

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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Blake Answers Back!

Jack Blake's here to answer your letters and deal with your queries. Write to him c/o The GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Be as candid as you like—Jack Blake likes a plain speaker, being by nature a John Blunt himself! But keep your letter SHORT, and enclose if possible a photo of yourself for reproduction on this page. No photos can be returned and no replies given by post.

"Two Good Mixers," of Littlewick, writes:

We two would like this point settled. Two boxers deliver a knock-out to each other at the same moment, so that they both go down for the count. What is the correct verdict?

ANSWER: This is known as *Miracle No. 1*—in boxing circles. The result is a draw, and an immense feeling of relief for each man when he comes round and discovers that, though he was knocked out, he was not beaten.

"Mathematician," of Preston, writes:

If a bottle plus cork costs twopence-halfpenny, and the bottle costs twopence more than the cork, what does each cost?

ANSWER: Without calling in Manners, the mathematical expert of the Shell, I can tell you the bottle cost twopence farthing and the cork cost a farthing. Surely you haven't been letting a little thing like that worry you?

"Farmer's Boy," of Reading, writes:

I had £100, and with it I bought 100 animals—cows at £5 apiece, sheep at £1 apiece, and pigs at a shilling each. How many of each did I buy?

ANSWER: I won't guarantee to answer too many questions of this sort—you really ought to come in one morning during maths class. I make it 19 cows (£95), 1 sheep (£1), and 80 pigs (£4).

W. A. Orman, of Bull's Green, Knebworth, writes:

1. Why can't cads like Racke and Crooke be so completely squashed that they won't try any more of their tricks?

2. Could we have charts giving names, ages, and hobbies of St. Jim's people?

3. In a recent story, how did Lowther recognise his £1 note on its production from Racke's pocket? Wishing you all the best!

ANSWER: 1. Any gardener will tell you you can never quite get rid of the weeds. According to our new Fifteen-Year Plan, we hope to have Racke, Crooke & Co. completely squashed by 1954—or thereabouts.

2. You could, if you went without the stories for a few weeks. But would everybody care for page after page of fidgety figures? Gosh, I wouldn't! I'd have to compile them!

3. I asked Lowther, and he says the fact that it was brought out with the other stolen articles from Racke's pocket was sufficient for him. 'Nuff said.

Wishing YOU all the best!

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,616.

J. D., of Cononley, Yorks, writes:

I'd like a list of studies in the Fourth and their occupants to begin with. Then could you answer these: 1. Who is best at English in the Fourth? 2. Who is most poetic? 3. When was the School House founded? 4. Also the New House? 5. How old is Gussy, exactly? 6. From which University does Mr. Railton hail?

ANSWER: At the risk of boring stiff those readers who don't care a hoot who inhabits which study in the Fourth, here goes. School House: No. 1. Lumley-Lumley, Durrance. No. 2. Mellish, Baggly Trimble. No. 3. Bates, Macdonald. No. 4. Tompkins, Mulvaney. No. 5. Hammond, Kerruish, Reilly, Julian. No. 6. D'Arcy, Digby, Herries, and self. No. 7. Contarini, Roylance, Smith minor. No. 8. Lorne, Wyatt. No. 9. Levison, Cardew, Clive. No. 10. Jones minor. Richard Brooke, the day boy, has no study. New House: No. 1. Kouri Rao. No. 2. Robinson, Clarke. No. 3. Pratt, Digges. No. 4. Figgins, Kerr, Wynn. No. 5. Redfern, Owen, Lawrence. No. 6. Chowle.

Replies to questions: 1. Brooke, probably, or Manners. 2. No real claimant to this title, though Gussy fancies he pens a pretty verse. 3. About 1540, when St. Jim's, as a school, was founded on the site of the old abbey, destroyed by Henry VIII. 4. The New House is only "new" by comparison—it has been built well over 100 years. 5. 15 years 3 months. 6. Mr. Railton is an M.A., and went to Oxford.

End of Volume 1, *Encyclopædia St. Jim'sica*. O.K.? Next, please.

Maurice Williams, of Coleford, Glos., writes:

I am anxious to know whom I should most resemble at St. Jim's? My height is 5 ft. 4 ins., weight 7 st. 4 lbs, age 13 years 2 months. I am very strong-headed and a pretty good fighter, good in all kinds of sport. P.S.—Sorry I have no photograph.

ANSWER: You would be in the Third at St. Jim's, though you are taller than many fellows in the Fourth. In fact, you could look down on a chap like Mellish, who is five foot nothing, and probably dot him on the nose in safety if you liked! I don't think we have your exact counterpart at St. Jim's, though Grundy is strong-headed and a good fighter and thinks he is good at all kinds of sport. P.S.—Keep up the sport, and let me know if you put up any records.

STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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THE GEM

It was exactly 90 years ago - on 16th March 1907 - that the *Gem* was launched, and soon afterwards Charles Hamilton's St. Jim's stories had virtually taken it over. This month the C.D. pays tribute to the *Gem* and the great characters and stories of 'Martin Clifford'.

It is especially satisfying that Eric Fayne, whose favourite paper has always been the *Gem*, has written an article for us to mark this anniversary: also that John Wernham, another long-standing and unshakeable St. Jim's enthusiast, has added his own personal tribute.

Roger Jenkins' contribution chronicles the pre-*Gem* history of St. Jim's in Pluck, when Blake, Figgins and their respective Cos. were the school's stars, and Tom Merry had not even been thought of. (I found this account of the *Pluck* tales particularly interesting because my father, who introduced my brother and myself to the Hamilton papers, had fond memories from boyhood of St. Jim's but always regarded Jack Blake - and not Tom Merry - as its hero. I feel sure that his reading about St. Jim's must have begun with *Pluck*.) Peter Mahony then takes up the story with Tom Merry's short-lived and intriguing career at Clavering and, later on, his move to St. Jim's.

Despite the extraordinary appeal of the St. Jim's characters, and especially of Tom and Gussy, for much of its run the Gem was overshadowed by the Magnet. Although we sometimes tend to take Hamilton's skills for granted, for one author to create two such popular schools was a remarkable achievement. Next year we shall, of course, be celebrating 90 years of the Magnet, but during 1997 it is St. Jim's turn for the limelight. So, Hamilton enthusiasts, don't forget to send me your tribute to and reflections on the resilient and warmly remembered *Gem*.

Happy reading!

MARY CADOGAN

THE GEM STORY - BY JOHN WERNHAM AND MARY CADOGAN

The Museum Press have reprinted this book, and copies can be ordered from the address below. The cost is £10.00, which includes postage and packing to anywhere in the world: "The Strange Secret" is also once again available at £8 including p&p anywhere in the world. Orders please to: The Museum Press, 30 Tonbridge Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME16 8RT.

<p>THE COMPLETE MAGNET COMPANION 1996</p> <p>is now on sale! It lists all 1,683 MAGNET stories in chronological order and alphabetically. It's quite new: totally revised and reset. Details of writers (including Hamilton!); maps, plans and a Who's Who! 96pp A5, it costs £9.00 inc. post (overseas £10.00) Send to: QUATERMAIN PUBLICATIONS (A), 48 KINGS DRIVE SURBITON, SURREY, KT5 8NQ</p>	<p>IF QUELCH HAS A MAGNET COMPANION, I'D BETTER GET ONE TOO!</p>	
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WANTED: MODERN BOY, ORIGINAL SERIES.

Nos. 27, 38, 39, 40, 117, 125, 143, 146, 149, 150, 206, 232, 233, 248, 273, 276, 305, 321, 340, 345, 346, 391, 398, 399, 429, 432, 433, 434, 435, 466.

Marie Scofield, 3 Hunters Way, Springfield, Chelmsford, CM1 6FL. Tel: 01245-460416.

Five pounds paid for a copy of the rules of the game "Up For The Cup", which was given away with the Thomson paper "Adventure" on March 10th 1934. Contact Ben Bligh, Tel. No: 0161-483-7627.

Wanted: Toy and games catalogues from the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. Ben Bligh, 55 Arundale Avenue, Hazel Grove, Cheshire, SK7 5LD.

Wanted: All pre-war Sexton Blake Libraries. All Boys Friend Libraries. All comics/papers etc with stories by W.E. Johns, Leslie Charteris & Enid Blyton. Original artwork from Magnet, Gem, Sexton Blake Library etc. also wanted. I will pay £150.00 for original Magnet, cover artwork, £75.00 for original Sexton Blake Library cover artwork. NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 EASTBURY ROAD, WATFORD, WD1 4JL. Tel: 01923 232383.

Can anyone please help me with the loan of some illustrations for a forthcoming article in 'Collectors Digest'.

I require illustrations of *Colonel Sapt*, who plays a major role in both the 'Prisoner of Zenda' and 'Rupert of Hentzau', by Anthony Hope. I would also like illustrations of Lieut. William Bush, who appears in many of Captain Hornblower's adventures during the Nelson period. I realise that the Hornblower books do not usually contain illustrations, but when the stories have been serialised in magazine form, illustrations are sometimes included. There were some particularly fine illustrations of Lieut. Bush when 'Hornblower and the Hotspur' was serialised in the early 1960s. M. Waters, 11 Abbots Way, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, NN8 2AF.

JOIN THE FRIARS CLUB

Contact: (Secretary); Christopher V. Cole, 271 Firs Lane, Palmers Green, London, N.13 5QH. Membership:- £8.00 per year or £7.00 if paid by 1st April 1997. Membership runs 1st Jan until 31st December. P.O.s/Cheques to - The Friars Club. Meetings/Dinner - please join!.

WANTED: COLLECTOR FRIENDS - DO YOU HAVE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ORIGINAL MAGNETS IN GOOD CONDITION WHICH YOU WOULD BE WILLING TO SELL?

393	424	451	800	862	877	896	1027
397	428	652	822	865	880	897	1045
399	445	776	841	870	883	900	1147
415	446	781	842	874	885	956	1153
419	449	795	849	876	889	972	1308

I HAVE SOME ORIGINAL MAGNETS AND HOLIDAY ANNUALS SPARE AND WOULD OFFER GENEROUS EXCHANGE TERMS IF PREFERRED. IAN WHITMORE, THE CHASE, ROUND OAK ROAD, WEYBRIDGE, SURREY, KT13 8HT.

