

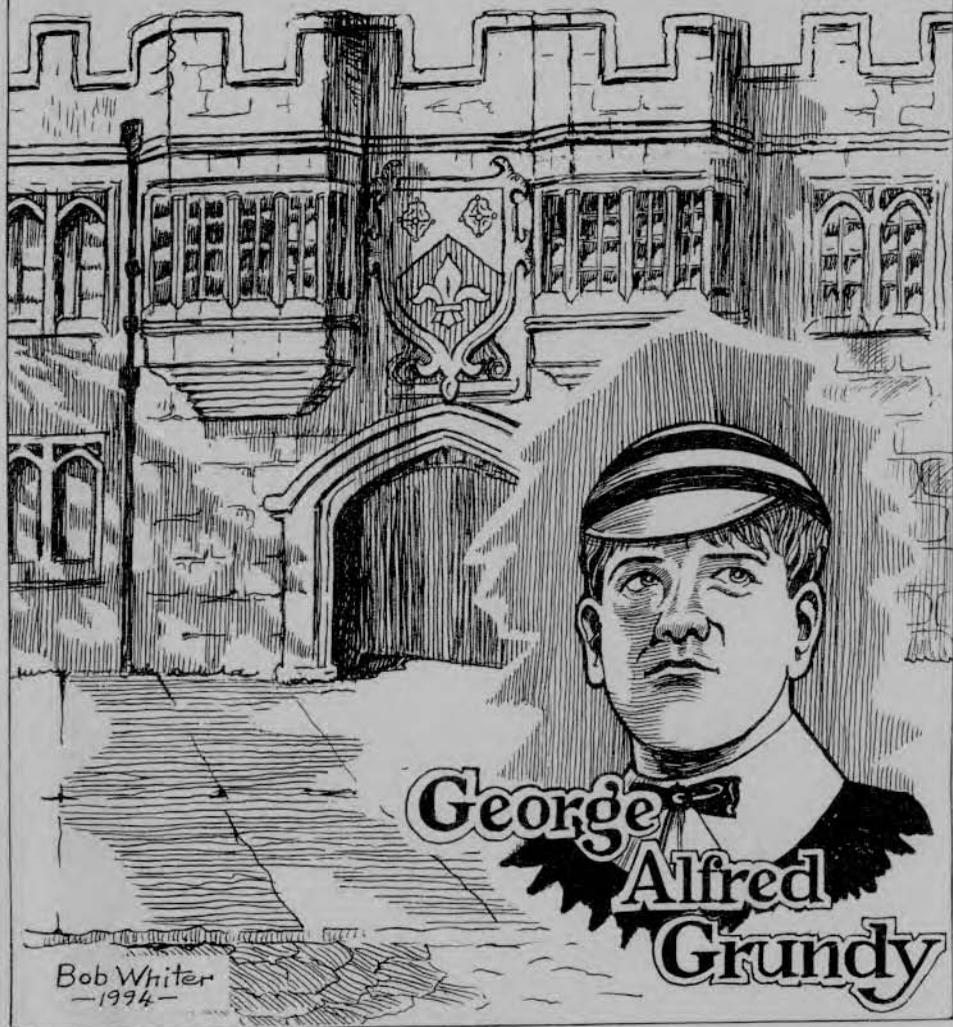
VOL. 48
No. 571

Story Paper

JULY
1994

Collectors' Digest

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George
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THE EDITOR'S CHAT

SOME USEFUL PUBLICATIONS



I am happy to draw readers' attention to three booklets which have recently become available from the pens (or, more accurately, the word-processors) of some of our contributors.

George Beal's complete guide to the *Howard Baker* boys' paper *Facsimile Editions* is described on page 32 of this issue

of the C.D. and, having seen it, I feel sure that this will be warmly welcomed by collectors.

Norman Wright, who recently co-authored and produced an index of Enid Blyton's Magazine, has now published two guides with a distinctly aeronautical flavour. His 40 page *W.E. Johns & Modern Boy: An Index* lists Johns' stories, articles and cover drawings for the weekly *Modern Boy*, its Annuals, and the *Modern Boy's* Books of Aircraft, of Pirates, and Adventure Stories. There is a special, extremely comprehensive section on Biggles which cross references the *Modern Boy* tales of this flying hero with their publication in books and in the *Boys' Friend* Library.

George E. Rochester, 1898 - 1966: An Index of his work is a co-operative venture by Bill Bradford and Norman Wright which includes a sketch of Rochester by a third regular C.D. contributor, Bob Whiter. This 25 page index includes an interesting biographical introduction, a photograph of Rochester



in Royal Flying Corps uniform and a reprint of his poem 'The Night Bomber'. This booklet is divided into 5 sections. The first 2 list the author's stories and serials in weekly and monthly papers and comics: the third section covers tales in Annuals; the fourth lists Rochester's novels, while the fifth comprises an appendix cross referencing all of his stories with their serialisations.

Details of how to order George Beal's Howard Baker index are given on page 32. The W.E. Johns and Rochester guides can be ordered from Norman Wright, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, Herts, WD1 4JL at £4.40 and £2.75 post free, respectively.

Happy browsing!

MARY CADOGAN

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FAVOURITE AND GOLDEN ANNUALS

by Donald V. Campbell

The mention by Margery Woods - in the January edition of our magazine - of the Daily Express Annuals and of The Boys' and Girls' Books took me off on an adventure to the past; to a flight of fancy re-creating a time long gone.

Dad worked for the Daily Express. He was not, I am sorry to say, in the editor's chair, the editor's office nor in an Express building in London or Manchester. He was caught up in the circulation wars of the times which was a fairly tough job and very wearing on shoes and feet. This background gave - for me - the Boys' and Girls' Books a special and particular aura.

To the very young child they seemed to have been always there. There is no memory of a time when they were not available to be poured over, enthused about and just plain enjoyed. What did they have? They are collected nowadays for Rupert but they were far more than one character and they had "stayability".

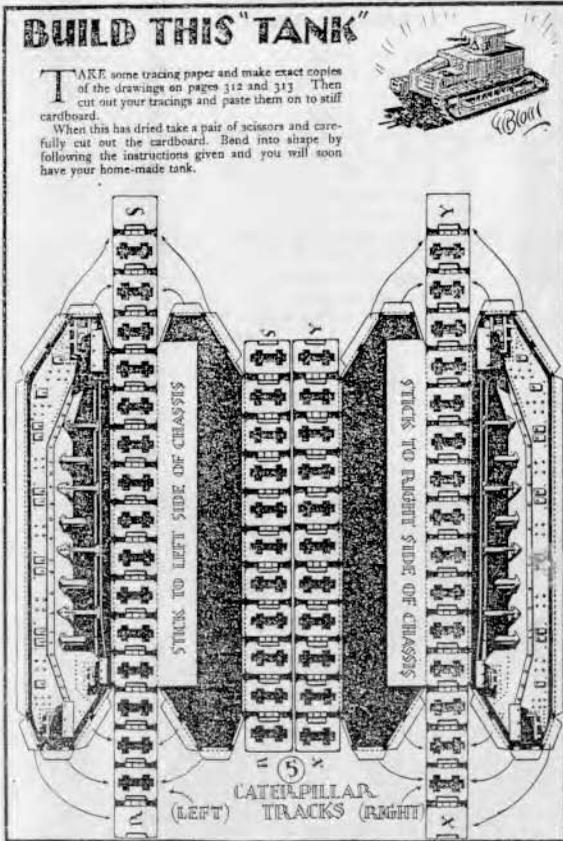
Stayability? The means to take a barely aware and new-to-school child from picture gazing to words to sentences to complete stories - the first stories to be read were anthropomorphic (Cubby the Bear), those devoured later were in an exciting serial style that ran on in separated chapters throughout the books. "Serials" such as "Scott of the Antarctic" and "Black Beauty" and "Alice in Wonderland" (this last with the horrific yet compelling Tenniel illustrations).

The books lasted through and even beyond the war years. Books for 1937, for 1938, and for 1939 were three books that entertained and frustrated.

Frustrated? Frustrated because of the incredible cut-out items that could be fashioned from a two dimensional page - a TANK for example. But books were for handling with care, for reading and for loving. The last thing you did was to cut them up in order to make models! Tracing paper was non-existent even if there had been cardboard to trace on to!

