

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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THE EDITOR'S CHAT



SEXTON BLAKE CENTENARY: As I write this I am very hopeful that plans for a full-length book to mark this very important anniversary will come to fruition. I hope to be able to give further details next month in what will be our special Sexton Blake Centenary issue of the C.D. As I mentioned previously, although strictly speaking December marks the one hundred years, we are 'jumping the gun' by a month so that there will still be plenty of space in our December issue for Christmassy items.

OUR ANNUAL: This is now well into production and I am glad to report that I have received, as always wonderfully varied, nostalgic and colourful contributions from our enthusiastic band of writers and artists. The three main pillars of our hobby - Hamiltonia, Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee - are well represented. There is a Christmassy Greyfriars episode by Leslie Rowley, a St. Jim's item from Ray Hopkins which features Gussie at his gorgeous best, and an intriguing study from Roger Jenkins on the career of Harold Skinner.

I think you will all agree that our Annual promises once again to be a bumper treat. I know from your letters that for many of you Christmas would not be Christmas without it. I have already received lots of orders for it, but, if you have not done so, do remember to send me your order without delay so that the Annual can be posted to you just as soon as it is ready (in early December, I hope). The price is £9.00 in the U.K. and £10.00 for overseas orders. Both prices include postage and packing.

As always, I wish you happy reading
MARY CADOGAN



O IMMORTAL SLEUTH!

A Centenary Tribute by J.E.M.

It is very difficult - no impossible - to kill off a truly great fictional character, especially if he is a detective. Arthur Conan Doyle tried to in 1893 when he sent Sherlock Holmes and his arch-foe Professor Moriarty over the Reichenbach Falls. Sherlock, of course, was rescued by his outraged fans and returned to continue a career that lasted into the 1920s. Mind you, many of his aficionados thought he was never quite the same man again but there was, in any case, to be an exciting compensation.

In the actual year of Holmes's premature "death" - and it was surely no coincidence - another sleuth emerged to foster the fame of Baker Street. The case-book of Sexton Blake also opened in a gas-lit, fog-bound Victorian metropolis echoing to the sound of Hansom cabs but, unlike that of Holmes, continued well into the atomic age. What a long, rich life Blake has enjoyed, especially when you consider the incredible hazards he has regularly encountered and overcome; a life indeed to be coveted and, not surprisingly, it has been - literally!

On at least two occasions, mad scientists of the Baron Frankenstein school really did try to steal the life-force from Blake's body! In 1928, Gwyn Evans recounted *The Strange Affair of the Rejuvenation Club* in the UNION JACK (1300), while, five years later, Anthony Skene dealt with the case of *The Man Whole Stole Life* in DETECTIVE WEEKLY (17). You can hardly blame the would-be life-stealers for trying. What brains, what energy, what courage and resource to be found in a single individual: rich prizes indeed if

their theft could be accomplished. Happily, such evil plans were thwarted by our hero who emerged, as ever, as large as life - even, perhaps, a little larger. And, of course, he still lives, for it has been well said that all the time anyone is remembered by a single soul he is truly immortal. There are still many, many Blakians (as indeed) Sherlockians) who will not forget.

If memory does immortalise, then Blake's many allies and adversaries also live vividly on. No reader who encountered such glittering characters as Zenith the Albino, Prince Wu Ling of the Yellow Beetle and Rupert Waldo the Wonderman, not to mention such female exotics as Yvonne Cartier, Roxane Harfield, Marie Galante et al could ever forget them. Certainly, I shall not; they are in an important sense, part of Blake's own imperishable image.

So, long live Sexton Blake, just one hundred years young!

GRACE-NOTE: Blake appeared in *regular* publications devoted to his adventures for something over seventy years and, for a good part of that period, his best and most popular illustrator was Eric Parker who helped to give him permanent life. If the detective's visual image still survives, it is for so many Blakians the one Parker created.

FOOTNOTE: It is scarcely credible that seven years have passed since Jack Adrian edited *Sexton Blake Wins* (published by J.M. Dent), a collection of classic tales from nine leading Blake writers. This is still the best single introduction to the golden age of Blakian writing and a must for both stalwarts and newcomers to the Baker Street scene.



NEW BOYS AT ST. FRANKS

No. 2. Titus Alexis

by E.B.Grant. McPherson

One of the most wicked boys, and certainly one having the shortest stay at the old College was the Greek Junior, Titus Alexis.

He arrived in No. 221 old series, and left in No. 222, having burned the College house to the ground.

Placed in study M, by Mr. Crowell, the Remove Form Master, the trouble started almost immediately; every time De Valerie and Somerton, his study mates, entered the room, he had a habit of leaving. The two tried to be pleasant as he was a new boy, and they wanted to be on good terms, so Somerton decided to hold a 'spread' in the study. He and De Valerie had been quite busy; they borrowed some extra crockery and laid the table with a new cloth, and dainties of all descriptions. They had just left the room when Alexis came in, a small parcel in his hand. He took one look at the table, shoved

all the plates to one end, rolled back the cloth and proceeded to unpack his parcel, and lay out his own food.

A few minutes later Somerton returned. "So you're here old chap, we have been looking --- hey! what's the idea of mucking up the table." "I share this study" said Alexis "I have a right to my third of the table, and I have got my own food here." The Duke stared at him in amazement, "But the table was laid for us all." "I want nothing from you English boys, I eat my own food", said the Greek junior.

"When Val comes in you will probably get a punch on the nose, for saying things like that, he's not as easygoing as I am."

"He would not dare to touch me" said Alexis "Do you think I would allow an English pig-boy to lay hands on me."

After this amazing threat, he actually tries to attack Somerton with a table knife. Fortunately De Valerie returns just in time to stop any real harm being done.

The two juniors decide not to tell the masters about this, but they do ask Mr. Crowell to move him from the study, which he does, giving him an empty study at the far end of the remove passage.

The Greek junior continues to put everybody's back up by his arrogance, and rudeness, which, needless to say, earn him a great many punches. Then one day, while standing in the Quad, a cricket ball tossed by Chubby Heath hits him on the leg, Alexis picks up the ball and hurls it at Heath with all his might, striking the unlucky fag on the head, and knocking him unconscious. Nipper sees this and proceeds to give Alexis a real thrashing. Nelson Lee sees this, and starts to tell Nipper off--- just then, one of Heath's chums runs up to Lee, and asks him to come and look at the unconscious fag.

After an enquiry, during which the Greek junior shows no remorse, but, again, only insolence, the housemaster gives him a good caning and Alexis leaves Mr. Lee's study, swearing to be revenged.

This he endeavours to accomplish by enlisting the aid of Fullwood and Co. who themselves have no particular love for Nipper, to help him rag him, as, they are led to believe. They lure Nipper into the Vaults of the Old Monastery Ruins, and there tie him up, and paint his hair and face. Having done this, Alexis leaves with Fullwood and his friends, laughing and saying what a good jape it was.

A little later he returns by himself, and carrying a heavy cane, he then proceeds to thrash the bound and helpless Removeite, until he is almost unconscious, and laughing and jeering all the while. Meanwhile Fullwood and Co. pass Watson and Sir Montie, and taunt them with what they have done to Nipper. The two chums make them tell where they have left the Remove Captain and run to release him.

When, accompanied by Handy and his two pals they finally discover the beaten junior, they are appalled at his condition, and try to smuggle him back to the dormitories. On the way, however, they are seen by the Remove Master, who immediately institutes enquiries. When Fullwood is questioned, he swears Nipper was unhurt when they left. Nipper of course corroborates this, and The Greek junior is sent for. He admits that he was to blame, and says he is glad, and that it was deserved.

Mr. Crowell takes Alexis to Dr. Stafford, who cannot believe his ears, and orders that Alexis is to be flogged in front of the whole school the next day. This is duly carried out, with the recipient screaming curses at the head, and calling him a brutal swine, etc.

That night, Nipper, who finds it difficult to sleep because of his bruises, goes on the dorm window to get a little fresh air, and sees a figure coming out of one of the College house cellars. He goes to find Mr. Lee to tell him, but by the time the detective gets to

the window, they see that the building is on fire. The alarm is given, and all the boys and staff are assembled in the Quad, where the roll is called. All are found to be present, with the exception of Alexis. By this time the fire brigade has arrived, and are attacking the flames. Then Alexis is spotted on the roof. He is rescued, and locked in the Ancient House punishment room, until his parents arrive to take him from the old College, much to the relief of the entire school.