THE GEM - NINETY YEARS ON

By Eric Fayne.

As we approach the ninetieth birthday of Charles Hamilton's first great school story paper I feel it essential that I should add my little tribute.

Unfortunately I cannot do this without being very, very repetitive. I have written it all before as the tumbling years have tumbled past. Over and over again. I feel sure that I have covered every aspect of the Gem's history and the affect that the grand old paper had on my own life down the years.

I have equal love and admiration for all the memorable Hamilton schools - St. Jim's, Greyfriars, and Rookwood, plus his splendid and dearly-loved tales of the Rio Kid and of Cedar Creek.

But, as a paper, it was the Gem which was my great favourite, as my old readers know. And this was purely sentiment. It was the first reading matter of my entire life. Before I could read for myself, my sister, over 9 years my senior, used to read aloud to me those masterpieces of school fiction from the Gem's blue-cover days. I feel that the very first story she read to me was "Tom Merry's Concert Party" and the second one was "D'Arcy's Libel Action." I suppose Tom Merry became my hero. I used to sit by Beatie's side, enjoying every minute of her reading. I was a tiny tot, but in those days tiny tots were early taught the three R's - so very soon I was reading for myself.

I often bought Gems and Magnets, 2 a penny from a stall every Saturday in Gravesend Market. I saved my copies, for the stall proprietors bought back the old copies for tuppence a dozen. (When to-day I look at my scores of bound volumes of Hamilton - all St. Jim's, all Greyfriars, all Rookwood and the rest, my mind slips back now and then to those tuppence a dozen days.)

We have ample proof that, in those early years, the Gem was an extremely popular paper and that St. Jim's continued to be the Number One school in the world of boy readers, even though the Magnet and Greyfriars had come on the scene in 1908.

Early in 1910 another new paper was on the bookstalls. This was the Empire Library which was an astonishing copy of the Gem. Published at a halfpenny, as the Gem had been originally, the Empire offered each week a long complete story of Rylcombe Grammar School, a school near St. Jim's and much resembling it in every way. Even the leading character in these tales was Gordon Gay, a name which vividly calls to mind Tom Merry. The writer was Prosper Howard, another pen-name for the increasingly famous Hamilton. Then, still following the Gem's example, the Empire doubled its size and price some nine months later. And a new serial, "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays" was introduced, by Martin Clifford of Gem fame.

Still later, in 1912, another paper came along - The Penny Popular - which they told us would comprise complete stories of the three most popular characters in boys' reading matter. And these three "most popular" were Sexton Blake, with detective stories; Jack, Sam, and Pete with stories of Adventure; and to represent the most popular stories of school life we had... not Greyfriars with Billy Bunter, but St. Jim's with Tom Merry.

With passing time the Gem lost ground, and by the Twenties the Magnet had become Number One in the affection of youngsters who loved school stories. This was partly due, almost certainly, to the fact that "sub writers", as we call them, took over. It is well known how it was because of my persistence, very early in the nineteen-thirties, that Mr. Down, the Gem Editor, gave his blessing to starting again from the beginning. Personally, I have never doubted that that move gave the fine old paper another ten years of life.

I felt it up to me to help things along. So, in the school of which I was Headmaster, we put on every term a "Gem Evening". These were social affairs. Present-day boys and girls, plus "Old Boys" who liked to come along and join in the fun, were very welcome. Those evenings were very popular and well attended. The only stipulation was that anyone attending should carry the current issue of the Gem.

Mr. Down, the Editor, made mention in his editorials from time to time of our "Gem Evenings". And, on one occasion, to my immense delight, I received from Mr. R.J. Macdonald, the famous Gem artist, a big painting of Tom Merry. The picture was headed: "Greetings from St. Jim's to The Modern School Surbiton."

- That painting, with its message hung in one of our Form-rooms at Surbiton for many years. To-day it hangs in my own dining room, and it never ceases to rouse joyful memories.

I wonder if any C.D. readers remember Danny? We used to publish extracts from his Diary in which he referred to the stories he had read that particular month plus the events that had occurred in this land of ours.

From early 1930, when the Gem started its reprints, it went on successfully until, once again due to my suggestion, they persuaded Charles Hamilton to write a new series of St. Jim's stories, and those new stories - very good they were - went on through 1939 till at the end of the year that wretched war brought the end of so many things we loved.

And Danny wrote in his Diary, in case any of you remember:

"ENGLAND WON'T HALF SEEM FUNNY WITHOUT THE GEM!!"

And it did: How right he was. Papers like the Gem are sadly missed to-day.

(Editor's Note: The Macdonald painting of Tom Merry, which Eric mentions, was used on the front-cover of C.D. 185, back in May 1962. We are, as you will see, again using it on our cover this month.)

THE GEM AND I

By John Wernham

The year 1907 was a vintage time: the Gem was born in March and I was born in May. We were and we are, contemporaries. My cradle was filled with Gem chatter and I knew all about 'Nobody's Study' and poor little Joe Frayne before I could read. The 'great excitement' that was generated by the Talbot stories filled my small horizon. But the first pictorial memory is of the dear good D'Arcy desperate to save the poor sunken mariners and, of course, immaculate as usual. A little later in my early history, I found myself living out of town and my sister made an arrangement with Amalgamated Press to send my beloved books by post - and how I did wait for the postman to arrive, only matched by Bunter waiting for that postal order. Happily, the books arrived punctually. Unfortunately, it was war-time, and the Gem was in decline, although the introduction of Cardew is memorable in spite of the cynicism he brought with him, but there was one other new character that made his mark and an impression on the mind of this nine year old that has remained intact for 80 years. A story of mistaken identity, it is a thumping good yarn; in fact there were thumpings on practically every page. Charles Hamilton was never violent but he could describe vicious activity with great zeal and I have never failed to enjoy the groans of Weekes the rascally bookmaker. Of course, it is the story of Valentine Outram and his Strange Secret..

The years then intervened as they often do and the sorrows of Outram were no more until the advent of the O.B.B.C. I wrote to a well-known collector asking for a copy of the Outram story which he very kindly sent along and there was the old slogging match all over again. All the fun was there ripe for a re-print and the Museum Press was born, never to look back since that happy event in 1966. And now, 30 years on and 80 years since this wonderful old story was first published a second edition is envisaged. Long out of print, there have been many requests for a copy and we hope to be able to satisfy a new and growing demand for this splendid example of the Charles Hamilton genius.

A STRANGE SECRET!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.





THE NADIR OF ZENITH, OR, THE LAST OF THE MASTER CRIMINALS

by DEREK HINRICH

"As the 1930s drew towards their close, the storm clouds banked ever more threateningly on the European horizon and the close of play scores on the nine o'clock news became an increasingly inadequate anodyne to the tramp of the Nuremberg rallies". Thus begins the valediction to the period immediately before the Second World War in Altham and Swanton's History of Cricket. And with the advent of the War there also came a general passing from the scene of Sexton Blake's most persistent enemies as if they, too, bowed themselves out in the presence of a greater evil.

This is perhaps fanciful, but certainly the great detective suffered from the deaths in 1937-39 of three of his most distinguished chroniclers (Gwyn Evans, Robert Murray Graydon and G H Teed), and with them went most of his most memorable adversaries. Of course, by then George Marsden Plummer, for instance, would have been getting on a bit - 64 in 1939, I believe - and Dr. Huxton Rymer must have been about the same vintage. With the death of G.H. Teed they both disappeared, except in Detective Weekly reprints of old stories in its last days (Rymer was Teed's own creation but Plummer had had three or four other authors since Sempill created him in 1908, and I wonder why no-one carried him on), though two pale ghosts bearing their names surfaced insubstantially and briefly in the "New Look" Blake twenty years later.

By the end of 1940 all the great master-criminals were gone at last with but two exceptions. In 1944 Leon Kestrel made his final appearance in *The Case Of The Biscay Pirate* (SBL 3/65), characteristically evading capture at the last moment. Presumably he retired in the post-war world - but by then he, too, must have been getting on a bit, though he was still sprightly enough to drop Blake a line sometime in the '60s.

The year before saw the last of Zenith the Albino in one of Anthony Skene's final contributions to the Blake cycle, *The Affair Of The Bronze Basilisk* (SBL 3/49). After the outbreak of war in 1939 Skene was presumably too busy in his other persona as G N Phillips, a quantity surveyor in the Ministry of Public Building and Works, to write more than four new Blake novels between 1939 and 1947.

The plot of *The Bronze Basilisk* owes more than something to *The Maltese Falcon* I think for it, too, is concerned with a struggle between various dubious characters, Sexton Blake intervening, for the possession of a gem-laden statuette. One of the interested parties is Monsieur Zenith.

But this is no ordinary criminal enterprise by the Albino. He wishes to acquire the basilisk to use it to raise funds for his war effort. He has been abroad in Yugoslavia fighting the Germans with the guerrillas - presumably with General Draza Mihailovic's Chetniks rather than Tito's communist Partisans since, in London, he is accredited with diplomatic immunity by the Yugoslav Government in exile and provided by them with a car, petrol and rations. This does make it all rather difficult for Blake!

Zenith still habitually dresses in white tie and tails, even odder than previously this, in the fourth year of the War. Did the Albino lead his war-band in this fashion across the Balkan hills?

Despite the Albino's diplomatic immunity, Sexton Blake finally catches up with him amid the ruins of a bomb-shattered house teetering on the edge of a cliff. He wrests the basilisk from him in their final confrontation and in a climactic fight reminiscent of the Reichenbach encounter sends Zenith reeling, just as the house and cliff thunderously collapse. Afterwards, no trace of the Albino can be found and yet..... But in the event there was no "and yet".

So they passed, the master criminals. Sherlock Holmes in his 23 years of practice encountered many desperate villains but only one master criminal, the incomparable Professor Moriarty. Sexton Blake in his Golden Age met any number of them, so-called clearly to distinguish them from ordinary criminals. I sometimes wonder if in graduating to that status they acquired diplomas with framed certificates to hang upon the wall, like any honest tradesman. These could only have been issued, of course, by the Criminals Confederation, but is so could one trust their reliability?