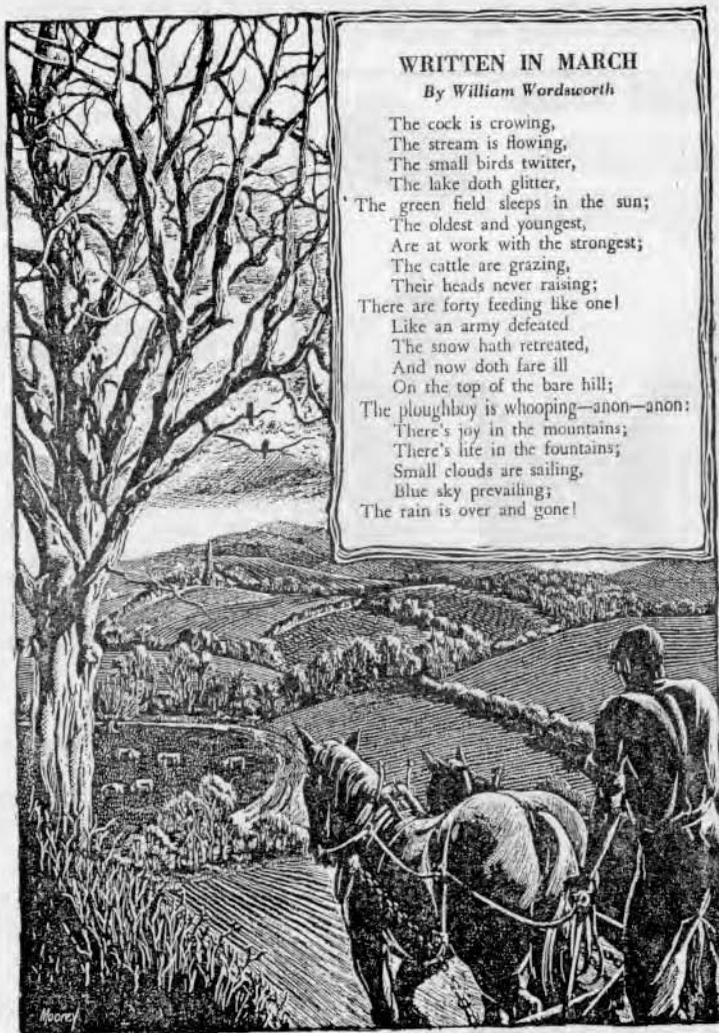
Another frustration was to read of - and to be unable to execute - the special models that

needed to be created from cardboard, wood dowels, string and cotton reels and the ubiquitous elastic band. The fairground roundabout, the traction engine, the table-top seagoing freighter ("building this ship will try your PATIENCE") were never started - no materials, they were all needed for the war effort or something.



Looking back with faint regret I now know that I was, and remain, so cack-handed that I could never have completed a satisfactory model had the materials been available. But there is always the memory of the unfilled longing - a longing to have both made and owned any one of them. There was no "Editor" preaching in these books, no "Uncles" or "Aunts" to muddy the waters. In this they were only matched and better matched in some ways by the "Golden" and "Favourite" - "Wonder" books produced under the editorial banner of John R. Crosland for Odhams.

(A bye-the-bye: Odhams are currently re-publishing some of their Detective, Horror and Romantic compilations from the thirties - probably to do with copyrights lapsing? Will they have the guts to re-enter the children's market with these outstanding offerings, or is it too late for modern children?)



WRITTEN IN MARCH

By William Wordsworth

The cock is crowing,
The stream is flowing,
The small birds twitter,
The lake doth glitter,
The green field sleeps in the sun;
The oldest and youngest,
Are at work with the strongest;
The cattle are grazing,
Their heads never raising;
There are forty feeding like one!
Like an army defeated
The snow hath retreated,
And now doth fare ill
On the top of the bare hill;
The ploughboy is whooping—anon—anon:
There's joy in the mountains;
There's life in the fountains;
Small clouds are sailing,
Blue sky prevailing;
The rain is over and gone!

The Odhams collections were very different from the Express annuals. They made no concessions.

All the typeface was densely set and each page was well covered - off-putting for the child of today possibly? Each story was illustrated by excellent artists of note, the majority of the drawings being black and white. Many stories were culled from classics from many lands and included Dickens, Tolstoy, Charlotte Brontë, the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen. Poems interspersed the stories and these were often beautifully illustrated - one scraper board picture leaps into the mind for "Written in March" by Wordsworth.

Perhaps it was the quality and the intensity of many of the pictures in the "Favourite Wonder Book" that gave this writer an abiding interest in line artists which was fed and never sated by the fare found in "Radio Times" up to the '70s - when the graphics quality in that magazine started to slip away.

The "Wonder" books introduced many literary geniuses like O Henry ("The Ransom of the Red Chief" - an incredibly funny and wry look at two inept kidnappers being beaten into submission by a young boy); Oscar Wilde (with "The Remarkable Rocket"); comic writers like A.P. Herbert (The Doctor, an hilarious poem, to be taken in small doses by hypochondriacs); atmospheric writing from Charlotte Brontë (A Summer Night); and the touching and romantic "The Blue Rose" (by Maurice Baird and with haunting drawings from Dorothea Braby); and then there was "The Village that Celebrated Christmas on the Wrong Day" that had just the right touch for the season.

THE RANSOM OF RED CHIEF

By O. HENRY



Illustrated by Laurence East

The artists included: Sheriffs, Joyce Mercer, Jack Mathews, C.W. Bacon, Steven Spurrier, Stanley Herbert, Muriel Gill, Anne Anderson and Van Abbe; other authors were of the calibre of: E. Nesbit, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Algernon Blackwood, Thomas Hardy, Walter de la Mare, Victor Hugo and William Wordsworth. They provided a feast then that remains appealing. Some of the "children's" stories occasionally appear "moralistic" or "pat" or "middle-class" and would not do today. But....

For one boy in a far off time and almost another world - a world that somehow glowed with falling coals and the light from the wireless; the wireless that comforted along with the voices of Uncle Mac and David Davis and the Zoo Man and Romany - these

books provided adventure and humour and wish fulfilment. They set a base that could be built on and extended and then looked back with that peculiar thing we call nostalgia. Will the primary school child of the '90s look back with similar nostalgia on Sonic the Hedgehog and Super Mario?



FUN AT THE PARK PLAZA HOTEL

by Mark Caldicott

It was a simple game of golf which brought Norman Conquest to the Park Plaza Hotel for the first time. He has driven his ball down the fairway, only to see it bring down a pigeon. Being Norman Conquest, of course, this is a carrier pigeon with a message: "Room 605 - Park Plaza Hotel - be there eight o'clock this evening - await contact - then act according to instructions". Since the pigeon had failed to deliver its message, Conquest takes the place of the intended recipient. He strolls down from Conquest Court to the Park Plaza, which is only a stone's throw away, and takes the lift to the sixth floor. He immediately encounters the beautiful blonde Nadina Borodin, who is to feature heavily in the proceedings - to start with by causing Conquest to be discovered unconscious in a room of the hotel in the company of a dead body.

The remaining adventure involves illicit dealings by members of a Soviet Trade Delegation, a mild inoffensive-looking Mr. Theodore Feather whose orchid importing business is not all it seems, the mysterious Mr. Shell, and Conquest falling for the charms of Miss Borodin.

The adventure is recounted in Berkeley Gray's "Dare-Devil Conquest" (1950), a novel which holds a special place in the Conquest canon as being the first completely original Conquest hardback story. Up to this date stories had either been rewritten from Thriller episodes or from the reworking of Waldo stories from the Union Jack. Even so, I must confess it is not among my favourites.

Norman Conquest's only venture onto the screen - the film "Park Plaza 605" - is based on this novel. Perhaps this has coloured my view. When I first saw the film on TV in 1971 it struck me as poor. Earlier this year it was broadcast again, and the age of video allowed me a further chance to view. This film is truly appalling. The casting of Tom Conway as Conquest is bad enough, but Sid James as Inspector Williams...? The crinkly ex-tramp Mandeville Livingstone is transformed into a smooth Cockney valet (Leon Davey), and Joy becomes a twittering jealous girlfriend (Joy Shelton). The automatic car lift was obviously beyond the scope of the budget, and consequently the Pace Special is made to reside in a ground-floor garage.

Some years later Conquest has occasion to visit the Park Plaza Hotel again. Conquest's visit to Clam City ("Conquest In California", 1958) was bad news for certain evildoers of that city, and good news for Anita Duncan and her father, the latter having been wrongfully accused of murder and kidnapped to prevent him defending himself, giving the appearance of guilty flight. Conquest's subsequent escapade ("Death on the Hit Parade", 1958) has the trouble-hunter meeting Anita at London Airport, and encountering one of the said evildoers, Mr. Reed Lonson, not to mention the latest teenage pop sensation, Tenn Dacey. Conquest's Clam City escapades have brought him to the attention of Dacey's manager, Elmer Hollister, who invites Conquest to a meeting at the Park Plaza Hotel. Here Hollister tries to enlist Conquest as a bodyguard to the pop star, a task which Conquest refuses until by sheer accident he enters Tenn Dacey's bathroom. This would not normally have created a sensation but for the fact that the teenage heart-throb is unmistakably a girl.

Soon the adventure develops into Round Two of Conquest's battle with Reed Lonson, until Conquest witnesses the demise of both Lonson and the Pace Special.

I recollect that in his ESB centenary contribution (CD, 515), Norman Wright expressed the view that the late 50's and 60's Conquest stories were "unsatisfactory affairs". Perhaps it is because these stories were my introduction to ESB, but I have a view that whilst it is impossible to identify a single "golden era" (how can one choose between the Old Series St. Franks, the thirties Blake, the Thriller Conquests?). I have a view that the Conquest stories from "Conquest In Command" (1956) through to "Get Ready to Die" (1961) constitute one of these golden eras. Certainly, in terms of fun at the Park Plaza Hotel, I prefer the adventure arising out of the later visit.