CHIEF INSPECTOR JOHN MEREDITH

by Ian Godden

In C.D. 379 C.H. Churchill wrote a short piece in which he wondered if Francis Gerard was a reader of SBL because in Gerard's book *FATAL FRIDAY* he makes his investigating detective Chief Inspector John Meredith say, "I've another piece of evidence connecting you with the person of the blackmailer, and that is a bloodstained banknote. Sounds like something out of the Sexton Blake Library doesn't it?"

In a reply Bill Lofts pointed out that while we know that Gerard was an avid reader of Edgar Wallace we have nothing on record as to whether or not he was a reader of the SBL but can presume that he knew something about it. In one of Gerard's early books, *NUMBER 1-2-3*, which first appeared in *THE THRILLER* as a serial, he had a character called Hartig who, "had put in a couple of years at Oxford where he had systematically read right through the late Mr. Edgar Wallace, (no mean feat this)." This is one of three references to Wallace that appear in the book.

Gerard used Meredith in some 17 novels, most of which were thrillers or adventure stories but two were proper detective stories, *FATAL FRIDAY* and *RED ROPE*. The latter appeared in *THE THRILLER* as did several others, either as serials or single stories. Meredith retired from Scotland Yard at the early age of 41 because of what happened in a very odd book called *SECRET SCEPTRE*. He then worked for Sir Hector McAllister the Intelligence chief and after the war took over from Sir Hector when he retired.

Chief Inspector Meredith (he was knighted after the events in *SECRET SCEPTRE*) was, as his creator says in *THE MIND OF JOHN MEREDITH*, "a singularly attractive fellow," and indeed he was all of that. For me he has always been one of the most memorable characters in all of popular fiction.

Francis Gerard was an enigmatic figure and little seems to be known about his early days as Bill Lofts discovered when he came to write a short account of him which appeared in the *Edgar Wallace Newsletter* No. 12. After his war service Gerard found himself so out of sympathy with life in post-war England that he and his wife and child went off and settled in South Africa where he remained until his passing in the early sixties. He wrote a book about his life there, *SPRINGBOK RAMPANT*, which also gives an account of his reasons for leaving England but anyone hoping to find out

something about his fiction from reading this book will be disappointed as he has little to say on the subject. He remains a strange but interesting man who wrote some marvellous stories.

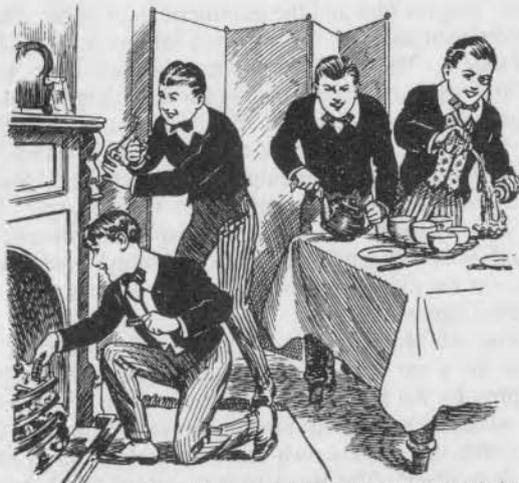
BRANDS FROM THE BURNING by Peter Mahony

Part 4

In February 1915, the Rookwood saga began in the "Boys' Friend". Just over a year later (April, 1916) Valentine Mornington made his debut in a story entitled "The Wrong Sort". He proved to be an unprincipled rascal.

Mornington was the highest born of Hamilton's scapegraces. Talbot had grown up among criminals; Lumley-Lumley and Vernon-Smith were new-rich upstarts; Levison and Hazeldene came from middle class backgrounds. De Courcy and Cardew, though aristocratically connected, were not peers of the realm. Mornington was - "the genuine article, all wool and a yard wide" as Fisher T. Fish would have expressed it. He quickly showed that his silver spoon was badly tarnished.

His early career at Rookwood was almost unrelieved skulduggery. Rich, purse proud, snobbish and undisciplined, Mornington had scant regard for others. The "Giddy Goats" (Peele, Smythe & Co.) toadied blatantly to him; though accepting them as followers, he openly derided their motives. He led them into a series of reckless escapades which plumbed the depths of dissipation, and he sneered caustically at their craven fear of the consequences. Experienced beyond his years, he was a dangerous companion.



The merry japers were quickly busy. Smythe mixed ink and gum with the jam, with a workmanlike hand. Ink was soaked into the extremely small cake, and gum added to the milk. Mornington arranged some jumping-crackers amidst the sticks in the fireplace.

From the start, Mornington was at odds with Jimmy Silver. He was caught creating a disturbance at "The Peal of Bells" and promptly gave Silver's name instead of his own to the authorities. Jimmy got out of that scrape and, later, when Mornington tried to thrust his way into the cricket XI, refused to include him. Mornington complained to his guardian, Sir Rupert Stacpoole. Sir Rupert, a Rookwood Governor, "persuaded" Dr. Chisholm to order Mornington's selection for the St. Jim's match. That scheme was foiled by the drastic measures of Tom Rawson (a scholarship boy who had suffered ragging and rudeness from Mornington and his cronies). Mornington retaliated by causing Jimmy Silver to "disappear" on the eve of the Bagshot match. Silver endured a bad night on top of the old tower and became quite ill. A surly Mornington collected a Head's foggng.

Seething with resentment, Mornington again complained to his guardian. This resulted in Dr. Chisholm's resignation. The new Head, Mr. Scroop, appointed Mornington as Junior Captain. After more trouble over the cricket, the Fourth Form rebelled. A barring-in followed; Scroop lost control and was dismissed; Chisholm was reinstated; Mornington left (temporarily) under a cloud.

Some weeks later, he returned to find new boy Alfred Higgs, 'Cock o' the Walk' in the Fourth Form.

Mornington, never lacking in vicious courage, reacted alarmingly when Higgs tried to bully him. He smashed a tea-pot over Higg's head and was so ready to follow it up with the poker that Higgs, thoroughly chastened, backed down. This vicious streak appeared again when, after another clash, he bribed two hooligans to way-lay Jimmy Silver and "not bother too much about the damage."

At this sombre point, Mornington had his first change of heart. He tried to head off the 'toughs', but finding them already hammering Jimmy, he went to the rescue. Ruthlessly, he stunned one assailant with a heavy stone; then, together, the boys routed the other. Severely damaged, Mornington confessed his role in the affair to Silver. Predictably, Jimmy forgave him and the glimmerings of better relations emerged.

They were soon extinguished. Mornington taking advantage of a dormitory raid, "pillowed" Mr. Manders. The whole form was punished; then Tubby Muffin exposed him. Mornington was ostracised; and again he blamed Jimmy Silver for his predicament. This time, he plotted with Beaumont, a scoundrelly prefect, to 'frame' Jimmy for theft. Silver was expelled, but refused to go. Rawson, always suspicious of Mornington, uncovered the plot. The culprits were expelled. Beaumont departed, but Mornington feigned illness and was confined to the "sanny". While he malingered there, the Head's house caught fire. In a great display of courage, Mornington rescued Rosie Chisholm and was duly pardoned. Back in 'sanny', recovering from his burns, he reflected seriously on his evil propensities. His wilfulness and self-indulgence were much less in evidence afterwards.

This softening of Mornington's character was necessary to Hamilton's next development. Out for a car drive with his 'nutty' pals, Mornington found a starving waif, 'Erbert Murphy, by the roadside. Despite his friends' protests, he took 'Erbert to Rookwood. In a sardonic scene, Mornington prevailed on Dr. Chisholm to give the waif shelter by quoting one of his own sermons back to him ("we are all brothers..... we must care for each other") The Head 'took it' - much to Mornington's surprise.

Later 'Erbert warned Mornington of impending discovery at "The Bird-in-Hand". In gratitude (another softening of his character) Mornington persuaded Dr. Chisholm and Sir Rupert to admit 'Erbert to the Second Form at his (Mornington's) expense. In view of his previous record, this "do-gooding" was a surprising change.

The change was not entirely unselfish, however. Mornington's sharp brain realised that good deeds made him less unpopular and more acceptable with the decent fellows. The reckless behaviour and petulant displays of temper became less frequent, and they were interspersed with positive contributions to school life - particularly on the sports field. (He still managed to get 'sent off' against Bagshot, though!)