Monsieur Zenith



THE BELLTON STABBING

By Ray Hopkins

When Nipper is awakened by Fullwood at one in the morning to untie him and his Co., their arms having been corded to the bed posts to prevent their breaking bounds, he hears a sound from the corridor and is startled to see Arthur Lambert of the sixth, white of face, climbing through an open window. As he stumbles unseeingly past Nipper he appears to be in a daze. Early next morning the school is visited by Inspector Jameson of the Bannington Police and Lambert is arrested for the murder of retired sea-captain Roger Garwood living at the Cabin, an old house he furnished to remind him of life at sea. Inspector Jameson is dubious about letting Nelson Lee see Lambert but, as he is a schoolmaster at the school the accused boy attends, he gives his permission, not knowing that he is facing the celebrated detective Nelson Lee.

This story takes place during the early days of the Detective and his boy assistant Nipper at St. Frank's where they are in hiding from the Fu Chang Tong who have threatened to kill him. Nelson Lee is Mr. Alvington, the Ancient House master and Nipper is referred to by his schoolfriends not as Nipper but as Benny, a contraction of his assumed name of Dick Bennett.

Lambert assures Lee that Captain Garwood was alive and well when they parted at the garden gate, Garwood shouting at the boy that he intended to write to Lambert's father when Lambert told him he couldn't possibly pay him the fifty pounds he owes him for gambling debts sustained at the White Hart pub, a favourite venue for blackgaurdly pupils like Fullwood and Co. Lambert, unfortunately, though a senior and presumed to have more common sense, must also be included in this disreputable company.

The Inspector tells the disguised Nelson Lee - he has aged himself with facial lines and greying hair since being at St. Frank's - that Lambert, when brought before the magistrate on the morrow, will either be sent for trial or placed on remand. He also gives Lee written permission to visit the Cabin and interview Garwood's housekeeper, Mrs. Lennan, a thin, angular old lady with white hair, in an advanced state of near hysteria. She says she heard her master and Lambert raising their voices in what was obviously an angry argument. It must have been the boy who killed him she says, for there was nobody else in the house. The murder weapon was a stiletto used by her master as a paper-knife.

Nelson Lee's attention is drawn to a small brass casket, polished and oriental in appearance. Inside is a small representation of a frog made from copper. The housekeeper tells him she has never seen it before but the Captain had a lot of trinkets he kept put away. She couldn't think of any reason it suddenly appeared on the mantelpiece unless Garwood had been looking at it when Lambert visited him late at night. Lee notes a clear thumb print on the polished under-surface of the frog and informs the housekeeper that he will take it away with him to see if it can throw any light on the murder. Mrs. Lennan tells Lee that she is frightened the police will think she killed her master if Lambert is proved innocent, but the detective tells her she couldn't possibly have struck the fatal blow. It must have been done by a very strong man.

Leaving the house, Nelson Lee surveys the ground outside the window of the room where the Captain was murdered. Vegetables are growing there and he discovers clear footprints of a left foot and a round, deep indentation where the right foot should have been. Lee deduces that the one-legged man must have visited the garden during the previous night and follows the prints to where they finish at the low wall bordering on the road. On the other side of the road and on what might have been waste land is a dilapidated tent with a small fire burning close by it. A man appears to be slicing vegetables into a pot over the fire and shows no alarm when the detective approaches him. A tinker's grinding machine stands beside the tent with the name Jeremiah Binns painted on it in rough fashion.

Lee asks Binns if he had gone into the garden of the Cabin and the old man, not at all perturbed, concurs, adding that he knew he'd be found out, but he only took two cabbages and would be willing to pay for them. He couldn't resist stealing them, he says, they were too good to pass up. Lee realises that this 'cheerful old pilferer' could no more be a murderer than Mrs. Lennan. He also gives the detective some useful information. He was about to leave the garden when the front door opened and he hid in the bushes. A young fellow came out with an old man and they shouted at one another right down to the gate where they parted.

Lambert now having been cleared of the murder, Lee's thoughts turn back to the Captain's house and a contemplation of the housekeeper, and her performance of a badly-shaken elderly lady. The detective wonders if it was indeed only a performance and returns to the Cabin armed with an envelope on which he has written a fictitious name and address. Mrs. Lennan denies any knowledge of the person (handing the envelope back and leaving a thumbprint which can be compared with the one on the frog) and reiterating again that the boy must have done the murder; nobody else was in the house but he and her master.

In the dark hall, Lee precedes the housekeeper to the front door and is knocked out by a sudden blow from behind. He comes to in a small attic wondering how a thin old lady could have carried him up several flights of stairs to the top of the house. Mrs. Lennan confronts him saying that his ruse to obtain her thumbprint had not fooled her in the slightest. It would have proved that it was her thumbprint on the frog but that wouldn't have proved that she had murdered her employer. The only thing she can do is to make a run for it and she'll make her getaway for he won't be found until tomorrow by which time she'll be miles away.

Lee is relieved that the woman had decided not to kill him and wonders at her guessing the object of his having her look at the specially prepared envelope. He wonders if she may possibly be a professional criminal. But she must have had a strong male accomplice to have shifted his inert body from the ground floor to the attic. He hears the front door slam and knows that Mrs. Lennan has escaped with her accomplice.

Meanwhile, back at St. Frank's, Nipper, who had been apprised of Nelson Lee's visit to the Cabin and told that it was to be very short, becomes alarmed when he realises that Lee has been missing for over two hours.

Arriving near the gate of the Cabin, Nipper, Tregellis-West and Watson observe the figure of a man and Nipper breathes a sigh of relief. However, he quickly realises the figure is not that of his guvnor when the man turns and shakes his fist at the building he has just left. Strange action! The man turns in the direction of the railway station.

Nipper and Co. can get no reply to their knocks, and break into the house. A faint voice from the upper regions tells them that Lee is there. Learning that not a woman but a person dressed in male attire has left the house, Lee, hearing a train approaching Bellton Station, urges the boys to race with him to the station to see if they can spot this man.

There is only one man entering the train and Nipper confirms that it is he. - Lee, with the help of the three boys, throws the man to the floor of the compartment as he is about to escape by the opposite door. The detective realises that this is the person who has been masquerading as Garwood's house-keeper, and is more than pleased to recognise him as the long wanted Clapham murderer, Carter Gibbons, on the run from the police for years. Captain Garwood, who had been his best friend, had kept him safe from the police where he lived at Hastings. Gibbons, having once been an actor, had decided his safety would lie in constant disguise, and so he had become the housekeeper to Garwood. They had moved to Bellton several years earlier and were accepted as master and housekeeper at the Cabin.

All would have been well had not Garwood, realising he had the upper hand of Gibbons, decided to change his attitude to his long time friend. He refused to give him any money and threatened to turn him in if he made a move to leave. Gibbons had discovered where Garwood kept all his hidden wealth and the visit of Lambert had made it possible for the murderer to find a scapegoat and get away with the money (a sum of five hundred pounds) and Garwood's valuable collection of trinkets. Among these was the Copper Frog in the brass box, which Gibbons forgot to conceal after the murder of his employer. Gibbons would finish up hanging by his neck until he was dead! Unfortunately, Lambert, too, would have to be punished for breaking bounds and gambling. He was expelled and returned home to face his parents in disgrace.

(The events recounted above can be found in NELSON LEE LIBRARY Old Series 126, 3 Nov 1917, entitled "The Problem of the Copper Frog.")

THE MYSTERY OF ROCKLIFFE, OR, A CASE FOR VICTOR DRAGO

Part 2.

By Brian Mowbray

Last month I set out the plots of the first two numbers of the Schoolgirls' Own Library and gave a clue in the subtitle of the article to their origin.

If you haven't worked it out yet, "The Schoolgirl Outcast" is taken from School Friend (1st series) No. 21 and 23 with the addition of Chapters 19-22, which are new and concern May being falsely accused of taking the answer sheet. "Rockcliffe" is Cliff House, Hilda Noble is Barbara Hilda Redfern, Milly Masters is Mabel Lynn, Tubby Potts is of course Bessie Bunter, May and Phillida are Peggy Preston and Augusta Anstruther-Browne, with Bella and Zena representing Marcia Loftus and Vivienne Leigh. In other words, just as Victor Drago was a renamed Sexton Blake, these stories were basically Cliff House stories with the names changed.

No. 2. "SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN" LIBRARY.

"The Rockcliffe Rebels" is a slightly more complicated case. Instead of adapting later stories, earlier ones were chosen - from School Friend 16 and 18. It was therefore necessary to give lines to the Peggy and Augusta characters to shoehorn them into stories in which they did not appear: e.g. instead of the Marjorie Hazeldene equivalent being put in charge of the Rebels' food supplies May is (except where the



A splendid exciting story of the girls of Rockcliffe School.

adaptor forgot to change it and mentioned Margaret West as Food Controller) and, instead of Cissy Clare being caned, May is. A new chunk was again inserted, the whole second expedition and episode of Phillida saving May (forming most of Chapter 23) were placed between the rescue of the prisoner and the final attack on the Tower.

As to why the A.P. management wanted to do this, I don't know. But, it wasn't the only example of name-changing: Cliveden became early adventures of Rookwood, Sexton Blake became Ferrers Locke, and so on until Victor Drago. Many of these seem to have been changed from a popular to a less popular or unknown character, which does not seem terribly commercially sound.

ST. JIM'S SOBRIQUETS

(from Peter Mahony)

A simple quiz to test your knowledge of the "GEM". Who is?

1. THE SWELL OF ST. JIM'S
2. MONEYBAGS MINOR
3. KANGAROO
4. THE FALSTAFF OF THE NEW HOUSE
5. THE OUTSIDER
6. COUSIN ETHEL'S CHUM
7. THE TOFF
8. THE BULLY OF THE SIXTH
9. THE LITTLE SISTER OF THE POOR.
10. THE GENIUS OF THE SHELL.

(answers on page 29)

FILM FUN

by Bill Lofts

Part 2



1. As a popular person, George is used to the plaudits of the populace, and when he stepped off the train at Sunnyville accompanied by the fair Flossie he was not too surprised to find a reception committee in the shape of the mayor and corporation and a few other influential citizens. In acknowledgment of the applause he raised his tit-for-tat.