WALTER TYRER: THE CRIME ON THE MOORS by Ian H. Godden

Walter Tyrer wrote 37 SBL stories between 1943 and 1956, the earlier ones such as THE CRIME ON THE MOORS, No. 131 (Third Series) being very good although some of the later ones were of lesser quality.

Bill Lofts knew Tyrer and had a most informative article on him and his work in CD 116, August 1956. Some of this information was repeated in an obituary notice in CD 443, November 1982.

Tyrer was a prolific writer of romance fiction for D.C. Thomson papers from the mid-1920's to mid-1930's when he joined A.P. He estimated that by 1947 he had written twenty million words of popular fiction and he was writing for a long time after that so must have achieved a very great total during his long writing career.

He generally included more romance in a SBL than other authors and was probably disliked for it by many readers. There is some romance in *THE CRIME ON THE MOORS* but it is unobtrusive, for the love between the young West Riding constable and the farmer's daughter is very agreeable and well-portrayed.

THE CRIME ON THE MOORS is a very good story indeed being well-written and interesting. Set partly in a remote West Riding Valley with the bleak moors all around, it has a splendid background. The young constable, on his rounds by bicycle one night, finds the body of a murdered man near an abandoned mill. When he returns the body has disappeared. The Inspector from the nearest town is obviously crooked and under the influence of the local ex-mayor and head of the Watch Committee who turns out to be implicated in the shady doings recounted here. Blake has a fairly minor role in this readable story.

Tyrer's first SBL was *THE MYSTERY OF SQUADRON X*, a wartime story about a special RAF group formed to bomb a top-secret German germs-warfare establishment. Everything goes wrong right from the start because the Germans always seem to know just when an operation is mounted against them. There is obviously a spy in Squadron X and Blake and Tinker join it, the former as a pilot and the latter as a member of the ground crew. Suspicion falls, in turn, on various members of the squadron and there are many thrilling adventures before the truth is uncovered. It's a good story, worth seven pence of anybody's money at the time and still readable today.

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IN THE '30s AND '40s (A list prepared by Brian Doyle)**

Inspector Hornleigh of Scotland Yard

(in "Monday Night at Seven (later Eight)", 1938-40. Played by S.J. Warmington).

Syd Walker

(in "Bandwagon" from 1938. In "Mr. Walker Wants to Know" item. Introduced one of radio's very first catch-phrases "What would *you* do, chums?" Was an old cockney junk man. Played by himself.

Old Ebenezer

(in "The Old Town Hall" in early-1940s. Was an old night-watchman, played by Richard Goolden. Created another early catch-phrase "Well, I'll be jiggered!")

Paul Temple

(Many series, 1938-68, plus repeats. The debonair detective story-writer and amateur detective himself was married to 'Steve;' and was originally created by Hugh Morton, followed by five more actors, the longest-serving being Peter Coke. Written by Francis Durbridge who also penned several novels.

Dr. Morelle

(in "Monday Night at Eight") in early-1940s, the short-tempered medical doctor and psychiatrist and criminologist was played by Dennis Arundel, and later had his own radio series. Written by Ernest Dudley who also produced 13 novels about the character (Dudley, incidentally, was the stepson of the late actor Eille Norwood, who was the most famous film Sherlock Holmes of the silent 1920s - not many people know that!)

P.C. 49

(Police Constable Archibald Berkeley-Willoughby of the London 'Met'. Ran from 1947 until early-1950s, written by Alan Stranks. Brian Reece played him perfectly and there were later 2 books and 2 films, plus a strip in 'Eagle' comics.)

Philip Odell

(Lester Powell's likeable private investigator was played with great charm by Robert Beatty in several series in the late-40s/early-50s)

Mr. Penny and Mr. Meek of 'Meek's Antiques'

(Both played by Richard Goolden, both kindly-mild-mannered but shrewd middle-aged adventurers, in several series.)

Bulstrode and Berkeley

(played inimitably by Basil Radford and Naunton Wayne and just like their earlier characters Charters and Caldicot - amiable, cricket-obsessed Englishmen who bumble and bungle their way through things)

Dick Barton - Special Agent

A legend. Portrayed successively by Noel Johnson, Duncan Carse and Gordon Davis, and his loyal sidekicks Snowy, by John Mann and Jock (Alex McCrindle) from 1946 to 1950. No more words necessary here - famous in his day as 007 James Bond later was in his time.



GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY

by Bob Whiter

Grundy was a tremendously big fellow with a four-point-seven punch and in a "scrap" he was admittedly first class. But the things that he couldn't do were innumerable. He couldn't play cricket, though he firmly believed that he could. He couldn't see that he was an ass, a fact which was perfectly obvious to everybody else in the two Houses at St. Jim's. He was a new fellow in the school, and he had, like Caesar, hoped to come, to see, and to conquer. That idea, however, had been somewhat knocked out of him in the Shell at St. Jim's. Grundy's idea was that he ought to have a hand in everything that was going on, and an authoritative hand, too. He found few fellows to agree with him on that point. Wilkins and Gunn, in his own study, agreed with him - perhaps for the sake of a quiet life. Outside his own study it surprised and exasperated Grundy to find that he was generally sat upon.

This was the description of the great George Alfred Grundy, as it appeared in *The Gem*, number 390, vol. 9, dated 31st July 1915. (Change the names, the form and the school, and you have an almost exact description of the latter day Horace Coker and his two study mates Potter and Green of the Fifth of Greyfriars.)

As in this particular story, *The Rival Weekly*, Wilkins and Gunn weren't really friends of Grundy, any more than were Potter and Greene to the great Horace. As long as Grundy

supplied the study tea, or was going to take them on a motorcar trip and picnic, the added attractions in *The Rival Weekly* story, they were prepared to go along with him. This story deals with Tom Merry, chief editor of Tom Merry's *Weekly*, refusing Grundy's "great" war story, *Licking the Germans* as a contribution. Not only is it a piece of nonsense ("The hoarse cries of silent forms" or "And the light of the moon in the deep darkness,") but the spelling is so bad that it would have disgraced a fag in the second form.

These were the days before Levison's reformation and he is up to his old nasty tricks, submitting a piece which on the face of it extols all the virtues of the junior weekly but is actually an acrostic. It takes the keen eye of Talbot to spot this when the juniors are checking the proofs of the paper. Using the initial letters of each line, and reading downwards it spells out: "Tom Merry is a bumbling ass." Thanks to the "Toff", the junior editor is able to use his blue pencil and prevent the acrostic from appearing in the final printing. It earns Levison a severe bumping. In order to get his own back, he tries to enlist the help of the already wrathful Grundy. Unfortunately, he goes too far when he suggests retrieving the "copy" of the weekly from the school letter-box. Although Grundy wants to alter the finished proofs, he balks at anything so criminal, exclaiming "Why a chap can be sent to prison for robbing a letter-box..." Once again Levison suffers for his sins, this time a batting from Grundy with a cricket stump!

Using his "great intellect" Grundy thinks up a scheme. Knowing Tom Merry hasn't posted the final proofs of *The Weekly* he forces Wilkins into a fight with Talbot. Gunn is sent to tell Merry and his friends in the knowledge that they will hasten to the scene of the conflict. This gives the great George Alfred his chance to slip into Tom's study and insert his own material, ruthlessly throwing out Tom Merry's leading article, Monty Lowther's comic column and Figgins' instalment of his war serial. Leaving no trace that it has been tampered with, he leaves the brown paper parcel for Tom Merry to mail. It is all to no avail. When the *Weekly* comes out the printers and editorial staff realise what has happened, they force Grundy with the aid of a pin to burn all the copies. To add insult to injury the juniors smear the burnt ashes over his already sweaty face! Extra work was needed, but the staff "wired in," and made sure this time that the "copy" wasn't interfered with. Tom Merry's *Weekly* come out; albeit a week late.

Grundy still dreams of inserting his story in the next week's issue of the paper. It is not until Wilkins informs him that although the paper is entitled *Weekly* it only comes out once in a blue moon that he realises he won't be able to. At first Grundy won't listen to a mere fourth form fag! It is only when Levison tells the great man that he should be editor and should bring out his own weekly that Grundy condescends to pay attention. Although he decides to adopt Levison's idea, he refuses to let the fourth-form fellow be any part of it, showing some sense, for a change, in not trusting him. This of course is not what Levison wants. Under his cunning management, the new weekly could have been brought out as a serious threat, not only to the rival *Weekly* but to Tom Merry himself. You may ask why Levison didn't bring out his own paper. The answer is simple - lack of funds; to print a weekly would cost too much money! Grundy, normally quite well off, had just received a large tip from his Uncle, so was fully in a position to launch a rival weekly.