The next stage in Mornington's 'redemption' followed the arrival of Kit Erroll. Erroll is generally regarded as Mornington's 'Good Shepherd', but they did not begin like that. 'Erbert recognised Erroll's 'father' as "Gentleman Jim", a notorious cracksman. No one believed him, except Mornington who set out to expose the pair. He spied on them; confronted Erroll with his knowledge; and was contemptuously rebuffed when the threatened to 'blow the gaff'. Gentleman Jim, a resourceful villain, kidnapped Mornington to keep him quiet.

Erroll came to the rescue; their antagonism changed to firm friendship. The mystery of Erroll's parentage was solved; Gentleman Jim was arrested; the real Captain Erroll was reunited with his lost son. (Shades of Talbot - except that Erroll had always 'gone straight'.)

Mornington now had two people - 'Erbert and Erroll - who genuinely cared about him; which was just as well in view of the next ordeal he had to face. "Erbert got into difficulties bathing. Mornington saved him - and was astonished to see the birth-mark of the Morningtons on 'Erbert's shoulder. Discreet enquiries indicated that 'Erbert was his cousin - the rightful Lord Mornington. Bitterly determined not to lose his title and wealth, Mornington kept the secret to himself.

Of course, the truth had to emerge. Mark Lattrey (one of Hamilton's nastiest pieces of work) unearthed the secret and blackmailed Mornington into 'throwing' a cricket match on which he, Lattrey, had plunged heavily. Mornington's pride took over and he played the game of his life. Lattrey lost a packet.

The imminent danger of personal ruin made Mornington ripe for desperate measures. The ultimate temptation - to cold-blooded murder - assailed him and he almost succumbed. In a brilliant passage Hamilton places 'Erbert and Mornington alone on a cliff-edge. One 'accidental' push and Mornington's troubles would be over. He draws back at the last; then in his shame and remorse, tells 'Erbert the truth. Mornington was the only one of Hamilton's characters to be pushed to these lengths. It shows a) the depths of depravity within his nature that he could contemplate such a deed; and b) the latent integrity also present which enabled him to reject murder and face the inevitable alternative. A weaker person (Hazeldene for instance) could well have found murder the easier option.

This was the real turning - point of Mornington's career. The title and wealth change hands; he becomes plain Valentine Mornington - the poor relation, little better off than Rawson whom he used to despise. Yet material downfall has brought spiritual redemption. His worst traits have been eradicated; the grosser excesses are things of the past. In subsequent stories the old blackguardism breaks out occasionally; twice more he is expelled, but his nerve and courage retrieve both situations. On the positive side he works and plays hard. He even replaces Silver as skipper with initial success but eventual disaster. Erroll, and, to a lesser extent, Jimmy Silver, are always there to help him through the rough patches, but their "Good Shepherding" plays only a supporting role to Mornington's own intelligence. He sees clearly and sardonically the error of his early ways. Though tempted to 'break out' from time to time, he often refrains and is always contemptuous of himself when he succumbs. The unprivileged road ahead is hard, but Mornington, one feels, will make it. His rise/fall from titled depravity to

honest poverty is unique among the 'burning brands'. He is, in many ways, one of Hamilton's best creations.

(Next month: Cardew of St. Jim's)

THE ELUSIVE WOOD

by JENNIFER SCHOFIELD

"Ghost-like I paced round the haunts of my childhood,
Earth seem'd a desert I was bound to traverse,
Seeking to find the old familiar faces...."

I wonder if these lines of Charles Lamb will strike home to other CD readers besides myself. But in my case, I am seeking not a face but a story, which remains deep in my consciousness. I wonder if anyone could very kindly help me to find a book I loved in childhood, in the early 1940s. I can't recall the author, and the title eludes me except for a vague memory of "Something Wood". "Merrywood"? "The Magic Wood"? "Tanglewood"? (But it was not "Tanglewood Tales".)

The volume was composed of interwoven stories set in a forest about its animal, human and supernatural inhabitants, and there was a folklore element. I know there was a fairy called "Tip", and an incident in which a magic piece of bright fabric fell into a gloomy pool and made it beautiful. I think a strange tale was included about a chapel in which a terrible wild creature killed anyone who spent the night there, unless the right sanctuary was found - one night the altar was safe, another night the pulpit was the only refuge, and so on.

I do hope these fragments may be enough for this haunting book to be identified. Otherwise I shall continue to pace the desert!

'REIGN OF THE ROBOTS' plus 'THE SHIP THAT LIVED' THE 7th DELUXE COLLECTORS EDITION DAN DARE

Published by Hawk Books, Suite 309, Canalot Studios, 222 Kensal Road, London W10 5BN. Obtainable from the publisher at £18.95 plus £2.50 post and packing. Reviewed by Norman Wright.

The seventh deluxe Dan Dare volume was a long time coming and I was beginning to wonder if Hawk Books were ever going to publish it. But now that it has arrived Dare enthusiasts will see that it was well worth the wait. "Reign of the Robots" is the third part of the trilogy beginning with "The Man From Nowhere" and continuing with "Rogue Planet", both already available from Hawk Books. Like its two predecessors it comes from the late 1950s, the comic's 'golden age', when Hampson's team of artists had got firmly into their stride and were producing some of the finest colour artwork ever to appear in a weekly comic. The opening episodes, with Dan and co returning to Earth after an absence of ten years and finding London deserted, are masterfully drawn. As we follow the characters in their search for some sign of human life the feeling of impending doom grows, heightened by the almost cinematic techniques used by the artists. There is a wonderfully atmospheric frame at the start of the second episode depicting the deserted centre of London. In the background Big Ben is encased in a transparent sheath while overhead a mono-rail hangs still. A futuristic taxi stands empty

and on an overgrown flower-bed geese graze around the remains of an abandoned hover-car. But Dan, Digby and their comrades do not take long to find the cause of the disaster that has overtaken the Earth - the Mekon has been up to his tricks again and with the aid of a horde of mechanical monsters, named Elektrobots, has taken over the Earth and Venus and enslaved their inhabitants. The rest of the story recounts Dan's battle to defeat the Mekon and free the Solar System.

One of the great joys of "Eagle", and the Dan Dare strip in particular, was that time was given for plot and character development. There was never the 'quick fix' but always plenty of cut and thrust before the final victory of Truth and Right, yet never was there any sense of repetition. At its best the Dan Dare strip offered some of the best science fiction of the 1950s with intricate plots skilfully told accompanied by first rate artwork and "Reign of the Robots" contains all of the elements that make for great SF - battles in space, robots and the classic struggle of a small group against the might of the Mekon.

The volume is nicely finished off with the short twelve episode serial, "The Ship That Lived", that recounts how Dan and Sir Hubert are rescued after their successful bid to break the Mekon's power, and how the entire team fight to save the Anastasia from the dreaded Silicon Mass. As with all of the Hawk Dan Dare reprints the colour reproduction is faultless and the volume is a 'must' for anyone who enjoys first rate science fiction.

Unlike the other volumes in the series there is no 'trailer' for the next volume. I hope this does not mean that the series is ending and I eagerly look forward to the next. Now by my calculation "The Phantom Fleet" and "Safari in Space" would just fit nicely into a Hawk volume.....

* * * * *

A Note by Keith Hammond on THE REIGN OF THE ROBOTS

Now available from Hawk Books is their latest Dan Dare reprint 'Reign of the Robots', combining for the first time the sequel story 'The Ship That Lived'.

This handsome volume of 128 full colour pages, with its dramatic black cover and silver lettering, easily maintains the high standard of the earlier volumes chronicling the Dan Dare saga, and tells of Dan's return to Earth from interstellar space to find the world enslaved by robots.

Each page is a faithful reprint of the original weekly Eagle publication, retaining the familiar red panel with the golden eagle with the artwork exactly as Frank Hampson and his team of artists depicted it in the Fifties.



* * * * *

THE GREYFRIARS REMOVE

by Roger Jenkins

When I gave up teaching, my new occupation took me to many schools and local Education Offices. Whereas county grammar schools (a surprising number of which still exist) work to a maximum of 25-30 pupils to a class in the main school, the independent schools achieve a much lower figure. When I had transacted my business with the headmaster of a public school, he offered to show me round the school. He stated that the classrooms were very small so that they could not accommodate more than 15 pupils, though the optimum size was 10-12. He pointed out that parents who paid the kind of fees his school was charging naturally expected a very personal style of education. This left me wondering what parents expected at Greyfriars, with a Remove form of some 40 pupils.