2. Now we'll let you into a secret! The welcome was not for George, but for Professor Chizzler, one of the lads of the village who had spent twenty years or so in Egypt, pottering about looking for old china. That's Prof. Chizzler peeping out from under the sun-hat. Having lived on curry for so long he was a gent with a rather hot temper.

The more one studies Film Fun from a sociological point of view the more one can appreciate how clever the Editor was in giving the readers exactly what they wanted to see and read. The thirties brought the depression with unemployment, poverty, food shortages and so on, so the strips then would mainly depict masses of food in the shape of huge feeds given as rewards for our favourite stars' good deeds. Huge piles of sausages and mash, with the former sticking out of the top. Slap up dinners at the Hotel de Posh or Cafe de Ritz, with huge jellies, large iced cakes and the company of pretty, shapely girls. The

readership of Film Fun, which varied between the ages of 10 and 18 was just about taking an interest in the female form, so the reader in those days was seeing exactly the many things that he or she exactly wanted to read about.

Many young readers had never had a holiday, or seen the sea or country, having only second-hand reports about these places from luckier friends. Their parents simply could not afford such holidays. So this was remedied to some extent by having our Film Fun's heroes in adventures at such delightfully named places as Winkle-by-the-Sea, Shrimpton, Cockle Bay, Sandy Beach, and Paddleton. Fun on the sands with collapsing deck chairs, donkeys, sandcastles, crabs and donkeys. Boat trips on the 'Saucy Sue', fun on the pier or in speedboats, with of course always plenty of ice-creams to enjoy. At the seaside lodgings a typical theme was that of being always behind with the rent. There were grim-faced landladies, a rich Uncle or Aunt turning up bedecked with jewels: also Fivers galore being handed out as rewards so that the rent was paid, and all was serene again.

The country settings, or frolics on the farm, would have traditional 'Farmer Giles' happenings with bulls, picnics, and very shapely girls (the Farmer's daughter and milk maids). Cads with monocles and natty sports cars would be after the same girl as the hero. The villains in many scenes wearing striped jerseys and black masks, and carrying a club or jemmy in their hands.

Strangely enough, Film Fun never made payments to the stars who appeared in its pages. In the 'twenties and 'thirties the commercialisation of a famous person was not like it is today. If there were agents who demanded a fee, the star was just dropped. In any case, most of them welcomed the free publicity the comic gave them. Many stars were American, anyway, and possible unaware that they were being used in a comic picture-strip. However some must have been fully aware of their exploitation because at times in Film Fun one saw photographs of Joe E. Brown and Jackie Coogan actually reading copies, and obviously enjoying it very much!

There is a story that once when Laurel and Hardy were travelling to England to appear at various theatres, George William Wakefield told Fred Cordwell of his intention to meet them and introduce himself as the artist who portrayed them. Cordwell almost had a fit, telling him firmly to keep away from them in case they demanded a fee. His budget could never run to this and he simply could not drop the greatest of them all, Laurel and Hardy.

Most boys' comics had their own detective, Film Fun being no exception. The 'twenties started 'Mr. E.' with his Chinese assistant, Ling Su, the 'E' standing for Edwards. Actually Jack Keen, the most popular one whom



" THE CASE OF LONE ISLAND! " DON'T MISS THIS GRAND THRILLER! "



readers remember, actually began in Kinema Comic. When this closed down in 1932, Jack Keen was too good a detective to lose, so he was switched to Film Fun, where he remained for over twenty years. Living at Denver Street, London, on the top floor, Keen was a clear cut type of sleuth. He had a boy assistant named Bob Trotter, whom he frequently reprimanded for eating boiled sweets and reading comic papers! Jack Keen was created by Alfred Edgar who, under the name of Barry Lyndon, later went to Hollywood writing such celebrated plays and films as 'The Man from Half-Moon Street, and 'The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse'. Later tales were penned editorially, as well as by teams of writers, many from the Sexton Blake field.

- Other stories were the enormously popular Westerns featuring Buck Jones, John Wayne, Tim McCoy, and Hopalong Cassidy, plus many others. The evil Chinese Orientals were also well to the fore in their river hideaways in Chinatown at Wapping, and Limehouse. Many stories were adapted from films as they were in The Boys/Girls

"THE BLACK NIGHT GANG!" A STORY PACKED WITH SURPRISES AND ALL THE THRILLS OF THE WEST!



Bill raced across to the two men.

Cinema, papers that are so collectable today. It was in the late thirties when Film Fun reached its peak. One week when they gave away a George Formby song book its circulation reached a staggering 850,000 copies. This equalled D.C. Thomson's best-selling boys weekly 'The Wizard' as well as that of the rival department at Fleetway House, the pink covered 'Chips' featuring Weary Willie and Tired Tim.

(To Be Continued)

THE FEMALE FACTOR - Real & Imagined

An article on the papers of D.C. Thomson - By Colin Morgan

In the chapter devoted to the papers of D.C. Thomson in his book, 'Boys will be Boys' (Michael Joseph 1948), E.S. Turner wrote: "The problem of sex was very simply solved: girls did not exist." He later added to this by writing "this ban on females was probably the most absolute in the history of boys' magazines."

My reading of the Thomson output began midway through World War 2, and from then on I would have had to say, if asked, that I agreed with Mr. Turner - but with some small reservations.

Footballers Nick Smith and Billy 'Cannonball' Kidd both had Aunties prominent in their first series in 1945 and 1946 respectively. In fact, it was Nick's formidable Auntie Maud who pushed him into a professional soccer career.

Another perhaps more obvious link with girls came in the Red Circle series titled 'Mr. Barrel's Little Sister' in The HOTSPUR 593-599 (1947-48). Barrel, the rotund Junior House master, who was replaced for a short time at the school by his equally rotund Hattie Jacques lookalike sister, Bessie, who, among other things, fixed up a game of hockey for the Juniors against a girls' team whose use of their lethal hockey sticks left many a boy spread-eagled on the pitch.

THE RED CIRCLE JUNIORS THOUGHT THEY WERE CISSIES PLAYING A GIRLS TEAM—BUT THEY HAD TO THINK AGAIN!

MR. BARREL'S LITTLE SISTER



From Hotspur 596, 13th December 1947.

In another Red Circle series (in 1949), Numb Ned Newton of the Home House's Fourth Form, while trying to win a super armchair in a competition, met up with the organiser's secretary, Mavis, in each episode to find out the next obstacle he had to overcome. Mavis was invariably using a lipstick as Ned entered, and once this process was described in the text as Mavis "adding more to an already overburdened pair of lips."

Apart from these events you could count the times girls or women appeared in the post-war pages of D.C. Thomson on the fingers of one hand.

However, it's when we go back to the pre-war issues, and particularly the 'twenties, that we find things handled somewhat differently at times.

The Dixon Hawke stories in the early ADVENTURES of 1921-22 often had girl characters, but it was THE ROVER that proves Mr. Turner's comments incorrect. In the first issue of that paper in 1922 we were introduced to a character named 'Breakneck Billy'. The lad, kicked out of his home by his stepfather, teamed up with his powerful motorbike to take on jobs of any kind around Britain. The first series, made up mainly of

completes, ran for 14 weeks and some of these contained damsels in distress. Nellie Stratton, Doris Glover, Lucy Bentley and Irene Gilbert all came and went, but Billy also met Daphne Lorne and got her out of scrapes in stories 4 and 6. When Billy returned in 'Breakneck Billy & The Black Star' (ROVER 15) he teamed up with Daphne who was referred to in the text as his partner, and so the only teaming of boy and girl as major characters in the Thomson story papers was born.

A long complete (ROVER 29) featured the pair and the following mutual admiration dialogue appears at the end: "You're just great," said Billy. "So are you," replied Daphne. In a later story the possibility of the two sharing a honeymoon is the closing feature.

The heat in the cellar grew worse as the flames became fiercer. "Stand back, Daphne," Billy Burnaby gasped. "I'll try to smash the door open; it's our only chance."



From Rover 29, 16th September 1922.
(Breakneck Billy and Daphne Lorne)

But there is another aspect of this feminism...

One feature of the D.C.Thomson stories which appears somewhat unusual is the number of times in the 'twenties that boys dressed up as girls. Always seemingly undetected, boys used this ruse to teach bullies a lesson (as in the ROVER ANNUAL story, 'Catching our Ranger', which found the bully falling over himself to impress his 'lady friend', a former victim; and a story in the 'Phantom Fred' series in ROVER (23) which found disguise



"Take that, you rude boy," shrieked the "girl." - And Phantom Fred, alias Florrie, walloped Greasy over the head with the satchel.

expert Fred Larkin posing as schoolgirl Florrie and walloping Greasy the bully over the head with a satchel. One has to wonder why Fred just didn't use his satchel in that manner anyway, without all the dressing up!

The description of this dressing up reached new heights in 'Snapshot Larry' in THE WIZZARD in 1924 (No.77). Larry Davenport, a footballer with Ferndale, had to evade a bunch of crooks waiting for him at the station where he needed to board a train to get to the next match. Instead of heading to a different station to begin his journey, Larry goes to a theatrical outfitters and pays £6.17s.0d to be kitted out, as the story states, "in a beautifully fitted costume of pearl-grey, showing a dainty blue silk blouse above, and a pair of grey silk stockings, with narrow pointed shoes, together with a coquettish feather toque, long-handled umbrella and a handbag. A flaxen, bobbed wig covered his own hair, his eyelashes had grown longer mysteriously while his pert red mouth seemed just made for kissing."

And, if all that wasn't enough, Larry, on the way out of the shop, came face to face with a young lady he'd never seen before who regarded him with a demure look and smiles. Larry enquired of the proprietor whether she was one of his assistants and was told he was looking at himself in a full-length mirror!

The icing on the cake of this particular piece came when Larry, on the station and being ignored by the crooks, bought half a dozen magazines which included THE WIZARD, THE ROVER and ADVENTURE. Once on the train and still in his girl's disguise, he pulled out his copy of THE WIZARD and sat reading it.

This theme was even used in one of Thomson's favourite storylines, the tough class who continually get rid of its teachers by terrorising them. In a complete story printed in the 'thirties, a new teacher comes to the school disguised as a shapely young woman. He is received rapturously by the normally wild schoolboys who accept him totally, even when he reveals his true identity.