Despite various entreaties from Wilkins and Gunn - visions of the car ride and picnic fading from their sight like a beautiful dream - Grundy proceeds to write plenty of his own and to "correct" the spelling of his two sub-editors' copy!

Having finished to his satisfaction, Grundy cycles down to Ms. Tiper's place of business with his copy, dodging an ambush set by Tom Merry and Co. en route. This is where Monty Louthier comes into his own. In a disguised voice, he phones Mr. Tiper and says he is sending down Monty Lowther to make some changes. Unsuspecting, Mr. Tiper agrees and the results achieved by the humorist of the Shell are hilarious!

When Grundy receives the copies of his *Weekly* the cover is fine. It is only when he opens the paper that he realises why the juniors who have already looked inside are

laughing! Each page is completely blank except for a small paragraph in the middle. The first reads as follows: "Wanted -- Lessons in spelling! Any second form fag who has a little time to spare is requested to call No. 8 Study in the Shell passage, and to bring a copy of the first spelling-book with him."

The second page ran the following advertisement. "Wanted -- A second-hand strait-jacket! Anyone having the same to dispose of is requested to call at No. 8 Study, Shell passage."

On the third page appeared: "Orthography on the G.A.G. System. K-a-t = Kat, D-o-g-g-e = Doggie, K-o-w-e = Kowe, B-o-o-l = Bool, S-h-e-a-p = Sheap, L-y-o-n-n - Lyonn, T-y-g-a-r = Tygar.

This was followed in the middle pages by more nonsense, spelt even more atrociously than Grundy's original form of orthography. Gradually it dawns on his powerful brain that he has been japed! He wants to carry out the same treatment as Tom Merry and Co. did to *The Weekly* he had interfered with - but the juniors are too quick for him and scamper off. Those he tries to stop turn on him, seize and bump him!

As the story relates: "In a quarter of an hour the *Weekly* was in circulation all over St. Jim's, and all the school was chuckling hysterically over it..." Tom Merry's *Weekly* "went on flourishing - intermittently". But the first number of *Grundy's Weekly* was also the last. Over the years readers were treated to several tales of the great Grundy's farcical antics. Maurice Downs, the companion papers' editor, is reputed to have said that in his opinion Horace Coker could have equalled the popularity of a comic character such as Bunter (or words to that effect). I wonder what he thought about George Alfred Grundy?

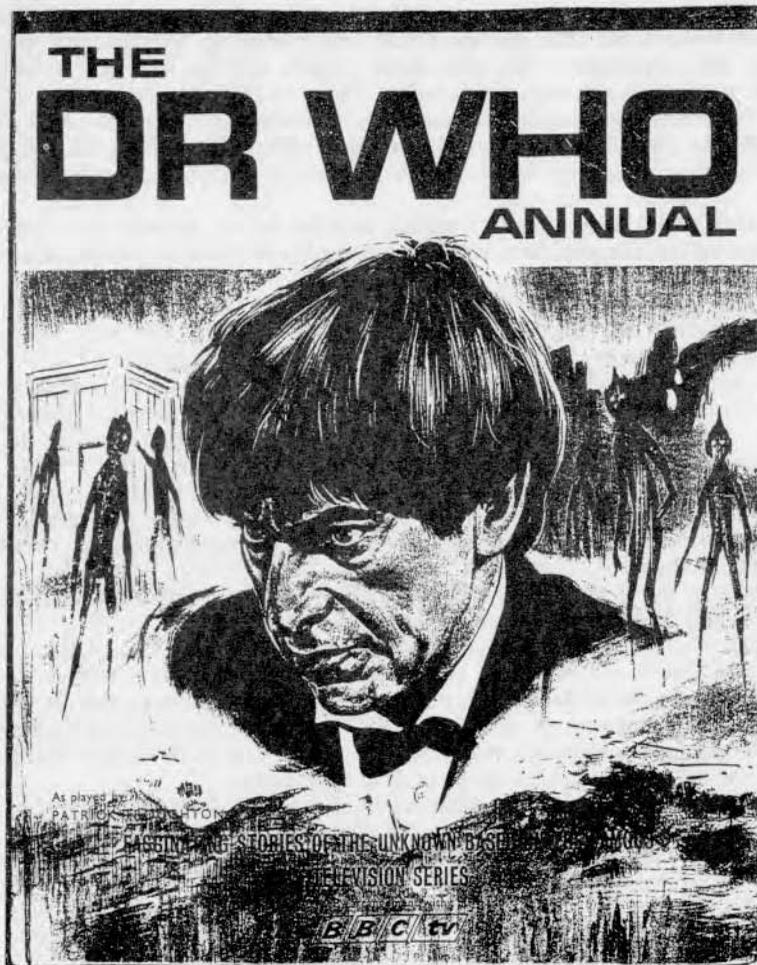
TRIBUTES TO OLD FRIENDS

I am sad to report the death in May of Isaac Litvac, a long time collector and member of the London Old Boys Book Club. In recent years ill health had prevented him from attending more than a handful of meetings but throughout the 1960s he was a regular attender. He was enthusiastic about the earlier pre-war papers and always happy to chat about them and share his knowledge. He will be remembered by fellow members of the London Old Boys Book Club as a very friendly individual with a twinkle in his eye and a dry wit that would bring a smile to the faces of those around him. Isaac was ninety years of age.

NORMAN WRIGHT

I regret to have to announce the passing of another long-standing C.D. reader, James Hodge, of Long Ashton, near Bristol. His widow, Rita, informed me that he died at the end of March after a two-year illness. Mrs. Hodge said that he always greatly enjoyed reading and writing for the C.D. Jim will be much missed and I send my condolences to his family, and of course to Isaac Litvac's.

MARY CADOGAN



Cover, 1968 Annual

The second Doctor as played by Patrick Troughton was a very different one from the first. Following his regeneration in the Tardis, witnessed by his astonished companions, Ben and Polly, there appeared a baggy trousered, tramp-like Doctor, almost Chaplinesque, who played a recorder and at first wore a strange, tall hat, the latter soon discarded in the television series. The regeneration took place on 29th October 1966 but this eccentric form of the 'cosmic hobo' that was the second Doctor did not make his appearance until the 1968 annual, available in the autumn of 1967. As well as the new Doctor there was another major change: from now on the annuals would also feature the current companions, in this case Ben and Polly.

The 1968 annual was also the first to include articles unrelated to Doctor Who, although these were mainly factual and to do with space exploration and astronomy. These features have been criticised but it should be said that in 1967 America was only two years away from landing man on the moon, and young people were generally fascinated by the space race between the USA and the USSR, and competing satellites and sputniks or astronauts and cosmonauts. The ever larger rockets and the incredible voyages they undertook were a constant source of wonder. The great cynicism, even anger, of the last quarter of a century regarding the enormous cost of sending men into space hardly existed. The annuals merely reflected that sense of wonder, while still providing the young reader with a large dose of science fiction and the continuing interplanetary adventures of the Doctor.

David Whitaker was no longer writing material for the annuals and, although the stories were still satisfactory, there was a certain quality of creativity missing which he had imparted to them.

In "The Planet of Bones" the Doctor lands in the Tardis on a fertile planet of considerable beauty that Polly likens to Heaven. The Doctor matter of factly mentions they are in a subsidiary galaxy of the Milky Way known as the Magellanic Cloud. They are soon met by the outwardly friendly inhabitants, who appear very healthy and well fed and look like Greek gods and goddesses. They seem to talk in music and the planet is called Harmony. They are taken as guests in a flyer to a fairy tale city beyond the mountains. They enjoy an unusual banquet of fruits, salad and cake and fruit cordial drinks. Yet the people explain they have no need for farms, or for animals such as cows, pigs and sheep. Ben and Polly think it is all wonderful but the Doctor is not so sure. And strangely, when he plays his recorder, one man staggers back and claps his hands to his ears - strange on a planet called Harmony.

While Ben and Polly sleep the Doctor explores, and the unpleasant truth about this seemingly idyllic planet is soon discovered.

In some kind of museum, he finds himself in a room full of heads in glass cases. He is disturbed by Sandor and Alba, and quickly hides amongst the glass domes. It is soon evident why the people of Harmony do not have need of farms. Many voyagers land on the planet whom they 'make use' of, as they consider all other species are lower creatures. Live heads and brains, particularly scientific ones are useful too, perhaps one just like that of the Doctor. And the two young ones can go in the breeding pens.

The Doctor rushes to warn the unsuspecting Ben and Polly but is captured by Sandor and Alba. But he remembers his discordant recorder and a few chords send the evil aliens fleeing. He awakens Ben and Polly and they all escape in the flyer back to the safety of the Tardis, returning into the inter-spatial flux!

The 1969 annual had a splendid cover, featuring the popular Doctor Who enemies, the Cybermen, attempting to break into the Tardis. The Doctor, still in long discarded hat, is protecting his new assistant, the Scottish Jamie, whom he had rescued from the Battle of Culloden in 1746. The female companion in this annual, not featured on the cover, was Victoria Waterfield, the daughter of a Victorian scientist.