Of course, many Removites were just names, like Smith minor. Piet Delarey from South Africa was not a Hamiltonian creation, and Hamilton never used him. Bulstrode, one of the red Magnet stalwarts, had been forgotten by the 1930s as had those three representatives of the Celtric fringe: Treluce, Morgan, and Desmond. Napoleon Dupont, the French junior, faded from memory, and when did Rake and Trevor play any part? Jimmy Vivian, the baronet with a cockney accent, was edged out of the stories. Hillary, the son of a first-world war conscientious objector, had no function after that story. Kipps the conjuror appeared in one chapter in 1933, his only appearance of the decade. Penfold, the cobbler's son, was consigned to oblivion, and Alonzo Todd was quietly dropped. Similarly, after Drake left Greyfriars, Rodney his chum faded away. Ogilvy and Russell were Stacey's pals in 1935, but they were just names without any attempt at characterisation. As for Dutton, he was just a deaf boy who could never have been educated at an ordinary school, and making fun of an affliction is not everyone's idea of amusement.

There were a few Removites on the fringes of importance. It would be a bold reader who could distinguish Snoop from Stott, especially as Charles Hamilton gave them varying attributes in the 1920s. Newland, the Jew, had a bit part now and again, as did Bolsover, the form bully. Brown (from New Zealand) and Field - or Squiff (from Australia) were useful as names to fill up cricket or football teams when the plot demanded that a regular player be dropped from the team. St. Jim's never suffered from having oversized classes because the junior eleven was drawn from two year groups at that school.



The essential Removites who regularly played starring roles were a much smaller group. They were the Famous Five, Bunter, Vernon-Smith, Redwing, Skinner, Mauleverer, Fish, Wun Lung, Wibley, Hazeldene, Linley, and Peter Todd. These 16 pupils would just about have formed a passable class in a public school. This view is reinforced by the Magnet illustrations of episodes taking place in Mr. Quelch's form-room. There was no attempt to depict a class of 40 boys, and the drawings usually, suggested less than half that number. In point of fact, Charles Hamilton's famous Magnet stories possessed a very limited cast, and it was only the editors who kept publishing form lists full of dead wood. So perhaps after all the Greyfriars Remove was not quite so overpopulated as we were so often led to believe.

BABS AND CO'S HOLIDAY EXPEDITION by Margery Woods

Chapter 4

"What on earth's going on?"

"What's the racket?"

"It's three o'clock in the morning, for pity's sake!"

Alarm and exclamations filled the night air as the members and helpers of Coldburne Archaeological Society blundered from their sleeping quarters, hastily donning assorted items of clothing over sleepwear.

"Are those kids playing pranks?"

"No, we are not playing pranks!" Clara was first out of the hut. "Someone was shouting for help. Come on!"

"Girls!" Connie Jackson materialised promptly. "Stay where you are. You're adding to the confusion. I'm going to find out what's happening."

"And we're going to look for Babs," returned Clara and Mabs. "She's not here!"

Someone had switched on the camp lights, and consternation grew among the chums as they realised Babs was not with them. A milling crowd of other youngsters had gathered by now, all puzzled, some giggling, and there were jeers as Connie called sharply: "Cliff House! Roll Call!"

A bright anonymous spark repeated this, and Connie looked daggers at the grinning crowd, then turned to the chums. Clara scowled. "For eleven of us! Grow up, Connie!"

Worried now, the girls spread out, pacing up the full length of the lighted part of the site, calling for Babs as they went. But there was no response. They returned to the big hut, which was quite empty, and stood in a worried group outside. "Who saw Babs last?" asked Jemima.

Lydia looked slightly guilty. "I woke her up when we came in---but that was hours ago. About midnight."

"After that?" Jemima scanned the circle of faces.

"No---we never heard a---"

"Girls!" A flurry of agitated voices and Jen and Connie arrived. "Is she here?" Because there's been a break-in! Both locks have been forced on the museum hut door. The coins have all been taken ---and the torque." Jen was almost tears. "I said we should have taken them straight to the bank, but we all wanted to study them and photograph them, and so we..."

Professor Aikens appeared. "Will everyone please return to their quarters and remain there. There isn't a great deal we can do until morning. The police have been

called, and they will conduct the enquiry." He paused, his gaze seeking Jemima. "Will you let me know immediately your missing girl returns. Thank you."

"When Barbara Redfern does turn up I shall deal with her," snapped Connie. "I shall telephone Miss Primrose first thing in the morning to report this. And mark my words," she added viciously, "I shall be very surprised if Barbara Redfern is still captain of the Junior School when you get back next term. Now get back into the hut, girls, and stay there until you're called."

The chums turned to obey, too worried about Babs to defy Connie, except for Diana. She stared at Connie with her most scornful Firebrand expression, and spat: "You don't really think that Babs had anything to do with the theft, do you Connie? If so, you're stupider even than I imagined you were, Connie Jackson."

Ancient feuds were mended as the girls gathered in the hut.

"We'll all go and search the moment it's light," vowed Rosa.

"And rats to Connie!" cried Clara.

"Oh, I hope she's safe," whispered Marjorie Hazeldene, and she wasn't referring to Connie.

Wan-faced and heavy-eyed but unable to think of sleep, they settled impatiently to wait for the first grey light of a dawn of foreboding to creep across the sky. Only then could they search.

* * * * *

Babs stirred and winced with the movement. She was not sure how long she had lain there, stunned by the force and shock of her fall, or where she had fallen. Her head ached abominably, there was a sticky patch on her forehead, and her shoulder felt stiff and painful. Cautiously she sat up, straining her eyes to pierce the darkness. She had dropped the torch, and the illuminated dial of her wristwatch showed that it had stopped at five to three. Beneath her was cold, dank stone and rubble, and above was a very dim jagged oval of dark sky. Recoiling from the clammy dark earth and stone, she began a groping search and tried not to imagine what she might encounter. Then her knee brushed against something and she gave a sigh of thankfulness to discover it was the torch. Her fingers closed on the smooth plastic and found the switch. Luck was with her; the beam shone out bright and clear. Now she could see where she had landed. Hopes of stairs or footholds faded instantly. She seemed to be in some underground crypt or cell, and the opening above was at least ten or twelve feet high. Barring a sturdy ladder there was no hope of reaching it. But Babs would not give in.

Methodically she set about dragging every stone or piece of broken masonry into a central heap, until everything movable in the place was stacked there. But when she clambered up she was still a long way short of any handhold, and the makeshift pyramid began to slide and collapse under her weight. At last she switched off the torch to conserve the power while she recovered her breath. Then she began to shout.

Her cries echoed and ran eerily round the underground chamber, almost as though the echoes would strike back. The night returned to silence and she realised she was wasting her breath. The walls were acting like a baffle; her pleas for help were not escaping, any more than she would by just waiting for someone out there to find her. Logic told her there must have been some way into this place, once upon a time. Babs began her search, and behind a broken buttress she found the opening, dark, narrow and

very uninviting, and the crumbling start of a flight of steps. Babs hesitated only a moment before she took her first eerie step down into the unknown.

There were fifteen stairs, then the beginning of a long, winding tunnel that seemed to go on for ever. In places the walls streamed with moisture, in others Babs had to put her hankie to her mouth to stifle the foetid odour that would suddenly well up around her. She dared not speculate on where the tunnel might lead, or what would happen if her only source of light gave out and left her stranded in stygian darkness. Thank heaven she had put new batteries in the torch last thing before she left for Coldburne.

A sudden stumble made her stop. There was roughness underfoot, a slight rising, and then three crumbling steps. Babs began to hurry, along another stretch of passage, and then up another flight of at least a dozen steps. Surely they led somewhere! She reached the top, to face a blank wall of stone blocks. Oh no! Babs thrust at it desperately, shining the torch rays up and down its hard, unyielding surface. Despair was saying she had reached an ancient archway which at some time in its long history had been blocked up. Then some subconscious urge made her crouch down and run her hand along the angle where floor and wall met. Yes! The faintest current of air fanned across her knuckles. And then she saw the traces of a half circle of wear crossing the stone flags.

It seemed to take hours before she broke the age-old secret of opening the great door, by the indentation above, embedded in the original keystone, and almost out of her reach as she pitted her young strength against the corrosion of mechanism unused for centuries. At last the dull grinding sounds began and the stone mass slowly gave way before her. Unheeding of the possibility of an even worse predicament awaiting her, she stepped through on to ancient tiles dark-bloomed with the grime of ages, to find herself in a narrow chamber, panelled with mouldering wood and smelling of centuries of habitation by rodents.

