

# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL.52

No.617

MAY 1998

The **UNION Jack** 1<sup>st</sup>

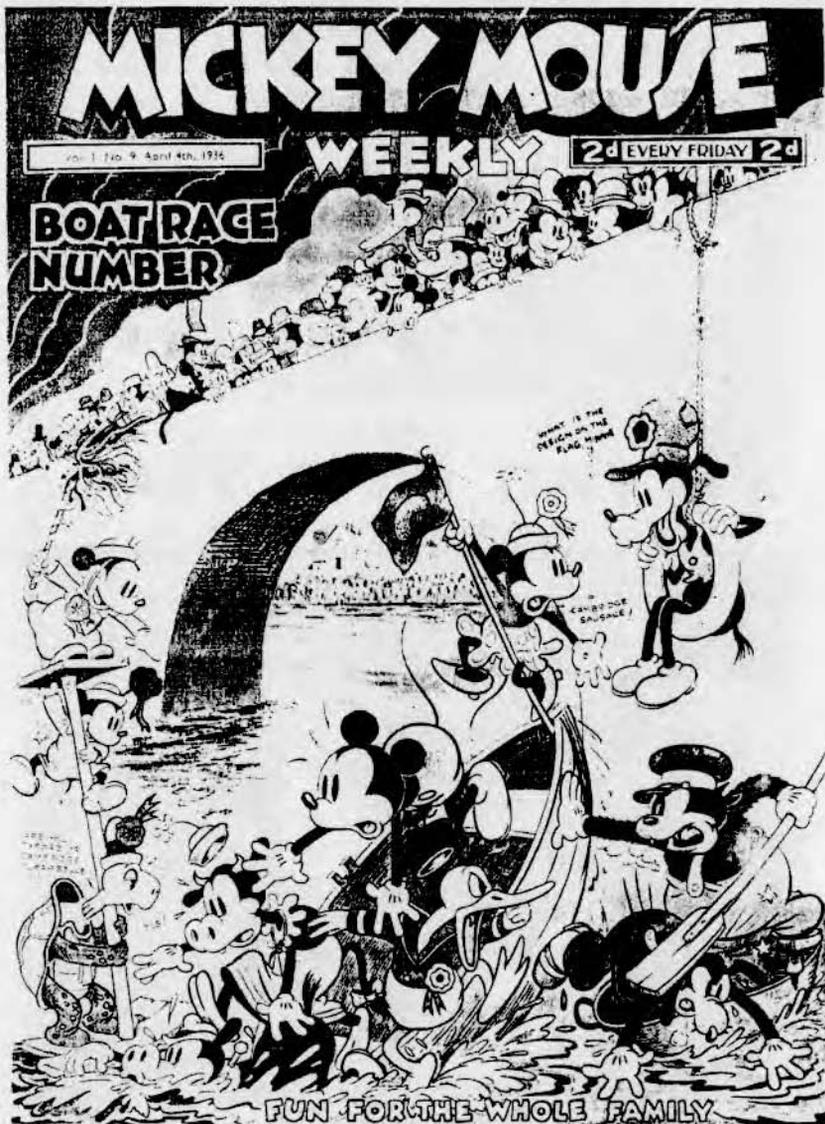
Vol. IV. No. 89 New Series. [Every Friday.]

## TWO ON A TRAIL;

Or, Sexton Blake on the Plains.



THE NEXT MOMENT SEXTON BLAKE WAS BESIDE THE COACH, A  
REVOLVER IN EACH HAND, A GRIM SMILE ON HIS LIPS.  
"HANDS UP!" HE COMMANDED



MICKEY MOUSE WEEKLY front page by Wilfred Haughton: 1936

Illustration from Alan Clark's *Dictionary of British Comic Artists, Writers and Reviewers* (reviewed in this issue)

# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by  
W.H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by  
HERBERT LECKENBY

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## The Editor's Chat



## ON BEING UNDERPINNED

As a reminder, I give again my new temporary address: 7 Ashfield Close, Beckenham, BR3 1SN. You may remember why after 30 years in Overbury Avenue my husband and I have moved. It was not through choice, but because our house there has to be underpinned. We are now comfortably installed in a very pleasant house not far away, but the process of removal was extremely stressful and exhausting. We had virtually reshaped our own home around us to fit our needs like a glove - with plenty of book-and-storage shelves and

cupboards to cover the requirements of our various interests. And, of course, we had 'expanded' to fill every nook, cranny and inch of the house!