Disappointingly, the Cybermen do not appear in any of the stories in the annual, and neither does another enemy, the Yeti on the title page. The annual is again a mixture of Doctor Who stories and strips and factual features, primarily on space.

A classic television adventure of the Hartnell era was The Celestial Toymaker. The 1969 annual features the Doctor in "The Celestial Toy-Shop", quite unrelated but surprisingly good for all that. With Jamie and Victoria he lands within a huge room full of giant toys, a ten foot high jack-in-the-box, six foot high dolls and four foot high soldiers, armed with tin muskets and with vivid red blobs of paint on their cheeks.

In the middle of the room is a dolls house, big enough to enter. Once inside, everything is once again life-size, including the dolls. Leaving his companions the Doctor

goes upstairs only to find another dolls house, which he enters alone. This one an exact replica of the one he is standing in. On entering it he finds another identical dolls house. So continues his strange journey, through endless dolls house doors, until he loses count of how many replicas he has entered. But as he progresses he senses a 'wrongness', and he hears eerie creakings and whistlings, laughter and thunder.

Still he continues until he comes to a dolls house which seems to emanate all the Light of the Universe, and gives him ecstatic feelings of happiness. He realises he has actually been plunging through the multi-dimensions of Space and Time.

In a moment of enlightenment, he realises that 'the first house in that enigmatic toy-shop had been the focus point or hinge of an infinite pivot, about which turn the multi-dimensions of the entire infinite cosmos'. This is esoteric stuff indeed for a children's annual. He can no longer face the Light - he must retreat. Back then he goes, through countless dolls house doors, wondering just how long, perhaps aeons, he has been separated from his companions. All is well and he is re-united with Jamies and Victoria and they return to the comparative security of the Tardis.

The last Troughton Doctor Who annual for 1970 signified the end of the sixties era of Doctor Who, and there was a colour still of Troughton at the console of the Tardis, reading his 500 year diary. His companions were Jamie and Zoe, and amongst the stories was yet another ingenious solution for the Mystery of the Mary Celeste. This was interesting as in the 1965 Hartnell television story, "The Chase", the Daleks had apparently been responsible for the crew hurriedly abandoning ship; perhaps the annual story took place in an alternative dimension!

The annual was, of course, released in the autumn of 1969 and it seemed most apt that, in the year when Apollo 11 landed on the moon and Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walked on its surface for the first time, there should have been a feature in a science fiction annual on "Prophets of the Space Age". These included Leonardo Da Vinci who, as early as the fifteenth century, had made plans for a flying machine. He even had a notebook proposing a form of jet propulsion. The next prophet was Jules Verne who is said to have studied da Vinci's notes and sketches of flying machines when he visited Milan in 1884. This great Victorian novelist, born in Nantes, France in 1828, utilised his considerable knowledge of science and geography to write highly imaginative and prophetic adventure novels, including "From the Earth to the Moon" in 1865. The spacecraft, "Columbiad", was virtually the same weight and size as the spacecraft that was used in the Apollo 9 mission of March 1969, and it was launched from the same place, Florida. The splashdown of the re-entry capsule was in the same area of the Pacific. It can be no coincidence that the more famous Apollo 11 command module was called "Columbia", a tribute to the prophetic genius of Verne.

Naturally, another great science fiction novelist, H.G. Wells, received worthy mention and for what else but his groundbreaking story of 1895, "The Time Machine", a prime inspiration for the time travel adventures of Doctor Who. The hero of the novel is almost as enigmatic as the Doctor, as he is only known as "The Time Traveller". He goes far into the future and becomes involved in helping the gentle Eloi against the savage Morlocks, and at the end of the book sets off in his machine and is heard of no more...

These early Doctor Who annuals culminate in what remains, for the conceivable future, the zenith of the most exciting era of the space age: an era when the dividing line between science fiction and fact narrowed to staggering degree and the possibilities of life or of living in outer space seemed limitless.

To quote the final paragraph of "Prophets of the Space Age" from that 1970 annual, "science fiction has become a part of our lives. We read it in magazines and see it on television and in the cinema. But when does the fiction become fact? Who are the prophets of tomorrow?"

FORUM

For the exchange of Readers' views

From JOHN LEWIS: I believe an unrecorded miracle occurred between 1922 and 1937 - Billy Bunter actually lost one and a half pounds in weight! In Magnets 1520 and 1650 the Editor printed lists which gave the age, height and weight of the members of the Remove. Both lists record the Fat Owl's weight as 14 stone 12½ lbs. Yet in 1922 Bunter's avoirdupois was 15 stone: "And fallen with his (Bunter's) full *fifteen stone* on the ball" (Magnet 730, page 14, column 2).

From Magnet primary sources (the actual words of Charles Hamilton) I have, in past C.D.s, revealed the correct ages of Mr. Quelch, Dr. Voysey and William Gosling. Also from a Magnet secondary source (Robert Cherry - no. 1616) a close estimation can be made of Mr. Prout's mortal years.

I have located another secondary source (Harry Wharton) which relates the approximate age of Dr. Locke: "'But it can't be true' said Harry Wharton. 'Why should the Head resign? He's not old - not over sixty. No reason why he should resign...'" (Magnet 743, page 6, column 1).

As an amateur historian I realise that secondary sources, especially when given by schoolboys, must be treated with great care. However, in this case, I opine that the Wharton source can be accepted (he was a youth with a very mature approach to life) as quite a sound reference regarding the age of Dr. Locke. I have now had to revise my former opinion that the Headmaster was nearer 65 than 60 - ten years senior to Mr. Quelch but younger than Mr. Prout.

From BERT HAMBLET: I was interested in Bill Lofts' letter in the October 1993 C.D. about Basil Storey. When I took up the sport of speedway racing as a fan in 1949 Basil Storey used to edit a magazine called SPEEDWAY GAZETTE which had a large circulation. Each week he would publish a school story in the magazine with leading speedway riders of the day featured in it. It didn't take me long to realise that some of the story plots seemed closely related to Magnet tales. Basil admitted that he was a great admirer of Charles Hamilton and it was his idea to do this as a small tribute to him. Possibly, however, either Hamilton or the Fleetway Press found out and the stories came to a sudden stop. A Speedway Magazine rather like the C.D. is being published four times a year, devoted to the golden years of speedway (1930 to 1960). Did Bunter once feature in a speedway story in the Magnets of the 1930s?

From BOB WHITER: I was interested in the Northern O.B.B.C. report in the May C.D. which states that the first Rupert Annual appeared in 1936. Now I am certain that as a very young boy I saved up my half pennies, pennies, silver sixpences, etc. and bought a black coloured cover Rupert

Annual either in 1929 or 1930. If my memory serves me correctly, it contained three stories, one of which was 'Rupert and the Black Dwarf'. I would love to hear from someone who remembers this annual, and to know that I never just dreamed about it! I would add also that I was reading the one shilling yellow coloured Rupert books. One stands out in the old brain box: 'Rupert and the Enchanted Princess'. All this has bugged me for years and I'd dearly love to get to the bottom of it. I remember my grandmother giving me a sixpence towards the cost of the 'annual' but I can't remember the full amount.

BRANDS FROM THE BURNING **Part II: Herbert Vernon-Smith (4)**

by Peter Mahony

After his return from the South Seas, Vernon-Smith became even more prominent in the Greyfriars saga. He was well to the fore when the Remove, under Lord Mauleverer's leadership, walked out of Greyfriars, and established themselves at High Oaks. Having 'cocked a snook' at Dr. Locke and the Greyfriars' prefects, Smithy started kicking over the traces at High Oaks - smoking, slacking, defying Mauly's authority. Mauleverer solved the problem by bringing in a 'Pug' to keep order - Smithy, Bolsover, Skinner & Co. suffered. The series showed that the Bounder, given an inch, was ever-ready to take an ell. Quite like old times!

Nearly a year went by before Smithy starred again. The Christmas series of 1928 involved the return of James Soames. The South Seas freebooter, still after Black Peter's treasure, kidnapped Tom Redwing and Smithy and held them prisoners in a sea cave near the shoulder. The Famous Five came to the rescue, and the Redwing/Vernon-Smith friendship deepened further as a result of their experience. (Soames escaped justice, to turn up again years later in quite different circumstances.)

In Magnets 1130-31, a new boy, Arthur Durance, was kidnapped by a couple of villains, father and son, named Knowles, alias Stone. Ulick Knowles took Durance's place and entered the Remove as a new boy. Vernon-Smith who had met the real Durance briefly over a year before, became suspicious of Knowles, but not enough to expose him. Being the Bounder, he indulged in some detective work, more because he disliked 'Durance' than through wishing to do right. He dragged an unwilling Redwing into burgling the Old Red House near Redclyffe. They rescued the prisoner, and led Inspector Grimes to arrest the older Knowles. Ulick, given a chance at Redwing's entreaty, bunked from Greyfriars before the hand of the law descended. Smithy, of course, got the limelight and lapped it up!