Well, there we are. Girls, ladies and female impersonators abounded in Thomsonland pre-war. Sorry, Mr. Turner, but girls DID exist after all. With tongue in cheek I offer an alternative title for his book - 'Boys will be Girls'.....

FOOTNOTE: I'd be interested to know if any C.D. reader can tell me if these impersonations were regular features in boys' fiction at this time? Did Frank Richards, for instance, write about them or was it a case of D.C.Thomson once again coming up with a 'First'?

(Editor's Note: We know that both Frank Richards and E.S. Brooks successfully used this device on various occasions. And, of course, sometimes girls in the A.P. papers - for diverse reasons - assumed boys' roles, generally with hilarious results.)

Illustrations in the article are Copyright D.C. Thomson

THE FILE ON VERNON-SMITH

By Margery Woods

Part 4 EXPULSION!

If ever a schoolboy was born to be expelled that boy was Herbert Tudor Vernon-Smith. That he succeeded in defying authority with total impunity during his early days at Greyfriars and escaped the ultimate retribution for so long was due only to the debt owed to his millionaire father by Dr. Locke, the venerable headmaster of Greyfriars.

The threats of Mr. Vernon-Smith to foreclose on that debt should his own son be expelled were all the more despicable when the debt had been incurred by Dr. Locke during his desperate attempts to trace his missing daughter Rosie, who, incidentally, had been found and restored to him only a short while before the time of Vernon-Smith's long

overdue expulsion. And now that debt, originally for one thousand pounds, had been swollen by the usurer's exorbitant interest rate to five thousand pounds despite the fact of Dr. Locke's having already more than repaid the original sum. But the Bounder's latest exploit was so school-shattering that there was no way it could be overlooked.

Vernon-Smith had just suffered a tremendous blow to his pride, and, worse, it had been compounded by a very bad mistake. From sheer egotism he had entered for the Founder's Prize and had been told that he had taken first prize. Not that he wanted or needed the fifty pounds, his great need was to be able to brag about it and throw a celebratory party for his cronies. But then the dreadful error came to light; he had not won the first prize after all; Mark Linley had succeeded in that.

Perhaps the bitterness of this blow was the rankling cause of Vernon-Smith's downfall, the cause of the impulse that took him out of bounds to drown his sorrows and be found in a state of intoxication by the village constable. The shock of seeing a Remove boy being escorted back to school, in that sorry state, virtually stopped the school's activities that evening. After that disgrace there was no way any headmaster could turn a blind eye.

The decision must have been agonising for Dr. Locke, knowing that as well as ending Vernon-Smith's scholastic days--- after this----he was also ending his own. For he would have to resign before Mr. Vernon-Smith carried out his threat and the disgrace of debt became public.

In this story the reader is shown Vernon-Smith at his very worst as he confronts the Head with insolence, defiance and threats, threats further underlined by Vernon-Smith senior when he arrives. But father and son eventually realise that arguments and blatant threats no longer cow the dignified head-master of Greyfriars. They depart, to cheers and jeers from the boys gathered by the gates.

Father and son break their journey at Courtfield, where they wine and dine before resuming their journey back to London. Mr. Vernon-Smith orders the chauffeur to get a move on, unaware that the chauffeur has also been partaking of rather strong refreshment. In a setting favoured by all the best movie makers of the time, the drunken chauffeur crashes the car straight into the level crossing gates, towards which, naturally, the essential express is thundering out of the night. Father and son are flung from the wrecked car out onto the track.

It is Bob Cherry, returning from Courtfield after seeing Solly Lazarus, secretary of Courtfield Cricket Club, about a forthcoming fixture, who manages to stop the train in time and save the lives of Vernon-Smith and his father, and through this is instrumental in lifting the great burden of debt from Dr. Locke's shoulders. For Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith is suitably grateful that his life and that of his son have been saved.

There is a certain irony in that the Vernon-Smiths had only themselves to blame for losing the blackmailing stranglehold they'd had over the headmaster, but Mr. Vernon-Smith could not bear to be in anyone's debt himself, even a schoolboy's, and demanded that Bob Cherry name his reward.

Needless to say, Bob's request is that the Head's debt be wiped out, and true to his word Mr. Vernon-Smith there and then burns the documents that had bound the Head to such great distress.

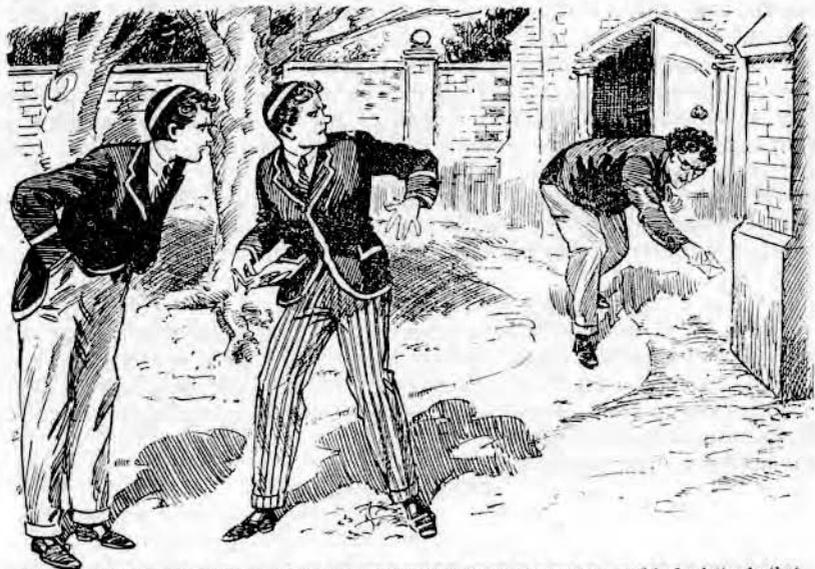
In this intensely dramatic scene we see where the Bounder has inherited some of his unpleasant and ruthless traits as his father hectors and menaces the Head, making no secret of his belief that money brings the power to buy one's way out of anything. Bob Cherry's request baffles him. He is unable to believe that Bob wants nothing for himself.

At last the millionaire cotton king accepts defeat. But as he is departing with his sullen son the Head recalls them and says that Vernon-Smith may stay at Greyfriars if he will promise to reform and work hard.

Of course the Bounder promises earnestly to do so, and perhaps at the moment of making another of the piecrust promises that come so easily to his lips he does have a fleeting sincerity actually to try, while perhaps the more cynical of readers permit themselves a sardonic snicker even as they rejoice that this vibrant and ever fascinating character has survived to sin another day. Even Johnny Bull muses thoughtfully that perhaps.... "the Bounder may possibly have something decent in him. Let's give him a chance."

The Bounder was to need many chances during his turbulent future. Expulsion brushed him many times yet somehow he always survived, sometimes to be feted for his heroic quality and for being proved right when the world accused him of being wrong. One of the greatest of his many adventures was his feud with the villainous Mr. Lamb, in one of the longest and greatest ever series in Greyfriars' history.

There was a prelude to this a few weeks previously when the Bounder indulged in yet another feud with Mr. Quelch. Threats concerning a bucket of whitewash and some Skinner trickery with a catapult brought expulsion looming over the horizon again for Smithy, and then some unfortunate crossed wires with the mighty Horace Coker's antics



"Oh, gad!" ejaculated Vernon-Smith, turning out the lining of a pocket. "I had a letter in that pocket, Redwing, and it's gone! Look!" Tom Redwing looked in time to see Mr. Lamb pick up something from the ground.

resulted in marching orders. However, although the great Horace was every kind of an idiot he was not the man to let another take the blame for him. Smithy was exonerated and restored to the long-suffering arms of his Alma Mater.

The Second World War had recently begun and people began to vanish to take up vital war jobs. One of these was Mr. Woosey, Greyfriars' art master and his place was taken by a certain Mr. Lamb, a seemingly inoffensive little man who immediately earned the nickname of Pet Lamb. About this time a spate of robberies was taking place in the neighbourhood and during one midnight expedition in search of his cake, which had been stolen by Bunter and then confiscated by Mr. Quelch, Smithy sees the cracksman, Slim Jim, breaking into the Head's study and raises the alarm. For a brief while Smithy is the hero of the hour. Then Mr. Quelch himself confronts the cracksman at the break-in to

Popper Court and gains the unenviable privilege of being the only person ever to see Slim Jim without his mask. For this the unfortunate Remove master pays dearly, for very soon after this he is kidnapped and all efforts to discover his whereabouts fail. The only clues to his disappearance are from Bunter, who had witnessed the abduction. The next day the mild and meek little Mr. Lamb volunteers to take the Remove until Mr. Quelch returns. The scene is set for the Bounder's greatest downfall.... and his greatest triumph.

Christmas intervenes, with further mystery for the chums, and an encounter with the Pet Lamb, while back at Greyfriars Dr. Locke is consulting with Ferrers Locke, the great detective. When the chums return for the new term they find that the Head now has a new chauffeur, one rather enigmatic type called John Robinson.

Smithy begins the New Year in exuberant style, ragging the new master on the train and continuing the ragging on what at first must seem like an easy target. But the new master begins to betray some inward violence not previously suspected. After one of Bunter's ventriloquial spoofs using Mr. Quelch's voice Smithy realises that any mention of the missing master seems to disturb Mr. Lamb. Smithy is not the man to neglect an advantage but does not realise what a box of evils he is opening. Lamb turns vicious and the boys discover what a savage temper lurks under the mild exterior. The Bounder's suspicions increase after he sneaks into Lamb's study to set some firecrackers in the fireplace but is caught by Lamb and instantly accused of spying. After a savage caning Smithy escapes and is now convinced that the Pet Lamb is a very sinister wolf beneath it all. Why should the man accuse him of spying? It could only mean that the Lamb had something to hide. Smithy's one consuming aim in life now fixes on the new master and the discovery of his secret.

Meanwhile, Coker is engaged in another little vendetta of his own, against George Wingate. Unfortunately Horace's plans usually fail to go according to plan. In the blackout Horace collars Mr. Lamb instead of the school captain. For this the Bounder gets the blame.