We had to empty it entirely for the underpinning to take place, and the sorting out of what to take with us and what to put into store was a difficult and extremely time-consuming process. We expect to be away for at least six months, so clothes for every season had to be kept with us. The real problem was our joint and individual collections of books, papers, magazines, etc. Contemplation of all this was staggering: I can't remember when or how I acquired all those treasures, but no other house than ours was likely to be equipped with sufficient shelves to accommodate them. There were agonising decisions to be made about which books and papers could come with us, and which must go into store. Apart, of course, from wanting books simply for reading and enjoyment, I had to consider what I would need for reference for the C.D., and for other writing and editing, and for talks which I am scheduled to give during 1998.

At last, decisions were made. Alex and I are now established here with a (temporarily) much smaller collection of books, records, tapes and so on. On reflection I find it interesting that, in having to make this selection, so many of the books and papers from which I felt I could not be separated are those which I loved and enjoyed during childhood. (I hope this doesn't mean that I am a case of arrested development!) I have brought with me to this new address my collections of various Tiger Tim comics (which includes the first issues of *Rainbow*, *Playbox* and *Tiger Tim's Tales*): all my *Schoolgirls*, *Schoolgirls' Owns*, *Schoolgirls' Weeklys*, *School Friends* and *Girls' Crystals*: several Howard Baker *Magnet* collections; various film annuals from the 1930s and *Theatre Worlds* of the 1940s; a considerable collection of Dorita Fairlie Bruce's *Dimsie* and *Nancy* books; all Jane Austen's novels (which I first read at the age of 15 when I studied *Pride and Prejudice* for my matric): a good selection of Richmal Crompton's *William* books; all my *Girl's Own Papers*, and my *Scarlet Pimpernel* collection. I have also, of course, brought here with me a complete set of *Collectors' Digests*, and a variety of reference books on popular culture, as well as letters, photographs and other memorabilia.

I certainly have not relished this removal, but it has been an interesting and challenging experience, pinpointing, I suppose, my attachment to and dependence upon certain possessions. It has also enhanced my realization of my good fortune in having such a comfortable home and being surrounded by so many wonderful and satisfying artefacts.

#### **OUR COVER**

Len Hawkey has sent me this interesting 1905 *Union Jack* cover illustration by Fred Holmes. Sexton Blake certainly appeared in a wide range of settings.

#### **NEXT MONTH**

C.D. will have, as always, a great selection of articles, including an excellent feature by Colin Morgan on aspects of the Thomson papers.

Happy reading!

MARY CADOGAN

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**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.

\*\*\*\*\*  
**WANTED:** Pre-War boys' comics/story papers, Xmas issues in particular. Can offer exchanges if preferred, e.g. Nelson Lees O/S, N/S, Penny Popular, Champions, S.B.L. 2nd, 3rd series. B.F.L. 1st and 2nd series, few others. KEN TOWNSEND, 7 NORTH CLOSE, WILLINGTON, DERBY, DE65 6EA. Phone: 01283-703305.  
\*\*\*\*\*

I think that most people will agree that grandmothers are amongst the most wonderful people in the world. Mine certainly was. Whenever my young days were overcast and cloudy, Gran could be depended upon to introduce some golden sunshine to drive the sombre threats away. With her around there were always new and exciting games to play; stories to be told that would bring happy and carefree laughter. Little treasures of sweets and chocolate to be discovered behind book or picture frame. At my eighth Christmas my mother slipped quietly out of this world and Gran, just as quietly, slipped in to take over. My father worked away from home, relieved, no doubt, that my sister and I were in such good hands. After all, our grandparents had brought four sons and a daughter (my Mum) into the world and into the happiness and comfort of a loved and loving family.

The youngest of my uncles went off to war and was killed in his seventeenth year. I was born shortly after and was christened with his names. I admired him and asked my mother countless questions about him but, had I known it, Mother was already gradually succumbing to tuberculosis and I had to wait for Gran to enlighten me, which she did in her usually carefully chosen way.

It was my tenth birthday, and I had accompanied her to the small sweetshop-cum-post office from which her small war pension came before trotting home for cakes and tea. For once Gran seemed quiet and occupied with her thoughts. Instinctively, I put my small hand in one of hers. This lovely lady had something to communicate and I sensed that this time it was not a new game, a hidden sweet. It was not to be one of those stories to pass the golden minutes but, nevertheless, it was a chat that I would remember all my days.

She spoke as a mother recalling the loss of her youngest son. As I listened, I caught the sense of what she wanted to say as soon as she said it. Uncle had been a reader of a boys' magazine long before he enlisted, and she had arranged for it to follow him. The magazine was *The Magnet* bearing the earlier stories of Greyfriars. Together with her own letters, they brought the memory of home and all that he loved and was destined never to see again.