More detective work cropped up in the famous "Courtfield Cracksman" series. Mr. Quelch was absent from Greyfriars and his place was taken by a Mr. Steele. In reality, Steele was Inspector Irons of Scotland Yard, masquerading as a schoolmaster while seeking the cracksman. Vernon-Smith started a feud with Steele which led to a predictable series of escapades, punishments, revenges and suspicions. Steele had nearly as much trouble with the disgruntled Bounder as he had with the elusive cracksman. Of course, Smithy's involvement was really a sub-plot to the main theme, but, as usual, he had a vital impact on events.

Later in the same year (1930), there was another rebellion series. Dr. Locke was supplanted by the tyrannical Mr. Brander, who appointed his obnoxious nephew, Van Tromp, to be a prefect. Punishments fell thickly on both guilty and innocent. Eventually, the Remove revolted and Smithy took a leading role. Barrings-out are a serious business and their leaders are required to show a particular ruthlessness. The Bounder, always

prepared to go the whole hog (and a little over), supplied the spark which was lacking in The Famous Five. Without him, the rebellion could have foundered ingloriously.

Sir Hilton Popper, in his capacity as school governor, intervened to restore order. He scaled a ladder to the Remove dormitory and was captured by the rebels. Vernon-Smith then proceeded to adorn Sir Hilton's face with boot-blackening - as a lesson to choose better Heads for the school! He was only just deterred from shaving Sir Hilton's eyebrows! The baronet departed, chastened but infuriated.

In a later episode, Major Cherry arrived to act as peace-maker. He tried to reason with Popper; they were quickly quarrelling; a shouting-match looked ready to degenerate into a brawl. With everyone, masters and boys, appalled at the prospect, Smithy introduced some light relief by shouting the odds: "Two to one on the major! Go it! You could lick him, major!"

When Quelch, at long last, introduced some common-sense into the proceedings, the Bounder was the least willing to toe the line. Smithy, drunk with the excitement, was not interested in the return of law and order - even when the purpose of the revolt had been achieved. Self-control was never his forte.

In March 1931 (Magnet 1205), after a quiet spell of nearly 9 months, the rebel Smithy surfaced again. He proposed to break bounds; Redwing prevented him; they came to blows. His worst feelings aroused, the Bounder broke bounds later that night. Unfortunately, Temple & Co. made a raid on the Remove dormitory. Quelch and Capper were aroused; Smithy was caught but he managed to extricate himself by declaring that he was bent on a dormitory 'rag' of his own. Quelch gave him the benefit of the 'doubt'. Recklessly, the Bounder broke out the next night; the wily Quelch, not fully satisfied, checked the dormitory - and found Redwing absent! Smithy got back - not without difficulty - and remained blissfully unaware that his erstwhile friend was up for the sack. In the nick of time, the Bounder learned of Quelch's visit to the dormitory and realised that Redwing must have occupied his - Smithy's - bed. He owned up, got Redwing off and collected a flogging. Once again, the 'Good Angel' had saved Smithy's bacon.

Not long afterwards (Magnets 1222-3), Vernon-Smith was caught smoking by Quelch. Detention meant missing the cricket match against Highcliffe. Then Prout caught him using the telephone at nine o'clock at night. Quelch gave Smithy a vintage 'six'. Nevertheless, the 'phone call - to our old friend, Jerry Hawke - bore fruit. Mr. Hawke, for a price, went to London and sent a telegram to Dr. Locke in the name of Smithy's father, requesting leave for the Bounder to 'come home'. The detention was cancelled: Smithy played at Highcliffe.

It should have been plain sailing. Unfortunately, Mr. Vernon-Smith came down to visit his son. Redwing got wind of it and managed to head him off - but not before Prout had encountered Mr. Vernon-Smith by chance. Prout told Quelch; Quelch checked up; the deception was discovered. Smithy got the sack.

The second of this pair of yarns was a snorter. On the 'be hanged for a sheep' principle, Vernon-Smith treated Quelch to a few home truths - "You're a bad-tempered old gent, a windbag and a bore". Quelch, naturally, lost his 'rag' and nearly became involved in an undignified brawl in the punishment-room. Fuming, he turned to stalk out.

Henry never made it. The Bounder barged him over; skipped out and locked Quelch in 'punny'. He resumed his place in the Remove; Quelch spent the night in the punishment room! Mr. Vernon-Smith had meanwhile interceded for his son. He extracted an undertaking from Dr. Locke that Smithy would be reinstated - if Quelch agreed! As Henry was then wriggling his way up the punishment-room chimney, the Bounder's chances were virtually non-existent! Courage came to the rescue. Quelch got into difficulties on a sloping roof. Vernon-Smith went to his aid and held him back from a death-fall. Redwing and the Famous Five completed the rescue. Quelch, predictably grateful, rescinded Smithy's sentence. (This was a repeat performance of Magnet 297, but with extra dimensions of animosity in the characters of both Vernon-Smith and Quelch.)

The Bounder's next adventure involved Harry Wharton. Smithy wanted to 'cut' a cricket match; Wharton jumped to the conclusion that he was going 'blagging'. It transpired that Vernon-Smith was booked to meet his father. Wharton refused to believe him - it was too like the 'dodge' that Smithy had worked on Quelch a few weeks earlier. Like most liars, Vernon-Smith was livid at not being believed when he was telling the truth. Blows were exchanged; Wharton got his back up; Nugent was given the Bounder's place. Smithy then made himself available for the XI: Wharton refused to accommodate him. The cricketers, eager to win, took the Bounder's part; Wharton, against his own judgement, reluctantly included him. (Poor old Nugent! What with Smithy and Hazeldene he endured a chequered sporting existence at the hands of his best friend.)

Wharton fared badly in the game. Smithy did rather better. Wharton took his annoyance out on the long-suffering Nugent. (The emotional instability of both Wharton and Vernon-Smith made them dubious quantities as team leaders. I have often wondered how much better the Greyfriars teams would have been with the more stable Squiff, or even Peter Todd, in charge.) Nugent and Wharton quarrelled; Nugent walked off on his own and ran into trouble with Ponsonby & Co. He fell (was pushed?) down a cliff; stuck on a ledge; and eventually rescued by Wharton and Smithy combined. Good humour and friendship were restored - until the next time.

The reconciliation occurred just in time for the Famous Five (and Bunter!) to join the Bounder on his safari holiday in Kenya (Magnets 1228 to 1236). This was one of those rip-roaring holiday series, where some of Vernon-Smith's activities bordered on the criminal. His readiness for violence and mayhem (the "Wild West" series in 1938 was another such) showed that the public school polish was only a surface veneer. (Mrs. Vernon-Smith must have been a fearsome lady. The Bounder inherited the hard-headed and hard-hearted business acumen of his father, but "Old Smith" never showed much of the violent streak which was such a feature of Smithy's character. I think he got it from his mum. She must have given Old Smith a hell of a time!) After sundry narrow squeaks the whole party got back to Greyfriars, more or less intact. They couldn't have told their parents too much of their experiences; if they had, the Famous Five would never have been trusted to the care of Mr. Vernon-Smith again. (Or would they? Colonel Wharton and Major Cherry may have looked on it as a "character-forming" experience. Hurree Singh's guardians and Johnny Bull's parents would surely have been gravely concerned while Mrs. Nugent would have had a pink fit! Whether Samuel Bunter would have worried about his hopeful son's narrow escape from the cooking-pot is a moot point!)

The Bounder's next exploit (Magnet 1242) was to misjudge Monsieur Charpentier. He made fun of Massoo's impecuniosity in the French class - and received a record thrashing. Bent on vengeance, Smithy rowed with Redwing over who should 'stand' tea. A fiver got left on the study table during the dispute; Bunter, pursuing his own scheme of vengeance on Smithy, hid it in a book. The Bounder decided, on very flimsy grounds, that Mossoo had taken it. He made a veiled accusation in public: Mossoo went off at the deep end. Bunter, meanwhile had gone into 'sanny' with a cold. When he came out, he found Greyfriars buzzing with the sensation. He told Wharton; the fiver was found in the book; Smithy had to eat humble pie. Quelch, who had a shrewd idea of what had been going on, reminded Smithy of his reason for having the fiver. "I wanted to subscribe to the School Mission". The Bounder had to stump up - a deserved lesson, particularly as Charpentier had interceded to prevent him from being caned. Vernon-Smith rarely felt ashamed of himself: this was one of the exceptions.

A term or so went by; then Smithy and Wharton were in conflict again. The Whartons were in financial difficulties (Magnets 1255-59). Due to a misunderstanding, Harry thought he had to pay his own way at Greyfriars. He entered for a scholarship; then he put his bike up for auction. Smithy generously bid more than its value; Wharton, his pride offended,

threw the money in his face. A feud developed; the Bounder ousted his rival as form captain.

The Easter holidays intervened: Vernon-Smith plotted a brutal revenge on Wharton, with the help of Ponsonby & Co. Redwing became the victim by mistake; had a bad night out; and became ill. (This was a re-work of the Mornington/Silver and Cardew/Merry feuds and it suffered a bit in comparison. Where Mornington and Cardew had been exposed and punished in various ways, Smithy got away with it because of Redwing's forbearance.) Smithy stayed with Redwing to nurse him back to health - the Bounder's remorse tended to be as intense as his animosity. They both missed the start of the summer term.

