasy still provides a certain amount of amusement to those not of these shores. (Of course, they simply have not realised that this weather gambit is merely our way of demonstrating to a stranger or acquaintance that at heart we really are friendly folk and there is absolutely nothing that could possibly give offence in a polite and amiable comment on the current vagaries of the British climate.)

But far more important than its value as a conversational icebreaker is the tremendous part it plays in the creation of fiction. What would authors do without it?

Imagine the wild fells without the moon glowing fitfully between dark scudding clouds: a haunted house without the scary atmosphere created by the wind wuthering eerily outside its walls and creeping through the chinks to send the candles flickering. How could characters get lost so easily in our well-mapped terrain without a good thick fog to lead them astray on the road to unexpected adventure and peril? Would romance flourish so readily without those golden sunlit seas and warm sands, and the caressing whisper of balmy breezes under the great silver moon?

Victorian novelists exploited the weather's possibilities to the hilt. They made our hearts ache and our indignation flare at the plight of all those poor little orphans, barefooted in the snow, the icy north-east wind cutting through the thin rags that clad their frozen little bodies. Much of the impact would be lost if those same ragged infants skipped barefoot through sun-warmed clover, just as romance would quickly wither when trying to flirt in the teeth of winter gale!

It is said that plot should grow out of good characterisation, and so it should, spurred by the emotional motivations of the leading protagonists, but the weather is rarely given credit for the help it gives. The storms that founder vessels, the lightning that cripples a plane, the treacherous ice that sends a vehicle spinning into the nearest tree, so that the occupant can come to in hospital without any memory of his or her identity; take it from there, author!

Fog could turn out to be a friend in disguise, as the heroine of *CICELY ON THE MUD SPOT*, an entertaining story reprinted several times in the fat annuals of the thirties, discovered. When Cicely and her bicycle parted

company on a hairpin bend and Cicely landed in the river, to be cast ashore upon a mud island, she had cause to welcome the thick sea fog that hid her from some very unwelcome companions on her mud spot: thieves who waited anxiously to depart under cover of darkness with their booty. The resourceful Cicely not only uncovered the box of jewels they'd hidden, she also collared their boat, albeit minus one oar, and made off into the murk. The tidal current, also deciding to be friendly, carried her unerringly out to sea, right under the looming shape of Sir Charles Porter's yacht. He was delighted if astonished to encounter this mud-bedaubed apparition in one of his yachting jackets, in his boat and complete with his stolen valuables. He was even more delighted to round up the still stranded and disgusted thieves. All because of the fog! Although the somewhat inefficient brakes on Cicely's bike deserved their share of the credit!

The gloriously atmospheric Christmas stories would not have been the same without that vital ingredient: snow. One of the best of the Cliff House seasonal adventures might never have happened but for a ferocious snowfall that brought the north of England --- and a mighty express -- - to a grinding halt. If the girls and their boy chums had not had to trek several miles over the moors to Delma Castle, they would not have found and rescued the mysterious girl who lay helpless in the snow. Nor would they have encountered the villainous Black Jake and his even more villainous parent, Mother Faa, all of which led to the famous siege of Delma Castle and many perilous adventures in the elements of that snowbound New Year, and encounters with the unpleasant denizens it held. Without that they would probably have spent the rest of their vacation playing Rummy, eating, playing Charades, eating, and even getting bored with the lack of excitement. Although, somehow, knowing the Chums and their proclivities for finding trouble, I doubt it. The weather would have taken a hand once more!

"THE SECRET OF THE MOOR!" Grand tale of the Cliff House drama, inside.

THE SCHOOLGIRL

EVERY SATURDAY

2^d

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PLAYING WITH FIRE

by Keith Atkinson

"Scandalous!" barked Mr. Prout, and Billy Bunter jumped,
For the Owl had, in the Cloisters, sought seclusion.
The parcel under Bunter's arm, he hoped, contained a cake,
And he raised a startled face at this intrusion.

The parcel, strictly speaking, was the property of Bob,
From whose cupboard Bunter contrived to extract it,
And retired to that sequestered spot, the contents to enjoy,
Till in his fat circumference he had packed it.

He had started to unwrap it when he heard the voice of Prout
Who was trying to solve a worry which arose.
Prout's ponderous tread had passed behind the pillar where he stood
And a whiff of strong cigar smoke itched his nose.

The fat Owl just suppressed a sneeze as footsteps died away
And his little round eyes gleamed with expectation,
But then, as he removed the lid, a change came o'er his face,
And he gazed down at the contents in vexation.

Nor cake nor tarts he did espy, no edibles at all,
But some fireworks for November celebration,
Remembering Guy Fawkes Day, which was very close at hand,
And his very glasses gleamed with indignation.

"Iniquitous!", the voice of Prout returning, smote his ear,
As Bunter crouched behind the old stone column.
The strong cigar was near its end and glowing in his mouth,
As the portly Prout returned, with visage solemn.

On November breeze, once more, the smoke had tickled Bunter's nose
And, before he knew what happened, he was sneezing.

"Oooh! Oooh! Atchoo!", "Who's there?", snapped Prout, and threw away cigar,
Not noticing the box of Bunter's seizing.

"What are you doing here?" rapped Prout. "N-nothing!" Bunter gasped,
But at that moment came an interruption.

Bang! Bang! Fizz! Bang! The hot cigar had dropped into the box
And set Bob Cherry's fireworks in eruption.

"Oh, goodness gracious! Bless my soul!" and Prout performed a dance
As crackers cracked and whizzed in all directions.

He stumbled o'er the cardboard box and landed on his back
As the fireworks interrupted his reflections.

Prout scrambled to his feet again, his eyes ablaze with rage,
As he galloped after Bunter, who was bolting.

He crossed the quad at frantic speed, and vanished in the House
To escape from violent battery and assaulting.





THE MONTHS OF THE YEAR

NOVEMBER.

At last comes chill November,
And I'll ask you to remember
That Guy Fawkes, a plotter, many years ago
Started business with gunpowder
That each year is getting louder
As we celebrate the rascal's overthrow.

We all know that poor Miss Mandles
Has a dread of Roman candles,
So upon the Fifth we purchase quite a lot ;
We all love the celebration,
But our greatest jubilation
Comes from watching poor Miss Mandles grow
so hot !

In this month exams. are nearing
But you will not find us cheering,
For our learning really isn't very great.
So we all go madly cramming
At the subjects they exam. in
And try to bring our knowledge up to date.

Making fogs is this month's duty,
And last year we had a beauty,
And our least-liked monitress *was* in a stew ;
For this girl was wandering in it
For five hours, if for a minute,
So we'll be quite fair, and give this month its
due !

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