(To Be Concluded)

CELEBRATION IN AMSTERDAM!

by Jennifer Schofield

Hertford, Hendon, Biggleswade, London and - Amsterdam. This year has seen some splendid events in various venues to honour the Centenary of the birth of Captain W.E. Johns on 5th February, 1893, but the exhibition at Schipol Airport, Amsterdam, was the first major celebration outside this country.

The exhibition, entitled "Biggles in Holland," and organised by the International Biggles Association based in Amsterdam, was held at the Aviodrome, the aviation museum at Schipol, from 5th July until late September. The opening ceremonies were enjoyable and charming, with an international flavour. There were speeches in both Dutch and English (to the relief of the British enthusiasts present), lavish bouquets of flowers were presented, and a delightful local choir sang appropriate songs. Their spirited performance of "Those magnificent men in their flying-machines", sung in English, won a well-deserved encore! An award was made to Monsieur Claude Lefrancq, the Belgian



publisher of the Biggles books, and I was asked to speak at the special "in flight" luncheon, as Chairman of the Captain W.E. Johns Centenary Committee in Britain. The climax of the day was the unveiling of a plaque within the Aviodrome as a permanent tribute to Johns and also to his most famous character.

"Biggles in Holland" was an excellent exhibition with some fascinating material very well displayed. The story of Johns' life was told in a series of outstanding family photographs from the collection of Mrs. Margaret Collins, niece of the author, and a large number of interesting copies of many of his books were on display, including foreign editions. It was intriguing to see a Biggles story translated into Icelandic, featuring the airman as "Benni!" A lively video film showed more books, dust-wrappers and illustrations. The IBA had some tempting items for sale, including Marvel Wagenaar-Wilm's new Catalogue of Biggles titles in different languages, launched at the opening of the exhibition.

All those of us who flew to Amsterdam for the celebrations on July 5th would like to thank Henk Meeuwis, the President of the IBA, and Marvel Wagenaar-Wilm, the Vice-President, for their kind hospitality, and to congratulate them warmly on the success of "Biggles in Holland." Although, as far as we know, neither Captain W.E. Johns or Biggles ever went to the Netherlands either in fact or in fiction, they are both very much at home there now.

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE DUTCH !



The I.B.A. is the only official organization in the world of people interested in, or collecting, the works of Captain W.E. Johns. It exists some seven years now. In Holland we have over 200 members, and more in other

countries. Our "Biggles News Magazine", mostly in Dutch, is published every two months and members can place a free advertisement in it concerning their collections. If you are interested in membership of the I.B.A. please send your full name, address, date of birth and signature, together with £10,00 in cash to:

I.B.A. Treasurer, Mr. W. Blok,
Weth. Berbeelaan 67,
1761 GP Anna Paulowna,
The Netherlands.

You will receive your membership card and this year's issues of "Biggles News Magazine". The fee for renewing your subscription is £8,00, payable in cash in January each year.

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International BIGGLES Association

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.



BILL LOFTS (London) In answer to Mark Taha, I was certainly surprised to read that G.R. Samways had penned the last 4 Bunter Books, because when I met him in the late sixties, he denied it, though he did admit he was approached on the matter. According to Bryan Gentry of Cassells they were based on old T.V. scripts, written up in story form. Though I would agree that 'Bunter the Sportsman' reads like his favourite theme and style. G.R. Samways seemingly by records is still alive but now 98.

Basil Story was speedway/ice-hockey correspondent of The Daily Express producing a number of magazines on the subject in post-war years. It was in 1950 that he produced *Boys World* and in 1953 *School Cap*, both running to about eleven issues.

TED BALDOCK (Cambridge): I was amused to read of Mr. Terry Jones' 'fear' of Mr. H.S. Quelch..... May I attempt a possible explanation. I suggest that in the heart of every man worth his salt there lurks the shadow of the boy he once was together with all the hopes and fears of that boy. These emotions do not die with the passage of time. Dormant they may lie, yet very real they can become. Hence this 'fear' of the sharp and acid eye of the Remove master. I would say to Mr. Jones - Do not be ashamed of this.... Mr. Quelch has never failed to concentrate my thoughts in the most memorable way! I regard him also with no small 'fear'. The menace of those acid features and the gleam behind those spectacles which seem to be attached to his nose without any visible means of support have never failed to generate a healthy respect - especially if I have been transgressing any of the sacred rules of the school.... I have often asked myself the fearful question - What would one do if our pleasant hobby did not exist? There would surely be a deep emptiness - a dreadful prospect... Something akin to the cutting off of all 'tuck' from Billy Bunter for a whole week. I can imagine nothing more devastating than this.

JOHN LEWIS (Uttoxeter): I love lists and those compiled by Brian Doyle (C.D. No. 460) fascinated me, though a clue as to the sources would have been helpful. Through the courtesy of the C.D. may I add, the names of a further eight policemen and another eight butlers called from the 'official' (non-sub.) Magnet text: Policemen: Inspector (John) Brent, New Scotland Yard (1253), Inspector Craven, Lantham (1008), P.C. Hodson, Seacliff (664), Inspector Moles, Easthorpe (1074), P.C. Piper, Wharton Magnus (1367), P.C. Simpson, Courtfield (1298), Inspector Shute, Castlewood (1559), Inspector Stacey, Wimford (1208, 1260, 1610). Butlers: Bates, Hogben Grange (1215), Doolan, butler to Sir Wm. Romaine (461), McNab, Lochmuir Castle (829), Jarvis, Cherry Place (1142), Packington, Ravenspur Grange (1125), Parkinson, The

Skelton mansion in Park Lane (1037), Stenson, Tipton Lodge (1646), Walton, Compton Hall (906).

A notable omission from Brian's list of reputed haunted places in Cavandale Abbey (1193).

LEN HAWKEY (Leigh-on-Sea): I felt while writing I should reply to Eric's query, at the end of his intriguing piece entitled "A Study Feed" in the August C.D. At first I thought of Hutton Mitchell - in my own "Catalogue of Artists" I've written against Mitchell - "A much better artist than he's usually given credit for - could be very like Warwick Reynolds, at times". However, though it *could* be Mitchell, I think it *is* Warwick Reynolds, mainly because of the way the eyes are drawn. Not really a "young" W.R. however, as he would have been 33 at the time, and a professional illustrator since the late '90's.

LAURENCE PRICE (Weston-Super-Mare): **ADDENDUM to Some Thoughts on the Radio 2 Billy Bunter Stories (published in C.D. 561).**

Having now heard the sixth and final Bunter episode I must say that I think this was one of the most successful of the series. All the very worst, and ultimately most enjoyable, characteristics of Bunter were to the fore and all in the pursuit of the consumption of comestibles on a grand Chunkley's Stores scale! A primarily adult 'cast' greatly helped in the success of this particular story. What a joy were the disdainful and superior staff of Chunkley's, as they passed the exasperated and scheming Bunter from department to department. At last, there was plenty of Quelch and the bonus of his amusing encounter with the pompous Mr. Prout. This last episode was classic Bunter and more of the same would be hoped for should there be another series.

TERRY BEENHAM (Chelmsford): I have just heard that, after a long illness, Horace Owen has passed on. I am saddened to lose a good friend.

When attending London OBBC meetings we always sought each other out to have a good chat about our shared interest in the hobby - **SEXTON BLAKE**.

Horace was a very keen collector in general but specialised in **BLAKE**. He was a very quiet reserved gentleman but could talk at great length and with enthusiasm of his love for the **BLAKE** stories.

He had humour and charm. I shall greatly miss him at the Club meetings.

My sincere condolences to his family.

FOR SALE: Sexton Blake Second Series bound 5 or 6 to a volume. Mostly Maroon with Gold lettering. Vol. 1 contains No. 163, 165, 405, 448, 535 and 739. Vol. 2 No. 573, 577, 603, 683, 669, 684. Vol. 3 No. 432, 436, 440, 443, 471. Vol. 4: 325, 469, 558, 664, 738. For further details apply to address below, together with offers. J. Ashley. 46 Nicholas Crescent, Fareham, Hants, P.O. 15 5AH. 0329/234489.

BETTY AND JOHNNY HOPTON and their black and white cat "Pookie" have now moved from Burton-on-Trent. Their new address is as follows: "GREYFRIARS", 6 Wellfield Road, Carmarthen Dyfed, South Wales, SA31 1DS. Tel. 0267 232659.