The feud resumed when Smithy returned to Greyfriars. First, he had a narrow squeak from expulsion. "Do-gooding" for Redwing had been a strain. The Bounder 'blagged' at the "Three Fishers"; was spotted by Sir Hilton Popper, but managed to work his way clear by exposing an impersonator (The Gentleman Pincher). Unfortunately, Quelch had endured an embarrassing scene with Sir Hilton because of the Bounder. He was less inclined than ever to overlook Smithy's peccadilloes.

Bunter caused the next problem. Because of Smithy's late return to school, the Owl had - legitimately - bagged his study. Vernon-Smith turned him out; Quelch upheld Bunter's complaint and gave Smithy 500 lines. An uneasy co-habitation of Study 4 resulted. Venting his spleen elsewhere, the Bounder took the high hand about cricket practice. He had dodged often enough when Wharton was skipper. Now that roles were reversed, he wasn't going to have any nonsense! This was typical of the unsavoury petty streak in Smithy's character. The cricket season was soon heading for trouble.

To get rid of the leech-like Bunter, Smithy set up a trap with a pie and a bottle of rat-poison. Bunter wolfed the pie; then the Bounder 'conned' him into thinking it had been poisoned. The resulting hullabaloo brought Quelch on the scene. Bunter was caned for stealing the pie, and quit Study 4 in high dudgeon. In revenge, he used his ventriloquism to lure Smithy from school on a match day. The Bounder returned, furious, and accused Wharton of queering his pitch. The Cricketers put him right, but the resentment was festering.

Bunter, for once implacable about his wrongs, carried on his feud. He wrote an insult on the blackboard (signed: Vernon-Smith!) and was caned. Then he shipped Smithy's study and was caught in the act. In desperation, he butted the Bounder's waistcoat and winded him. Exit, running!

Smithy had dropped Wharton from the St. Jim's match - a punishment for making his captain miss the previous game. The XI, who believed Wharton's denials, were up in arms. Wharton discovered that Bunter was the culprit but would not give him away. (Just as well, for in his current temper Smithy would have slaughtered the Owl.) Bunter discovered that Smithy was 'breaking-out'; he locked the Bounder out. Wharton, who knew of Bunter's scheme, came to the rescue. Smithy, to show his gratitude, offered Wharton a place in the XI. As it would have been at Nugent's expense, Wharton declined. Bunter (what a busy boy) had another go at ventriloquism on the 'phone; Quelch caught him at it; the outcome was harrowing. Smithy discovered the truth; made it up with Wharton; St. Jim's were duly beaten. Everyone was pleased - except Bunter.

In a curious interlude, Paul Tyrrell, Bob Cherry's wastrel cousin, turned up - on the run from the police. He tried to rob Vernon-Smith, Bob chipped in; between them they defeated the rogue. Tyrrell appealed to Bob for help. Bob was unwilling - and unable - to finance his escape. The bounder realised what was afoot. Secretly, he helped Tyrrell to leave the country and saved the Cherrys from a full-blown scandal. The "Good Angel," side of Smithy's character did not often emerge, but when it did, especially if money would work the raffle, it was very effective.

The last instalment of his splendid series showed Smithy "in his cups" again. A more than usual 'rag' - led by the boulder - in the French class caused Quelch to obtain the whole form. The St. Jude's match was to be scratched. Smithy proposed wholesale truancy. By lucky chance, Quelch was called away for the afternoon. Loder was deputed to supervise the detention. A fake telegram sent Loder to Lantham. Walker, his substitute, found half the Remove absent but took no action.

The XI went off to St. Jude's and the match commenced. Unfortunately, Quelch's outing had taken him to St. Jude's! He spotted the delinquents; stopped the match; and sent them packing. The Boulder's bad-tempered ragging of his team was aggravated by their humiliation. Vernon-Smith's popularity slumped to zero.

His hard-headedness and better nature returned. He took the blame for the escapade; apologised to Quelch; resigned the captaincy and supported Wharton's re-election. The *amende honorable!*

This fiasco marked another water-shed in the Boulder's career. he had shown himself unfit to lead: "No one can command, Vernon-Smith, who has not learned to obey". Never again did he challenge for the leadership; there were plenty of scrapes to come, but Smithy had, at least, learned to recognise his shortcomings as a skipper. The fact that he was man enough to acknowledge them shows that his character was still developing positively.

(To be continued)

GEMS OF HAMILTONIA

by John Geal

No. 5 Mr. Prout MAGNET No. 1237

(A rumpus is going on in the "Rag" and Prout decided to intervene to quell the noise.)

"In majestic wrath he arrived at the wide-open door of the Rag.

He arrived at an unfortunate moment.

At that very moment when Cecil Reginald Temple, under the propulsion of all Bob Cherry's beef, hurtled through the doorway.

Temple would have landed on the floor of the passage had not Prout arrived at the psychological moment. As it was, he landed on Prout.

Prout's ample waistcoat received Temple of the Fourth, and Prout staggered back as if a battering ram had hit him.

Prout sat down.

Temple sprawled over Prout, it was painful for Prout; but it was not Temple's fault. Temple jumped up and howled into the doorway; "'Ware beaks!"

Mr. Prout staggered to his feet.

"I say you fellows, it's old Prout!" came Billy Bunter's squeak.

Mr. Prout gave a breathless grunt. "Old Prout" was not a term applicable to him.

Besides being disrespectful, it was incorrect. Prout was not old. He had reached ripe years. Mentally and physically, he was ripe - fully ripe. But he was not old, perhaps a little over-ripe, but certainly not old.

Prout, crimson and breathless, rolled into the Rag. In his present winded state he was not quite so majestic as usual. The glory had departed from the House of Israel, so to speak."

CRIME AT CLIFF HOUSE

by Margery Woods

Part 2 - Persecution --- and Other Sins!

OUR PORTRAIT GALLERY!



No. 21.
PEGGY PRESTON.

Peggy Preston, the scholarship girl from the North, became one of the most popular girls in the Fourth at Cliff House, but she had the great misfortune to arrive at the school on the same day as the rich and spoilt Augusta Anstruther-Browne. The two girls clashed on that very first day, were, alas, consigned to share a study, and Augusta began a campaign of persecution with assault, insults and the insinuation that Peggy's father was lucky not to be in prison. Unfortunately Bessie, eavesdropping as usual misheard the actual words, and spread the rumour that Peggy's father was a convict.

The girls did not know that the fathers of Peggy and Augusta had once been business partners, and in the company crash which cost Peggy's father everything the blame had been wrongly shifted on to him by Anstruther-Browne. Perhaps like father, like daughter, Augusta deliberately did everything possible to discredit the scholarship girl until she managed to get Peggy accused of theft. It must be admitted that Bessie Bunter contributed a great deal to Peggy's misfortune, partly because of stupidity and partly because Bessie at that time was still thoroughly unlikeable.

After three weeks the author resorted to one of the favourite ploys for resolving an impasse which had been thoroughly milked of its possibilities, and caused a fire to happen at the school. Aroused by the fire bell, organised by the resourceful Babs, the girls carried out the procedure for which fire drill had prepared them, and took to the escape chute. But one was missing amidst the smoke and urgency; Augusta. Only Peggy had realised this, and promptly returns into the blaze to rescue her erstwhile tormentor. Within moments, from being the outcast of the school she becomes its heroine.

The two fathers arrive, for a dramatic confrontation in the San, and old scores are resolved at last for forgiveness all round. Peggy and Augusta are enemies no longer.

But Augusta was soon back to her old tricks.

The following year (SCHOOL FRIEND 68, August 28th 1920) Augusta makes a new friend, the equally spoilt and vain Sybil Spender, whose home is not far distant from the school, and who is not restricted by school rules. Soon

Augusta is embarking on a series of very suspect activities. She doctors a photograph of Barbara Redfern which then appears to depict the Fourth Form captain smoking a cigarette. She arranges for Sybil to impersonate Babs over the phone and by another ruse gets Babs locked in a room at Spender Court, thus setting up a complete frame-up of Babs in time for the arrival of Miss Primrose and resulting in Babs being expelled. Naturally, the chums are not prepared to allow this state of affairs to continue and soon set the matter straight, resulting in Augusta being up for expulsion.

Meanwhile, Augusta has cut off Bessie's plait, and Miss Primrose suffers a complication essential to the plot. A niece for whom she has made herself responsible and whose musical training she has financed has now written to say that her scapegrace father (Miss Primrose's brother-in-law) has turned up again and appears to be involved in some criminal business. Worse, the niece's employer has discovered this. Miss Primrose certainly has cause for concern, but worse is to come. Augusta's parents arrive, determined that their precious daughter should not be expelled, and when Miss Primrose refuses to



AUGUSTA ANSTRUTHER-BROWNE'S SPITEFUL ACTION!