In the Head's study sentence is pronounced; the Bounder is expelled. It seems that Lamb is to be rid of this troublesome thorn at last. But exoneration comes at the last minute, from an unexpected source. Ferrers Locke, in his guise as chauffeur, hears of it and presents evidence to the Head that Smithy could not have been responsible for the attack on the Remove's substitute master. So the sentence of expulsion is rescinded; The Bounder survives to fight another day.

But that day is to be tragically short...

(To be continued.)

FORUM

From Patricia Fahey:

I think I may have the answer to Mr. McMahon's query in last month's Forum section of the SPCD.

I think the Magnet he's trying to recall where Bob Cherry offers to catch Sir Hilton Popper in his hat, is Magnet No.1479. Billy Bunter's Burglar Chapter 2, pg. 4 which can be found in Howard Baker volume 17, The Black Sheep of Greyfriars.

I hope this is of some help.

From Brian Doyle:

With reference to Bill Lofts' entertaining article on the 'Our Gang' series of short films, the title was changed not to 'The Young Rascals' but to 'The Little Rascals' when they were shown on TV from 1955. And Bill says he thinks they were never shown on British TV, but I can assure him that they were. I don't have the exact details, but I recall watching them regularly each week (I think on Saturday mornings) when many were on TV around the late-1970s or early 1980s. The quality wasn't too good, but they were still amusing in an old-fashioned sort of way. It's sad to recall that two of the 'regulars', Alfalfa Switzer and Scotty Beckett, were both murdered in later years - Switzer in 1959 at the age of 31, and Beckett (still fondly also remembered as 'young Jolson' in the classic film 'The Jolson Story') in 1968 at the age of 38.

A feature film of 'The Little Rascals' was released in 1995, but didn't make much of an impression; for one thing it was set in the 1990s! 'Guest stars' such as Whoopi Goldberg, Mel Brooks and Daryl Hannah appeared.

I met American director Robert Parrish a couple of times when he was living in London in the 1970s and, knowing that he had appeared in a few 'Our Gang' movies when he was a child actor in Hollywood, asked him about those days. "We were all drilled like little robots and told exactly what to do down to the tiniest detail," he recalled. "Us kids had fun off the set, but it wasn't much fun actually working on the set or on location. The regular director, Bob MacGowan, never smiled - ever - except when having a publicity photograph taken, and didn't seem to be having much fun either. He was, I recall, an ex-fireman, with not much previous movie experience. But I guess I'll always get a little kick when I remember that I was once a member of the famous 'Our Gang', even though it was for a brief period." Parrish also told me that Petey, the famous dog in the series, was one of three animals regularly used, with other 'stand-ins' lined up 'in the wings' in case anything happened to the 'star dogs' (in fact, two of them were killed in a fire at the kennels at one point...).

From John Hunt:

Could any of your readers supply me with the words of a piece of doggerel which I believe was published on the back page of the Rover Comic as a readers' entry to a competition during the period 1948 - 53. (I believe that the eagerly sought prize was a Magic Lantern, - how would today's sophisticated youth regard such a prize ?)

The verse started:-

The Swallow is a roving bird,
and ended with the lines:-
And on his journey home again
He met a bloomin' hawk,
Who pulled off all his feathers
And said, "Now, you Blighter, - Walk."

But I cannot recall what came in between.

From Ray Hopkins:

Our two end-of-the-year treats (the December C.D. and the Annual), with their usual jolly cover drawings by long-time artist H.Webb are always eagerly awaited. A word of appreciation to that long-serving contributor is not out of place: the C.D. editorial for May 1961 mentions the cover by "Mr. H. Webb of Bury St. Edmonds, Suffolk" so that issue (No.173, Vol 15) may well be his first appearance on our mag. Way back in the fifties he

was also doing the covers for Joseph Meehan's "St. Gerald's Herald" so he's been long connected with our hobby...

The nicest surprise for me in the Annual was the enthusiastic discovery by a schoolboy of today of one of our old favourites, Harold Avery. Heartening indeed that his writing can appeal one hundred years after he was first published. 'The Orderly Officer' (1894) is his first title listed in the B.L. Catalogues. One looks forward to further articles by Richard Burgon. Margery Woods' article on early colour printing was a very unusual subject from this sterling C.D. contributor and of great interest. Bags of research faithfully transmitted for us all to enjoy. And incidentally, anyone noticing the diversity of subjects

contained in this Annual and hearing that it is an "unofficial organ of the O.B.B.C." might think it worth their while to investigate this interesting club.

In the C.D. Annual, page 33, the advertiser Mr. Baines wanted an author's name. It is ROWLAND

WALKER, the full title of the book being 'Under Wolfe's Flag; or the Fight for the Canadas,' published by Partridge in 1913. Regret I was unable to find any listing of books by Sidney Baldwin in the B.L. Catalogues, or an obituary in "WHO WAS WHO" so am unable to help Margery Woods with her query. However, I am pretty sure the drawing from CHATTERBOX is by an artist who signs his/her work as MILLS and appears frequently in the small size SCHOOL FRIEND (1925-1929) in drawings accompanying the stories of Tess Everton, the Madcap of Templedene School by Renee Frazer.



A Delightful School Story :: A Delightful Heroine :: And Delightfully Told
BY RENEE FRAZER.

From Peter Mahony:

Colin Coles comments on my Hamilton/Cricket article (CD 597) deal mainly with matters of opinion - we differ, but respect the other man's views.

However, he makes two statements which can be refuted by reference to the 'Magnet'.

1. "One cannot comment on the skills of Tom Brown, Squiff or Toddy." In respect of 'Squiff', at least, there is ample evidence of his cricketing ability - see Magnet 343 "A Cool Card", reprinted in Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1937 as "Squiff of the Remove". Playing for Courtfield Council School, Squiff puts it across Greyfriars well and truly both as batsman and bowler. (Sweet revenge for Bob Cherry's bumptious assumption that reading the "Laws of Cricket" showed Squiff to be ignorant of the game.)

2. In Magnet 145, "Coker's Catch", reprinted in Greyfriars Holiday Annual, 1928 as "How Horace Coker got his Remove", Hamilton makes up a Middle School Soccer XI which beats the Fifth Form decisively. Hobson and Pimble of the Shell, plus Temple, Dabney and Fry of the Fourth join 6 Removites in producing "a strong team". Pimble

keeps goal; Hobson is centre half; Fry and Dabney are the wing halves; Temple plays at inside left - clear evidence that the Remove did not carry all the 'big guns.' Pimble disappeared from later stories, and Temple became a slacking fumbler; but Hobson and Fry are always mentioned as good players - they are not just 'names' either at Football or Cricket. Scott is regularly rated "as good as any man on either side."

To carry the debate a stage further, I suggest that Greyfriars' best Junior XIs would be:

Football: G.K. Bullstrode, L.B. Linley, R.B. Bull, L.H. Scott, C.H. Hobson, R.H. Cherry, O.L. Penfold, I.L. Temple, C.F. Wharton, I.R. Fry, D.R. Vernon-Smith.

Cricket: 1. Wharton, 2. Scott, 3. Cherry, 4. Vernon-Smith (**Bowler**), 5. Brown (**Bowler**), 6. Field (**Bowler**), 7. Linley, 8. Fry (**Bowler**), 9. Todd (**Bowler**), 10. Hobson (**W.K.**) 11. Singh (**Bowler**).

I wonder what Colin - and others - think of those sides.

Happy discussing!

Editor's Note: Peter Mahony thanks readers who answered his query about S.O.L. 136. Ray Hopkins was first in the field, by telephone on the day of distribution! Leslie Laskey, Phil Clutterbuck, John Geal, Dennis Hilliard and Bill Lofts also were quick to respond. S.O.L. 136 was a story by Charles Hamilton entitled *Who Shall be Captain?* This, apparently, featured St. Kit's School and was one of four of his tales of this school to be published in S.O.L. The others were number 64, *Parted Chums*; number 70, *The Boy Who Found His Father*; and number 188, *Up The Rebels*. It seems that Hamilton as 'Clifford Clive' originally wrote of St. Kit's for H. Hinton's short-lived paper *School and Sport* which ran for 28 issues from 1921 to 1922. Many thanks to all of you who wrote to provide this information.

From Terry Jones:

Congratulations on the production of "Collectors Digest" number 599. It is a wonderful issue full of happy memories and interesting articles. How lucky we are to have a monthly magazine devoted to keeping alive all the wonderful characters of our childhood and teens. From Tiger Jim to Sexton Blake always dropping in to say "Hello" to us as if they had never gone away.

How well I remember "The Wolf of Kabul" with Chung and his deadly "Clicky-Ba". There was a time in the thirties when our neighbours were inclined to think my young brother of ten years was losing his sanity because he used to rush up and down the garden-path waving my cricket bat about and yelling "Clicky-Ba" at the runner beans!

EARLY DAYS AT ST. JIM'S

By Roger M. Jenkins

St. Jim's is older than Tom Merry, and the school first appeared in Pluck on November 10th 1906. It made occasional appearances, usually fortnightly, and must have gradually built up a substantial following, since the intermediate stories were by different authors, and as a result St. Jim's achieved a regularity and stability that the other one-off stories obviously lacked.

The school was planned with a fine balance, with Blake & Co. of the School House opposed to Figgins & Co. of the New House. The housemaster of the School House was

Mr. Kidd, and his opposite number was Mr. Ratcliff: thus it was that the juniors earned the sobriquets of Kids and Rats. The sixth-formers were equally balanced, with Kildare and Darrell balanced by Monteith and Baker. The dislike that Monteith had for Kildare was evident in the very first number, Pluck 106, when Jack Blake arrived, and his cocky assurance earned the displeasure of George Herries, captain of the Fourth, but Blake's success in foiling Monteith's plot earned him the respect of the other juniors.

In these early days, Monteith was a well-drawn character, whose envy of and hatred towards Kildare was to some extent masked by cunning and the occasional opportunity to wrong-foot his rival. The Kildare-Monteith relationship brought the senior school into great prominence and often provided a contrast to the light-hearted approach of the juniors.

The feud continued in No.108, and it was so highly esteemed that it was reprinted in Gem 261. No. 110 was written in a lower key: a new boy named Barby was vital in an election for treasurer of the school clubs, with a senior in each house standing. In the event Sleath of the New House was proved to be more than a matter of house loyalty stole from the funds to pay a debt to Mr. Joliffe the blame on Blake, but in the end Sleath was 253-5 reprinted this story plus 116 and 118.