The HEAD-GIRL of the CHALET SCHOOL



ELINOR M.
BRENT-DYER

Next year sees the centenary of Elinor Brent-Dyer's birth and the Friends of the Chalet School have organised various events to celebrate this. The Centenary Committee (actually an intrepid duo, Polly Goerres and myself) have been busy since last October and have come up with what we hope will be an enjoyable year for Chalet fans.

Elinor was born in South Shields on 6th April 1884 and it is thus to South Shields that we shall be going on 6th April 1984 to start the celebrations. The town council are providing a plaque on no 3 Westoe Village, where Elinor attended the Misses Stewart's school. Elinor was in fact born in Winchester Street but this is now a car park and modern houses. Belgrave Terrace where she later lived is terribly tatty whereas Westoe Village is both in a conservation area (in the centre of town) and part of the Catherine

Cookson trail - from next year the tourist information will include something on EBD. The plaque will be unveiled on the Centenary day by the Mayor and this will be followed by a small buffet reception in the town hall to which members of FOCS, the press, local booksellers and dignitaries will be invited. The museum in South Shields has expressed interest in having some EBD memorabilia featured in their permanent exhibition.

For most of her adult life Elinor lived in Hereford and we shall be celebrating with a special weekend from 15 - 17 April. On the evening of Friday, 15th April, there will be two illustrated talks - one for the general public and one for members of FOCS - in the Bishop's Palace, followed by a buffet supper for members. Linked to this will be a visit to a small EBD exhibition in the library in Broad Street. On Saturday morning, Kate O'Mara, engagements permitting, will unveil a plaque on Litchfield Lodge, where Elinor lived for most of her Hereford years, and where she ran the Margaret Roper School from 1938 - 1948. Kate O'Mara is the daughter of Hazel Bainbridge for whom EBD wrote her first book, *Gerry Goes To School*. The afternoon will be spent driving past some of the possible sites for the Chalet School and other places in the books when it was set near Hereford during the war years, and just after, and then going to Hay-on-Wye where we will be looking at - and buying! - books, finishing up at The Children's Bookshop for tea. In the evening we shall be having a mega quiz (of a particularly tortuous nature!) followed by a celebration dinner with guest speakers Helen McClelland (EBD's biographer) and Luella Hamilton (former pupil at the Margaret Roper School). On Sunday there will be a special celebration Mass at St. Francis Xavier RC Church where Elinor worshipped, followed by a book sale, lunch and, for those who still have the stamina, progressive games. (These were played endlessly in the Chalet School books!)

On the 4th June an exhibition of EBD's work will open at the Museum of Childhood in Edinburgh where it will run until 16th July. This promises to be an excellent chance to see not only rare books but also rare memorabilia, including some original artwork from the books.

Five of EBD's La Rochelle series, and two of the Chalet books, were set, at least partly, on Guernsey and we shall be going there for a long weekend in September (probably 16th - 19th). As yet, details have still to be finalised but our resident Guernsey member, Mo Everitt, is busy checking the locations together with the Island Archivist.

The first fourteen Chalet School books were set in Partisau am Achensee in the Austrian Tyrol - Briesau am Tiernsee in the books - and we shall be putting up a plaque in the library next to the Catholic church. Unfortunately, we are having to pay for this and still need to raise some money, although Martin Spence (who has communicated with the Austrians since the Committee's Chalet School German was not up to scratch) has contributed considerably towards the cost by doing a sponsored swim across the Achensee.

HarperCollins, who publish the Chalet School books in paperback under the Armada imprint, will be reissuing the final title (although they have missed some out), Prefects at the Chalet School, next May, together with a paperback facsimile of the first title, The School at the Chalet, a new edition of Elinor Brent-Dyer's The Chalet School, with additional material by Helen McClelland, and four of the books on tape.

We began with her birth and end with her death. Elinor spent the last few years of her life in Surrey, and died there on the 20th September 1969. On the 25th anniversary of her death we shall be holding a service of thanksgiving at the Church of the Holy Trinity in Reigate. Sadly, she was buried, in Redstone Hill Cemetery, Redhill, without a headstone. We have so far been promised nearly £600 towards a headstone and hope to be able to have it erected after the service. A fitting finish to what will have been, we hope, a year in which Elinor Brent-Dyer's considerable contribution to the world of schoolgirl literature is fully recognised.

Note: All centenary events are open to non members, but in some cases, where numbers are limited, members of the Friends of the Chalet School will be given priority.

RIDDLE ME REE by Keith Atkinson

My first is in Potter, but never in Greene,
My second's not in Kipps, but in Hazeldene.
My third is in Bulstrode, but never in Cherry.
My fourth's not in Dupont, but in Thomas Merry.
My fifth is in Hillary and in Mauleverer,
My sixth is in Wingate, and who could be cleverer?
My seventh's not in Skinner, but in Snoop and Stott,
My eighth is in Newland, but in Wibley is not.
My ninth is in Penfold, but never in Russell,
My ninth is a junior who has quite a tussle
With slackers and duffers. At sport he's quite hot.
Put all clues together, now who have we got?

The Answer is on page 29

Billy Bunter settled himself comfortably in Mr. Prout's armchair and reached a fat paw into the contents of Bob Cherry's cricket bag. Bunter, of course, had no right to be in Mr. Prout's study or in Mr. Prout's commodious armchair. But then Bunter was often to be found where he had no right to be. Come to that, the cricket bag had no right to be there either, nor had its contents. The proper place for the cricket bag was Study 13 in the Remove passage; the proper place for the contents thereof, as the legal johnnies would put it, was in a hamper in the study of Horace James Coker of the Fifth Form. The old adage has it that there is a proper place for everything and everything in its proper place. But this was a triviality to a person like Bunter who considered that possession being nine points of the law, the remaining one point could be disregarded. In all probability, Prout, Coker and Cherry would be opposite in persuasion. Bunter chose not to consider that possibility either, though it was probable - very probable indeed that he would be reminded of it!

Bunter, whose ear - like the rest of him - was often found where it ought not to be -- had gathered via a convenient keyhole the information that Prout was giving a lecture in Courtfield that afternoon. The fat Owl opined that once Prout got the bit between his teeth, so to speak, his absence from Greyfriars would extend over several hours. What better place could there be as a refuge from an enquiring Coker than the study of an absent master. Bunter's face had a greasy grin as his jaws settled down to some extensive and noisy mastication.

Coker's Aunt Judy was an accepted authority on hampers and the nature the contents should take. Bunter approved of Aunt Judy and his approval grew as cold chicken was followed by veal and ham pie and delicious sausage rolls.... Bunter would have wished for Aunt Judy to be his own, as he progressed through the eclairs, the marzipan topped cake and the custard tarts. But like the weary river that winds its way to sea, Bunter's journey through the confiscated feast gradually slowed until he was merely toying with a box of peppermint creams.

After eating, the next thing that Bunter could do really well was sleeping. If it had been physically possible to combine the two, Bunter would have welcomed it. Aunt Judy had packed that hamper wisely and well, her calculations being based on supplying enough for a study feast for six hungry and sturdy seniors. Bunter had dealt with that generous consignment of tuck faithfully and well. There was plentiful evidence of his exertions. Countless crumbs had fallen unheeded to the floor. There were traces of jam and cream on the arms of Prout's chair, though not as many as there were on Bunter's shiny features. Wayward peppermint creams from the discarded box joined fragments of chicken and pork pies on the study carpet, as Bunter lay back in that comfortable armchair. A moment passed and then a sound familiar to the Remove dormitory arose and disturbed the echoes.

To say that Mr. Prout was annoyed, was to put it mildly. He had arrived at the Assembly Hall in Courtfield, armed with a voluminous sheaf of closely written manuscript - ready for the delectation or otherwise of the assembled audience. Prout had readily - all too readily - agreed to give a talk on his real or imagined adventures in the Canadian Rockies way back in '88, or was it '89? He felt certain that his discourse, especially on the decimation of the North West grizzly population, would hold the

listeners spellbound. It was not often that Prout was asked to speak - he was quite accustomed to doing so with no invitation at all. At Greyfriars it was rumoured that masters would peer round corners to re-assure themselves that Prout was not in the offing. Prout often turned up for tea in Masters' Commons to find the room devoid of life. Some alert scout had observed his approach and had spread the alarm in time for the others to discover that they had papers to mark, the Head to see, or any excuse that came readily to mind.