(An incident from the magnificent new, long complete tale of the Girls of Cliff House, contained in this issue.)

rescind the sentence, Anstruther-Browne delivers his own bombshell.

The head governor of the school at that time was a Dr. Mary Knowles who was engaged in some very learned research in a remote part of the African continent. Anstruther-Browne has a letter from her in which she entrusts her Cliff House interests entirely to him with full authority to administer them as he thinks fit. As a villain in a B movie might have said: It was curtains for Miss Primrose!

During the power struggle that follows between Miss Primrose and Augusta's father the reader must suspend a great deal of disbelief. The moral blackmail by Anstruther-Browne depends on his knowledge of the rascally brother-in-law, whose arrest and subsequent disgrace would ruin Primmy's niece's hopes of a musical career. But why was Primmy ignorant until that time of her niece being employed by Anstruther-Browne as his typist? Surely the girl would have told her devoted aunt the name of her employer, a double-barrelled quite unusual name that was also born by an extremely wilful pupil at the school.

The climax to the power struggle comes when Anstruther-Browne insists that Miss Primrose publicly canes Babs and Clara for their "spiteful" treatment of his daughter. But in the nick of time Miss Primrose has received a telegram from her niece; her father is now the hero of the town! He has saved the life of the man he is supposed to have wronged, and, better still, his discovery of gold in Australia has enabled him to pay off all old debts. Readers could be forgiven here for whispering to themselves that history has a strange way of repeating itself in these sagas of Cliff House.

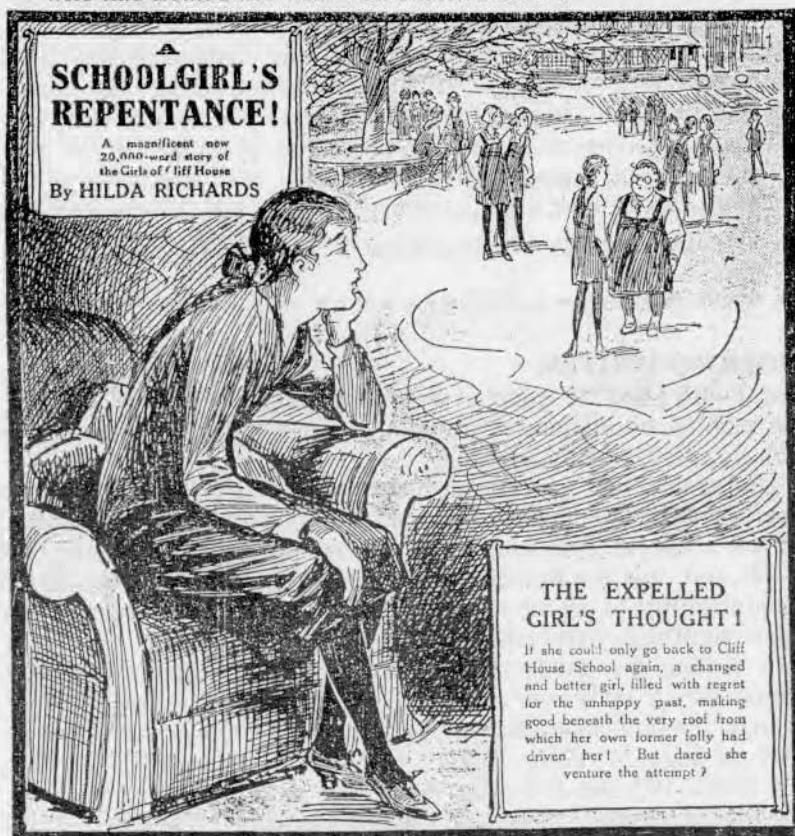
So Miss Primrose snaps the cane in half and throws it down then marches away from the school, for ever! A new head-mistress arrives, straight from a reformatory, the girls are sure, and Cliff House decides it has had enough. Augusta becomes the outcast, the girls rebel and openly defy both headmistress and the tyrannical new governor, determined never to surrender until Miss Primrose is reinstated and Augusta goes.

So the girls hold out in an old empty house while the mistresses and the servants leave the school. Even Stella Stone, the school captain, joins the girls and eventually they succeed in taking possession of the school and locking out the new head and Anstruther-Browne. But he suddenly finds something else to worry about and loses all interest in teaching those schoolgirl brats a lesson in discipline. For now it is his turn to face ruin. He has neither time nor patience to advise the whining Mrs. Grumph from the reformatory when she arrives with her tale of being locked out of the school; he needs to get to London, immediately.

After ten weeks, the series appears to be coming to an end with the return of Miss Primrose, the restoring of some sense of sanity to the school and at long last the expulsion of Augusta Anstruther-Browne, who is now in the unhappy position of Peggy Preston just over a year before. Poverty, disgrace, loss of the 'friends' like Sybil Spender, who have little time for failures, and the end of her dreams of queening it at Cliff House face her as she departs to join

her ruthless, unscrupulous father in contemplation of his own downfall, to bankruptcy. But Augusta was far too strong a character to be written out and the last paragraph in issue 77 hints at this, as she leaves.

Vain the bitter regret over her wasted chances. Vain the tearful wish that she could have her time over again ... Too late... But was it too late? Who knew but what a chance might come --- a chance that would enable her to make good and to win favour with the girls she had despised --- the girls who had treated her with well-merited scorn?



Only three weeks later that chance came and Augusta was back at Cliff House after her bitter experience of how the other half lives. The grand home had been sold, her parents had taken off for Australia, leaving her in the care of a couple in the rag trade, a couple who treated Augusta as a drudge and humiliated her. Then Augusta is befriended by an elderly lady who has a wilful niece who is about to go to Cliff House, and in her new guise, bobbed dyed hair and spectacles, and new name, Augusta agrees to accompany the wilful Lorna to school, to care for her.

Now the same theme and plot line of the earlier series is reworked, this time with the roles reversed. There is much manipulation of both plot and character in this second section of the Augusta saga, and re-reading the stories today it has to be admitted that much of the writing tends to be rather highly charged. For instance, some of the lines and reactions given to Miss Primrose would be unimaginable fifteen years later, when Miss Primrose would never have submitted to such emotional blackmail and would have found some way of continuing to protect her beloved niece. But one has to remember that this is still 1920 when for many authors the Victorian style of melodrama still had much to commend it when attempting to grip the hearts of young readers. The authorship of this four-months-long series is now credited to Reg Kirkham, although in style it is reminiscent of Horace Phillips, which only shows how skilful was Kirkham in writing against his own true and natural flair for wonderful humour. No-one would suspect this as he works out the long and painful repentance of Augusta Anstruther-Brown until she earns at last her own salvation. For in those days fiction had to show that crime does not pay!

(Next month: The Wickedest Girl at Cliff House)

RAY HOPKINS WRITES:

Gosh, I wish I had the 'gitup' to write long articles like Peter Mahony. His has been such an entertaining series with so much information packed within he must have spent hours of research.

I'm glad to hear that someone else spotted the Bunter Restaurant in Nepal. My cousin's youngest, who now has his PhD in Chemistry, is doing what they used to call a World Tour but which is now just a commonplace called a "Trip". He, too, saw the Bunter Eatery in Nepal and couldn't wait to tell me (take more than that to get me rushing off to those far flung places - I'm glad I got all that out of my system when I was a younker).

Since writing the article on the Redferns I came across the following information which makes an interesting addendum as I believed the BFL reprints to be the final appearance of these two St. Dorothy's tales. In CD 274, Oct 1969 on page 21, Philip Tierney says the two Redfern BFL's were re-issued in SOL's 192 and 194 (Mar, Apr 1933) with the following titles: 192: "For His Brother's Sake"; 194: "The Captain's Enemy". I'm sorry I never had the time to read the second story to see who the Captain's enemy turns out to be: I suspect the dastardly Ransome, one of Charles Hamilton's less than honourable characters whom he does so well in his usual dark colours.

**THE CLUB REPORTS HAVE HAD TO BE HELD OVER
UNTIL NEXT MONTH**

BRANCH LINE BOOKSTALL

by V. Brian Crookes

Six days a week the 8.16 a.m. train took us by the branch line to school. Wednesdays and Saturdays were half holidays when we played sport for Form, House or School. On the branch line platform there was a small bookstall, manned for a couple of hours only in the mornings. At least one different comic was on sale each day of the week.

Avid readers carried an atlas in their satchels, whether or not there had been geography homework. Two pence paid over the comic, it was placed carefully inside this largest of school books. No bending back or creasing the pages and next morning it could be returned to the bookstall with a further penny to secure the new day's issue. I'm sure it was quite illegal, but we regulars took advantage of the system every day except Saturday, when for obvious reasons it was not possible.

The bookstall man was very helpful in other ways. When there was a special offer and a set of cards had to be collected to qualify for a free gift, he sorted all the cards from the comics and gave us those we needed. I remember having a cricket bat, football and various display albums for the cards. Two albums I still have:-



Do you remember these? During which months of which years were they given away with the SKIPPER?

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