In the meanwhile, D'Arcy arrived as a new boy in 112 and expected to have his own quarters and a servant to run his bath. In essence, Gussy never changed over the years, and the suggestion of the editor, H.J. Garrish, that Charles Hamilton should introduce a character based on Beau Brummel was an inspiration indeed.

The Kildare-Monteith feud came to a glorious climax in No. 120. There was an argument about the number of New House players in the first eleven, and when Kildare sent off Monteith for bad behaviour the other New House seniors followed him. Afterwards, Baker decided that school came before house, and agreed to play; he was followed by all the other New House players and Monteith was left on the sidelines, his power base having crumbled away.

The remaining Pluck stories can be dealt with briefly. Gussy was kidnapped in No.123, whilst 125 and 129 introduced Marmaduke Smythe, an unpleasant spoilt boy who was in the New House: he reappeared in the 3d Boys' Friend Library "Tom Merry's Conquest". Finally, No.132 dealt with Kildare's weak-natured cousin Micky.

There can be no doubt that the four Clavering College stories featuring Tom Merry in the early 1/2d Gems were anaemic compared with the twelve stirring tales of St. Jim's in Pluck. When St. Jim's was transferred to the 1/2d Gem in No.11 of that paper, the alert readers might have noticed that Charles Hamilton no longer wrote about that school, and his place was taken by Martin Clifford, the author of the Clavering stories. As a matter of fact, very few Clavering College characters were retained: Merry, Lowther and Manners of course were transferred, plus Gore and Jimson. Mr. Railton and Herr Schneider also moved over, but not Mr. Quelch or Wingate.



elected, and it was in No.114 when Sleath and contrived to throw expelled. Later Gems

The amalgamation of the two schools left St. Jim's lopsided. There were three groups of juniors instead of two, and two forms - the Shell and the Fourth - instead of only one. It was difficult to decide at times where the reader's sympathies were supposed to lie, especially when ragging and light-hearted disputes prevailed. Moreover new boys were allotted to both forms: for example, Talbot and Grundy entered the Shell, and Cardew and Trimble went into the Fourth. Even the New House had Redfern, Owen and Lawrence, but there seemed to be no newcomers into the New House Shell. Compare this with Greyfriars with its clear centre of interest in the Remove, and though Rookwood had two houses, it was the Classical Fourth that prevailed and the Modern House juniors simply served as foils. It may be heresy, but I can find it in my heart of hearts to wish that Tom Merry had never been transferred to St. Jim's.

THE EARLY GEM. CLIFFORD'S CLAVERING COLLECTION

By Peter Mahony

When the Gem was launched on 16th March, 1907 (price ½d) the policy of its Editor, Percy Griffiths, was to alternate adventure stories with a new series of school yarns by Charles Hamilton. Hamilton, who was already writing weekly St. Jim's stories for "Pluck", invented a brand-new star character, a brand-new school, and a brand-new pen-name for the *Gem*.

The character was Tom Merry; the school was Clavering College; and Hamilton became Martin Clifford. The alternating arrangement did not begin until issue number 3 on 30th March, when "Tom Merry's Schooldays" started the Clavering series. It was followed at fortnightly intervals by "Troublesome Tom", "Our Captain" and "Tom Merry on the Warpath". Then, on 25th May, Tom Merry went to St. Jim's and Clavering College was no more. It had existed for just about two months - 56 days to be precise - less than a school term. The adventure stories disappeared at the same time - the Editor knew he was on to a good thing with Martin Clifford and Tom Merry. Their partnership in the Gem was to endure - with some vicissitudes - for the next 32 years.

The supplanting of Clavering by St. Jim's had a number of literary advantages. For a start, Hamilton (Clifford) was required to produce only one story per week, instead of three per fortnight. Secondly, the instantly popular Tom Merry was given a wider stage on which to display his talents. Third, the St. Jim's supporting cast, already well developed in *Pluck* added an appeal to the ongoing saga which Clavering's minor characters lacked. The *Gem* quickly became a firm favourite.

Despite its brief existence, Clavering College made a vital contribution to the success of the Gem. It provided an intimate background for Tom Merry's development, transforming him from a molly-coddled 'Spooney' into a self-reliant, enterprising leader - albeit with a mischievous streak. By the time he transferred to St. Jim's, Tom was well up to dealing with the challenges of Jack Blake and George Figgins. His rapid successes at Clavering as a boxer, cricketer and scholar gave him a self-confident 'edge' which the St. Jim's pair could not quite match.

Apart from Tom, Clavering provided several major characters for the St. Jim's scene. Manners and Monty Lowther, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, Mr. Railton, Herr Schneider and George Gore all became Gem stalwarts. A trio of others - Jimson, French and Clarke - also joined the 'Saints', but they became New House nonentities. The six major characters arrived at St. Jim's pretty well fully developed. Certainly, Martin Clifford made little modification to them as the years went by. Manners' shrewdness and Lowther's 'funny' streak were evident from the start: as were Herr Schneider's ill-temper and Mr. Railton's integrity. Perhaps Miss Fawcett's eccentricities were softened with time

- they certainly needed to be! - but her doting affection for Tom and her simple innocence were still clearly evident in the last Gem series in 1939. George Gore was the only Clavering 'star' to decline in importance after the transfer, but that was largely due to Tom having 'cut him down to size' at Clavering. A bully who is no longer 'Cock o' the walk' is a sad character - and that was what Gore became. At St. Jim's he was never a nonentity - but he was rather 'small beer'.

The four Clavering yarns are an excellent read - even now, 90 years on.

"Tom Merry's Schooldays" begins with a train collision at Westholm, five miles from Clavering. The confusion gave new boy, Tom, the chance to elude his embarrassing governess. Clad in a velvet suit (the things doting females inflict on helpless boys!), the innocent-looking Tom was guffawed at by a local policeman. By wondering-aloud-whether "the man was deaf, silly or had been drinking", Tom soon reduced the bobby to a less risible state. This penchant for uttering blunt home truths in a blandly naive manner disconcerted not only the policeman, but later Herr Schneider and some of the Clavering prefects. No one was ever quite sure whether Tom was being dim or impertinent. Resentment of innocent comments about one's short-comings is likely to make one seem childishly touchy.

Tom, the product of a tutor, had never been to school before. His vocabulary was, consequently, that of a pedantic adult - full of flowery adjectives and tautological expressions. He talked rather in the manner of Alonzo Todd of later Greyfriars fame. "Mercenary"; "Unwarrantable"; "reprehensible"; "conciseness"; "lucidity"; "castigation"; "ludicrous"; "veracity"; "epoch-making"; "solemnity" and "condescend" were some of the words he used - all guaranteed to 'stretch' the average boy reader. By making the early Tom so verbose, Martin Clifford illustrated several points. His speech, plus his quaint dress, irritated most of his peers - boys do not take to non-conformists. They promptly christened him 'Spooney' and he had to endure a number of ill-natured rags and humiliations. Unlike the later Harry Wharton, who reacted petulantly to similar treatment, Tom proved remarkably good humoured and resilient. Though tolerant and even-tempered, Tom was determined to stand up for himself and he quickly found favour with two of this study-mates, Manners and Monty Lowther.

With his other study-mate, George Gore, matters were very different. "Spooney's" flowing vocabulary showed him to be better-educated (at least in English) than most of his peers - a 'dead liberty' in the eyes of the idle Gore and his cronies. Unable to dispute Tom's academic right to a place in the Shell, Gore decided to redress the situation by bullying. Having landed lines and a licking from Mr. Quelch!, Master of the Shell (of whom more anon), Gore blamed Tom and set about him with a walking stick. Tom retaliated with a cricket stump - on Gore's head! That deterred the bully for a while; and Manners and Lowther decided to take the tyro in hand. He proved a very apt pupil.

Manners taught Tom to box and soon found him a rare handful in sparring. Lowther introduced him to cricket and, after initial difficulties with techniques, had a natural boatsman on his hands. Basically fit and strong (despite Miss Fawcett's insistence that he was delicate) Tom came very quickly to the forefront of Clavering's sporting scene.

(To be concluded)

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes BBC video BBCTV 5877 priced at £14.99

Reviewed by Norman Wright

Although, as far as I am aware, genuine Sherlock Holmes stories never actually appeared in any pre-war boys' papers the character is generally regarded with great affection by most collectors of Greyfriars, St. Jim's etc. and indeed many pastiches of the Baker Street detective were written by our own Charles Hamilton (see "The Complete Casebook of Herlock Sholmes" published by Hawk Books 1989, with an introduction by the present writer). At almost every gathering of the London Old Boys' Book Club the tea interval conversation invariably turns from books to films and from films to classic television and the mid 1960s BBC Sherlock Holmes productions certainly fall into the latter category.

During 1964 the BBC produced a series of dramas under the umbrella title of "Detective". The Sherlock Holmes segment of this series was, "The Speckled Band", broadcast on 18th May and featuring Douglas Wilmer as Holmes and Nigel Stock as Watson. The popularity of the production led to a series of twelve further plays featuring the same actors in the leading roles; the first of these, "The Illustrious Client" was first broadcast on 20th February 1965.

The series was repeated during 1966 but episodes have rarely been seen since and the rumour spread that the BBC no longer held any prints or negatives. It has to be admitted that the BBC does have a very poor track record as far as retaining popular drama is concerned. As one wag put it: they kept film of every boat race but very little else, and someone at the corporation certainly did seem to have the knack of junking anything that was likely to remain popular! Fortunately the rumours of the series' destruction were unfounded (although one story in circulation is that the existing copies were recovered from an overseas television company) and the BBC have at last brought out the first two episodes on video.

Viewed today the low budgets of these episodes are painfully obvious. The pace too is leisurely; far slower than the more recent Jeremy Brett series. But despite these shortcomings I found both episodes extremely enjoyable. Wilmer is an excellent Holmes; shorty scientific but with a whimsical smile at the corners of his mouth that leaves the viewer wondering if the detective feels he has to live up to the image that his chronicler, Dr. Watson, has woven of him. Nigel Stock works hard at the role of Watson giving the character a greater depth than previous screen Watsons had displayed. This must have been a difficult task for him when most viewers would have been familiar with the bumbling Watson as portrayed by Nigel Bruce in the series featuring Basil Rathbone.