Of course the Courtfield audience were blissfully unaware of all this and some twenty or thirty had turned up with an honest expectancy of learning more about the great dominion than they had gleaned from Jeanette Macdonald and Nelson Eddy in the film 'Rose Marie'. A few more had turned up because rain was threatened and the Assembly Hall offered a means of temporary shelter from the threatened rain....

Prout would have liked to have addressed a hall, full to the point of overflowing, all agog for the sound of his booming and fruity voice. Still, in spite of the sparsity in numbers, Prout was prepared to give of his best. For once in his life it looked as though he was to address a captive audience and it was his intention that all present should hang on his every word as though it was a jewel of great price. True, there was some shuffling of uneasy feet as the Fifth form master produced his fat wad of notes but he was given his head, so to speak, and allowed to commence on a subject so dear to his podgy heart - himself, Paul Pontifex Prout, a latter day Nimrod perhaps, armed only with his favourite Winchester, ready for every courageous confrontation with a deadly foe.

Prout had got into his stride in the first five minutes when he became aware of a pimply faced youth sitting in the front. The lad, of some eleven or twelve summers, had been favouring Prout with an intense and calculating stare which the fifth-form master assumed demonstrated an encouraging interest in what he had been saying. What an excellent boy, was Prout's first impression, to listen so intently to the sage discourse of one of his elders. It was then that he of the pimply face produced a pea-shooter and, taking quick and accurate aim at Prout's bald pate, directed a fusilade of dried pea ammunition at the shiny target so presented. Members of the audience who had by then made up their minds to an early departure decided that the intervention looked promising and remained in their seats to await future developments. They were not kept waiting long.

One solitary pea striking one's cranium might possibly be tolerated in certain circumstances, but when a second struck his podgy nose and a third his podgy chin. Prout demanded of his audience that the offending youth should be ejected from the assembly. Whether that audience had decided that the youth had injected a certain missing impetus into the entertainment was not clear. What was absolutely clear was that nobody was prepared to accede to Prout's request. In fact, there appeared a growing support for the boy, who willingly obliged by another fusilade at Mr. Prout's features.

Such behaviour could not be tolerated further. Without stopping to count the odds, Prout leaped from the platform and administered a resounding box on the ears which caused some of the ammunition in the boy's mouth to go down the wrong way. It became painfully apparent to Prout that the odds - counted or uncounted - stood heavily in the favour of the offending youth. The Fifth-form master was seized on all sides, his collar torn, his lecture papers shoved down the back of his neck as he was hastened to the already open doors through which he was cast forth. It was a dishevelled and livid

Prout that a taxi decanted at Greyfriars at an earlier hour than either the form master or a certain fat youth had anticipated.

Horace James Coker was angry, and like the prophet of old felt that he did well to be angry. He had issued invitations to the captain and other fellows in the form to come to a spread in the study over which he, Coker, was going to hold forth on the matter of games and the prowess of Coker thereto. Perhaps Coker thought that under the persuasion of the good things provided by his favourite Aunt attitudes would mellow and Blundell and the rest would welcome him at long last into their fold. Coker had exercised his mind in this matter of grand strategy but had failed to consider two things, one being that the fellows would not be taken in by Coker, and the other that the contents of the hamper were doomed to be taken in by Bunter. When his form captain appeared with the lesser lights of the Fifth it was for them to discover that Coker's study was as bare as Old Mother Hubbard's cupboard of old. Whenever tuck was missing its disappearance could be associated with a fat frog in the Remove. Unfortunately, Bunter was not available for kicking, but Coker was. Without going into high figures it would be difficult to compute how many kicks and bruises Coker sustained before the disgruntled seniors left their would-be benefactor for dead.

Coker's brain worked in peculiar ways its wonders to perform, but even Coker knew from personal experience where to look for his missing tuck, and even Coker divined that that tuck was probably growing beautifully less as the minutes sped unremittingly by. It was a coincidence that Coker had lines for Prout. Coker often had lines for Prout and always would have so long as Coker indulged in his especial brand of orthography. Prout had instructed that those lines be placed on his desk before teatime, and had threatened that shining ornament of his form with dire warnings of what would happen if Coker failed to do so.

Gathering up the badly written and plentifully smudged impot, Coker made his way to Master's corridor. As he reached Prout's study door, the fathead of the Fifth became aware of sonorous combination of grunts and snores. Grinning at the prospect of catching old Pompous taking a symphonic nap, Coker opened the door and gazed therein. He was greeted, not by the sight of a tormented Prout taking a rest from his onerous duties, but the view of William George Bunter displayed in all the elegance of unstudied grace, his capacious mouth, embellished by traces of jam, cream and breadcrumbs, open wide, from which depths escaped a cacophony of sound more at one with the African jungle or the Remove dormitory. Like Marius amid the ruins of Carthage, the Buntillian presence was surrounded by the traces of his recent plunder and Bob Cherry's cricket bag.

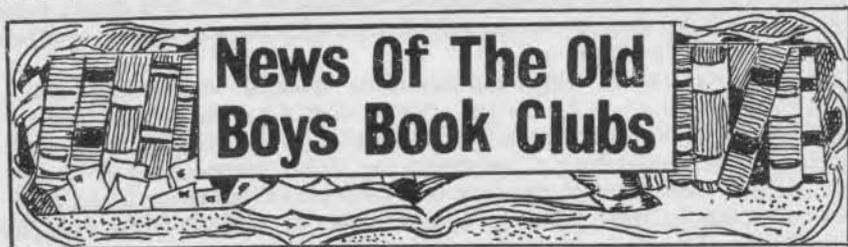
Bunter was never a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. The balmy embrace of slumber added nothing to figure, face and feature. His appearance did nothing to soothe the rising rage in Coker's manly chest. Rather the opposite. A hefty finger and thumb gripping one of Bunter's podgy ears lifted the pernicious porker from the armchair and into a state of sudden and painful consciousness.

(To be continued)

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NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Chairman Joan welcomed the thirteen present with a special welcome to our guest speaker, Don Cole.

Apparently, Billy Bunter is living in retirement in the North Yorkshire coastal town of Filey - well, according to the pictures Keith and Margaret Atkinson showed us of the cafe "Billy Bunter's last fling"! It would also appear, as depicted on the "Blurb" on the cafe window, that Bunter was still awaiting a postal order!

Don Cole took us on "a walk", using slides "from Adel Church to Golden Acre Park" a local well known beauty spot, and giving us a history of the surrounding area. This excellent presentation was warmly applauded.

Geoffrey Good read an amusing piece from "the Magnet". Bunter, asleep in the form-room during a hot and sticky summer afternoon, is rudely awakened (in more ways than one!) by Quelch. The conversation between master and boy is hilarious and Geoffrey's rendition was in top form.

Our next meeting is on October 9th. We have lunch in Wakefield with our guests Mary Cadogan and Anthony Buckeridge. We are also hoping Keith

Waterhouse and Willis Hall will be with us. A free and easy afternoon follows at the new home and library of our secretary, and our evening meeting is at our normal venue in Leeds with Mary as our Guest speaker and Eileen Buckeridge telling us about "Living with a Humorist". All are welcome at any or all of these events. However, lunch has to be booked so, if you would like to attend that, please contact Darrell Swift on 0532 671394 for more details.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

For the first meeting of our 1993/94 session we met at the Longstanton village, home of our Secretary, Tony Cowley.

After our usual short business section, and A.G.M., Bill Lofts gave us a talk describing 100 years of Sexton Blake, which noted some of the highlights of a career on stage and screen (not forgetting, of course, his prolific book and magazine appearances).

Next we examined the darker side of our natures: Horror literature. This subject was explored by our new member John Oram, who detailed how the acceptability of the unacceptable had developed over the centuries. A larger than usual amount of audience participation attested to the popularity of the subject.

ADRIAN PERKINS

LONDON O.B.B.C.

We met on Sunday, 12th September at the premises of our President, John Wernham in Maidstone. It was 6 years since our last visit and a long time since many of us had seen him and it was therefore good to see him looking so well and as full of charm and wit as ever, despite his recent bereavement. Our new member Ian Scales was warmly welcomed.

John talked about his 40 years with the Club, and showed a most interesting video (transferred from film) of members at Margate etc., C.H. Chapman, the great Magnet artist, and Charles Hamilton at 'Roselawn'. This was followed by a Pathe Pictorial recording of Hamilton at home with admiring children sitting around. Finally we saw a southern T.V. interview with John in the Hamilton Museum.

Mary then showed us a video of a film taken when she was about 12, with her brother. Her father had introduced her to the Magnet and it was obvious how large a part both parents had played in her life. She then talked about her early reading, with a love for the Rainbow and her brother's Magnet, often concealed within her 'Schoolgirl' while he looked, in vain, for his paper!! Mary spoke of Hamilton's brilliant descriptive powers, and read excerpts from his writings conveying irony, courage and fortitude, patriotism, and boy and girl relationships. A fascinating and moving contribution, as we have come to expect from Mary.

Roy and Bill had visited the 'Greyfriars Bookshop' at 60 Middle Street, Brighton, the proprietor being the son of the late Howard (Bill) Baker, where they received a friendly welcome and saw an almost complete range of facsimiles.

On October 10th we meet at the home of Peter and Dorothy Mahony, 12 Riefield Road, Eltham, SE9. Teas and tuck will be provided but please advise in good time if attending. Telephone 081-850-9316.

BILL BRADFORD

MUD PIES, MYSTERIES, MEANDERINGS AND MUSEUMS

by Mary Cadogan

Of the books which have recently found their way onto my desk and/or bedside table, I have been particularly impressed by those described below. C.D. readers might like to beg, buy or borrow copies of these publications: if some of them are beyond financial reach, remember that - in spite of recent cuts - we still have a good public library service in Britain.

David Schutte contributed to my WILLIAM COMPANION; he has privately published his WILLIAM THE IMMORTAL and is a dealer in old boys' and girls' books and papers. His first children's novel MUD PIES & WATER-BOMBS is now published by Macmillan in paperback at £2.99. Although contemporaneous in setting it strikes echoes of juvenile games and 'gang' experiences which seem almost timeless. Two rival groups operate from their separate tree-house bases and their exploits are lively, believable and often very funny. The 'good guys' (the Naitabals) tackle friends and enemies (both child and adult) with innovative schemes and strategies. They have a secret language too - which is slightly related to the backslang that many of us used in our own childhood street and playground games. Grown-ups as well as ten-year-olds are likely to respond to the appeal of the Naitabals with their mud pies and water-bombs, midnight pranks and vigils, and their sleuthing activities.

Marion Waters has produced a second compilation of stories featuring that popular group of mystery-solvers and righters-of-wrongs, the Silent Three. THE SILENT THREE AND THE THIRTEEN CLOCKS is available at £6, which includes postage, from the author at Ryburn, 11 Abbots Way, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, NN8 2AF. Once again the illustrations are by Marilyn White and the stories live up to their atmospheric titles: 'The Silent Three and the Thirteen Clocks', 'The Rival Silent Three' and 'The Silent Three and the Abbot's Pavement'. Admirers of Betty, Joan and Peggy, that celebrated an intrepid trio from the post-war *Schoolfriend*, will enjoy these new adventures by Marion Waters, one of which was directly inspired by a request from Evelyn Flinders, the original illustrator of the Silent Three's escapades.

Unconnected with the hobby but full of nostalgic charm, ENGLISH VILLAGES by John Timpson (whose voice we know so well from BBC radio programmes) is published by Headline at £9.95. This large format book takes us on a journey through many off-the-tourist-track villages. It includes a wealth of excellent photographs in full colour and a text which vividly describes the villages as they are today and also links them to the customs and traditions of the past.

WINDSOR - THE MOST ROMANTIC CASTLE by Mark Girouard (Hodder & Stoughton £20.00) is a timely and detailed study of the history and appeal of the great royal castle which so recently suffered devastation by fire. While we bemoan the loss of the fine St. George's Hall, we can revisit it, and Windsor's other splendours, through this big and fact-filled book. As well as conveying the Castle's development from the Middle Ages to the present day, the author provides interesting insights into the lives of some of the monarchs (from Edward III) who have been associated with it.

Further delectation for lovers of history is available in LIVING MUSEUMS by Richard Bryant and Iain Gale, published by Mitchell Beasley at £25.00. If you want to visit, from the comfort of your own armchair, many fascinating but not necessarily well-known museums from all over the world, this book gives you the opportunity, with its truly superb pictures and informative text. The buildings and the famous people

who occupied them when they once were private homes are often as interesting as the exhibits which they house.

MY INTRODUCTION TO THE GEM AND MAGNET

by Jack Wilson

When the newsprint shortage saw an end to so many famous storypapers and comics I mourned the loss of Tiger Tim's Weekly, on 18th May, 1940, being too young to enjoy such delights as the Magnet. My mother was trying to console me when the postman knocked at the door. "Don't worry," he said, "Switch to the Dandy and Beano!". This I did, eventually graduating to the Hotspur, Rover, Adventure and Wizard.

But I was destined, as a child, to enjoy the Magnet and Gem, for shortly after the war a local shop started selling a collection of them at 6d each. I was hooked, not particularly on the Magnet as I found Billy Bunter rather silly, but the Gem for I quickly became a fan of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. For about a year many copies changed hands as we "swopped" contentedly.

I missed Charles Hamilton's post war success as I never came across his hardbacked books when they were issued, but was reintroduced to the Magnet and Gem when I came across a selection of Howard Baker reprints in Foyle's Bookshop in London some years ago.

I started a collection of vintage newspapers, magazines, annuals and comics about 10 years ago, not specialising in anything in particular. At the time I was administrator of a large psychiatric hospital in Chester, and the ward sisters in charge of the elderly confused patients got wind of my hobby and asked me for selections as a memory aid. At the time Reminiscence Therapy was just being introduced. At first I was giving them away, but the Nursing Officer intervened and asked me to set a fair price for them. Hence Nostalgia Unlimited was born!!!

Nowadays many magazines, comics and newspapers pass through my hands unread, but my favourites are the story papers. I love reading the Magnet, Gem and Schoolboys Own Libraries. Howard Baker reprints are marvellous, but you can't beat the thrill of having an original copy in your hands.

I look forward each month to receiving my copy of the Story Paper Collectors' Digest and marvel at the wide knowledge of Mary and her team of contributors. I do appreciate that by comparison I am an amateur, but hope this little contribution is of some interest.

The answer to page 22s Riddle Me Ree is PETER TODD.

Your Editor says -



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

As our recent page of pictures of the Bruin Boys produced several appreciative letters, we are featuring their female counterparts, Tiger Tilly and Co, this month.

THE GIRLS OF MRS HIPPO'S SCHOOL



This is Betty, who is good at games, and whose favourite lesson is drill! She is clever at tricks and riddles, and loves skipping. She would like to have a party and invite all readers named Betty.



Baby Jumbo is the youngest of the Hippo Girls, and the busiest! She loves mince pies and jam tarts, and when she grows up she is going to keep a cake shop. She giggles a lot, but Mrs. Hippo is very fond of her.



Jenny Jacko is very vain. She likes looking at herself in the mirror, and she has fourteen different-coloured hair-ribbons. She likes dancing and singing, and is a dreadful chatterbox.



The most mischievous of all Mrs. Hippo's girls is Tiger Tilly. It is always Tilly who leads the others into mischief, but she is very popular all the same. Mrs. Hippo cannot help laughing at some of her tricks. Tilly is quite good at her lessons, and she is very kindhearted. She always shares her sweets, and loves getting letters.



Doesn't Gertie Giraffe look shy? But she is really the cleverest as well as the tallest of the Hippo Girls. She never seems to have much trouble with her lessons, and she nearly always passes the answers to riddles.



Olive Ostrich likes to think that she is as tall as Gertie Giraffe, but she isn't. Gertie is just three inches taller than Olive. She is not so noisy as the other girls, but always joins in the fun. She loves reading stories.



Here we have Fish, Folly, and Pearl Porky. Fish does not like school a bit, and her favourite day is Saturday. Folly Parrot is a funny little girl who makes a great deal of noise, and always thinks she is best at everything. Pearl Porky, as you can guess, is the greediest girl at Mrs. Hippo's school.

AS REVIEWED IN THE SEPTEMBER C.D.:

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THE ROAD TO GREYFRIARS

The inside information about what "went on" in the editorial offices of the *Gem* and *Magnet* in a highly-readable autobiography of George Richmond Samways, a leading "substitute" writer and chief sub-editor at Fleetway House (illustrated from the book, left). 1984. *Plates. Mint in mint d/w*. £5.00 plus postage.

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