Particularly enjoyable are the Baker Street scenes. The pair having breakfast near the beginning of "The Speckled Band" superbly captures the atmosphere of Doyle's stories. In "The Illustrious Client" the villain of the piece is played by Peter Wyngarde, an actor who always gives a good performance. I very much hope that the sales of this first tape will be sufficient for the BBC to release others - including, perhaps, one from the 1968 series which featured Peter Cushing as Holmes and were made in colour.

The BBC have informed Holmes enthusiasts that sales of this first volume have got to be very good before they will consider further releases, so I urge all Sherlockians to pull on their Inverness capes and track down a copy. Where from? Elementary my dear readers, from your nearest video shop!

Footnote:

It is worth mentioning at this point that The Sherlock Holmes Society of London recently released audio tapes of Douglas Wilmer reading Sherlock Holmes stories. So far

there are two volumes available each containing two complete and unabridged stories superbly read by Wilmer.

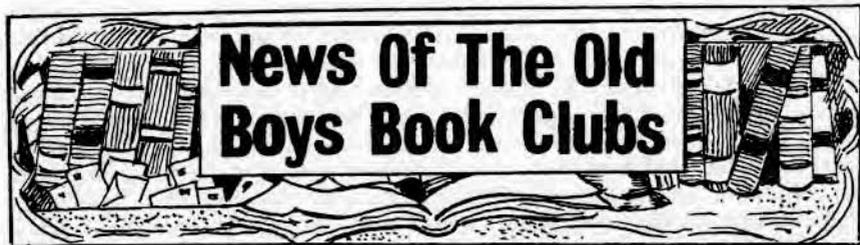
The 1997 Enid Blyton Literary Society Day

Collectors' Digest readers may like to know details of the 1997 Enid Blyton Literary Society Day. As this year marks Blyton's centenary the Day is planned as something rather special. It will take place on Saturday 7 June at The Gade Theatre, Watersmeet, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, a spacious venue close to Rickmansworth station (Metropolitan line) and easily accessible from both the M25 and the M1 with plenty of car parks close to the Theatre.

The day will begin at 10.30am and continue until 5.30pm. Our main speakers this year will be: **Gillian Baverstock** (Enid Blyton's elder daughter), **Sheila Ray** (author of "The Blyton Phenomenon"), **Barbara Stoney** (official biographer and leading authority on Enid Blyton) and our own **Mary Cadogan**.

The Centenary Programme booklet will contain the uncollected Five Find Outers story "Just a Spot of Bother." As usual there will be an exhibition of rare Blyton related material, etc. This year a number of leading dealers in collectable children's books will be displaying their stocks of Blyton books and ephemera.

Tickets, which cost £8.00 each, will *not* be available at the door but can be obtained in advance from Tony Summerfield at 93 Milford Hill, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP1 2QL. Cheques should be made payable to The Enid Blyton Literary Society.



O.B.B.C. LONDON

The February meeting saw twenty-six members gather at a packed Chingford Horticultural Society Hall.

With the formalities over, guest speaker Cliff Maddock gave a fascinating talk on the subject of mechanical toys. Cliff demonstrated many fine examples from his own collection, reaching a suitably animated climax with "the steam toy". This must be seen to be believed!

Following a delicious tea prepared by Audrey Potts, Bill Bradford gave a thoroughly researched and insightful talk on the prolific crime writer John G. Brandon. Lively

discussion followed. Finally, Bill took us on a nostalgic trip down the memory lane of the Club.

The next meeting will be held at Peter and Dorothy Mahony's home in Eltham on March 9th. Please telephone in advance if you plan to attend.

Vic Pratt

NORTHERN O.B.B.C. REPORT

Our February meeting began in the afternoon, with seven members attending "The (Enid Blyton) Famous Five Musical" at The Grand Theatre, Leeds. We all agreed it was extremely well done and it was good to see an almost full theatre for the Saturday matinee.

Our evening meeting saw thirteen present, but Alyson Leslie was not able to come down from Scotland because of her parents' illness. We hope she will present her item in March.

Information had been sent out concerning the Jennings Meeting to be held in Leicester, on 21st June, and it looked as though things were working quite well. If C.D. readers would like to know more, please write to: Northern Old Boys' Book Club, C/o 37, Tinshill Lane, Leeds LS16 6BU.

Our very own poet, Keith Atkinson, presented his Poet's Corner. This time, he read us more serious items he had composed arising from his love of the works of Richard Jefferies. The second selection was more humorous, relating to Greyfriars. Keith's latest poems made up two booklets which were eagerly acquired by members. An excellent presentation from Keith.

Geoffrey Good read "Bunter Knows How" (Published in the 1996 C.D. Annual) and also a chapter from the Cassell book, "Billy Bunter's First Case" These amusing items were superbly read by Geoffrey as always.

Next month: Alyson Leslie with "Not My Brother's Keeper" and "Mark's Remarks" with Mark Caldicott. April 5th, informal Club Dinner and on April 12th, "Westerns" from Alan Pratt, of London O.B.B.C., and "Life After Enid Blyton", by guest Mary Francis.

Johny Bull Minor

ANSWERS TO ST. JIM'S QUIZ

- 1. ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY.**
- 2. AUBREY RACKE.**
- 3. HARRY NOBLE.**
- 4. DAVID LLEWELLYN ('FATTY') WYNN.**
- 5. JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY.**
- 6. GEORGE FIGGINS.**
- 7. REGINALD TALBOT.**
- 8. GERALD KNOX.**
- 9. MARIE RIVERS.**
- 10. HERBERT SKIMPOLE.**

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A VERY SPECIAL BOOK (Reviewed by Mary Cadogan)

Children's Pleasures by Anthony Burton is a rare treat for both collectors and historians. Written by the Head of the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood it is, as we would expect, extremely well researched; it is also wonderfully well and affectionately presented, with illustrative delights, mainly in colour, on every one of its large pages. Anthony Burton has with flair and discernment drawn on the Bethnal Green Museum's uniquely comprehensive collection of toys children's clothes, books, comics and story-papers, pictures, games, puppets, model theatres, magic lantern slides and other artefacts of childhood. The book's sections include studies of pleasures (and instructional materials) from babyhood to young teens and from the 17th century to the present day.

Holding this book in one's hands is almost the equivalent of possessing the vast childhood treasures of the Bethnal Green Museum! Dip into it to learn about old and more recent customs, games and traditions; or to find out why babies were swaddled, or how long teddy bears have been popular. Most of all, savour and relish Anthony Burton's intriguing commentaries on popular and classic children's books, from fairy tales and chap books to Bunter, William, Angela Brazil, Enid Blyton, etc., and on dolls, train sets, Meccano, rocking-horses, toy soldiers and pop-up books. (Some illustrations from the book are included with this review but regrettably their colour cannot be conveyed here) *Children's Pleasures* is produced by V & A Publications at £25.00 and is great value for its price.



The bouncy Tiger Tim, from the cover of his 1927 annual.



Bad Penny, an anti-heroine invented in 1966 by Leo Baxendale for Smash!



Four children in Sussex, an illustration by Lilian Buchanan to Malcolm Saville's *Four-and-Twenty Blackbirds* (1959).



Billy Bunter in a scrape. Several illustrators depicted Bunter, the most successful being C.H. Chapman. This is from one of his cover designs for *Billy Bunter's Own*.

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no 16 St Franks on the Spree Spine taped, staples gone £7.

no 17 Prisoner of the Mountain Tiny amount of clear tape on spine else VG+ £8.50.

no 18 Remove in the Wild West Spine splits else VG £7.50.

no 19 Rebels of the Remove Small amount of clear tape on front cover else VG+ £7.50.

Schoolboys Own Library.

Issues by Owen Conquest

278 Follow Uncle James. Taped spine else VG+ £5.50

308 Jimmy Silver Resigns. Taped spine else VG+ £5.50

347 Chums of the Open Rd. Spine & edge taped else VG £4.50.

362 Manders on the Spot. Spine taped cvr repaired & scratched. £3.

380 Rookwood Ragers Spine taped, cover chip. £4.50

Schoolboys Own Library.

Issues by Martin Clifford

274 Camp & Caravan VG+ £4.

326 Harry Manners Feud. Spine taped else VG- £3.50

344 Saving of Selby Spine taped else VG- £3.50

383 Great Grundy. Spine taped else VG £4.00.

401 Cock o the Walk VG £4.

SOLS by E.S.Brooks

306 St Franks Explorers VG £3

312 Battle of the Giants. VG £3.

318 Schoolboy Inventor VG £3.

381 Cannibal Invaders VG £3.

384 Island of Terror VG £3.

396 Petticoat Rule. VG £3.00.

Schoolboys Own Library.

The following are all complete but are later issues all less than VG. Mainly with taped or poor spines and poor covers at £2.25 each.

303, 312, 315, 336, 339, 348, 363,

366, 369, 372, 381, 393, 396, 399,

405, 405, 408, 411.

ADVENTURE VG or near VG copies from 1957/8 at £1.75 each:

1677, 1678, 1682, 1684, 1685,

1688, 1689, 1690, 1691, 1693,

1694, 1723, 1724, 1725/1726,

1726, 1726, 1738, 1739, 1740,

1741, 1742, 1743, 1743, 1744,

1745, 1746, 1758.

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119, 123, 124, 126, 127, 131, 132,

133, 143, 143, 145, 146, 1959 at

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176, 177, 179, 180, 181, 185, 187,

188, 190, 191.

EXPRESS WEEKLY

The following £3.25 each: 180,

185, 186, 208, 211, 212, 212, 212,

215, 217, 218, 220, 223, 226, 226,

227, 239, 258, 268, 268, 270,

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closed tear in back two pages else

VG £3.00 no 361 "Call of the Past"

Chip from back cover £3.00.

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1946: Mainly VG £2.75 each:

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1928: no 301 VG/VG- £7.00, 306

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no. 148 by Clevely VG/VG- £3.00.

no. 226 by Wynnton G £2.50.

no. 228 by Clevely VG/VG- £3.00.

no. 242 by Brampton VG- £3.00.

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