My grandmother pressed a current copy of *The Magnet* into my hand. She was so confident that I would like it, she said, that it would be delivered each week. The paper stopped only when the paper shortage of the Second World War decreed that it should - by which time I was in the Army myself.

My uncle had pointed a way that my grandmother ensured I would follow. In this ninetieth year the stories of Greyfriars have served all of us well . . . To me they are a reminder of an uncle who sought moments of relief from the horrors of war. Then there was the grandmother . . . and surely grandmothers are amongst the most wonderful people in the world.

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**WANTED:** Howard Bakers, £4 d/w £7 slipcase.

W.E. Johns 1st editions, all magazines, *Modern Boys*, ephemera, books in d/w published by John Hamilton.

Bunter, Jennings, Blyton, Saville 1sts in d/w.

Please offer other hobby related items.

P. Galvin, 2 The Lindales, Pogmoor, Barnsley, S. Yorks S75 2DT.



## THE UNION JACK AND THE GANGSTER CYCLE

by Reg Hardinge

The Wall Street Crash of 1929 generated a world-wide depression resulting in massive unemployment and extensive poverty. This catastrophe coincided with the launching, by the movie moguls in Hollywood, of a series of new, realistic motion-pictures which gripped the imagination of the viewing public. Against a cynical background of nightclubs, speakeasies, gambling dens, bootlegging, tommy-guns *et al*, a glamorisation of the American professional criminal took place.



AL. CAPONE,  
a new portrait.

The sinister way in which power and wealth could be achieved was palpably demonstrated to the masses in films like *Little Caesar* (1930) which was a thinly-disguised account of the rise and fall of Al Capone, portrayed by Edward G. Robinson. *The Public Enemy* (1931) depicted James Cagney glorifying a hoodlum, whilst *Scarface* (1932) had Paul Muni in a variation of the Capone story. People flocked to be entertained by the brutality and documentary quality of such productions.

Influenced by this popular trend, *The Union Jack*, *The Thriller* and publications of similar ilk over here, injected violence and callousness over and above the norm into their offerings, in an attempt to increase sales. Some of the plots were extremely far-fetched. The invasion by, and the taking over of, large areas of this green and pleasant land by Chicago gangsters was a recurrent theme in many of the tales appearing in *The Union Jack* during the period 1931-32. Some of the situations were totally implausible. In *Sexton Blake on the Spot* (UJ 1433) for instance, newly appointed Head of Scotland Yard, Sexton Blake, and his Assistant Commissioner, Rupert Waldo, conducted a campaign to wipe out gang warfare over here. Then, in *Sexton Blake Cleans Up Chicago* (UJ 1435), a committee of Chicago businessmen invited Blake to go over and eliminate graft and "big shot" gangsterism from their city.

Even *The Union Jack* weekly *Detective Supplement*, at that time reduced to two pages, dealt purely with American criminals, and concentrated on Chicago's gang history, with the full facts on Alphonse (Scarface) Capone. Such a surfeit of repetitive and sometimes sub-standard output did nothing to encourage new readers, and in all probability put off the regular ones.

During this same period American-style crime was not infused quite so blatantly or excessively into the monthly content of *The Sexton Blake Library*, and so its readership numbers were maintained. In fact it outlived *The Union Jack* by 35 years!

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## BLACK, WHITE AND GRAY

by Mark Caldicott

### Part Five - The Path is Never Easy

His summer adventure in the South Seas has been the turning point in the life of Ralph Leslie Fullwood. The effects of his recent experiences are apparent even before he arrives at St Frank's for the start of the new term, for his problems begin on the train journey down. His inward turmoil affects his concentration, and his Study A chums, Gulliver and Bell, are disconcerted by Fullwood's lack of attention.

Their puzzlement turns to shock when Fullwood, refusing to take a cigarette, announces that he doesn't smoke. Challenged by his chums, he then takes a cigarette but, with the arrival of his newly acquired friend, Clive Russell, Fullwood's new conscience gets the better of him, and he throws the cigarette away in disgust. It was Russell's selfless act of bravery, saving Fullwood from certain death in the jaws of a shark, which had awakened the better nature which lay dormant inside the evil shell of Ralph Leslie's former self.

His Study A chums remark on his behaviour. Gulliver grasps the nub of the problem:

"Something's happened," declared Bell firmly. "He's not the same man as he used to be. Did you see the way he chucked his cig down when that cad Russell shoved his face in at the door?"

"Yes, almost as if he were afraid of bein' seen with it," replied Gulliver. "That trip to the South Sea Islands has done him a lot of harm, by the look of it . . ." ("The New Houses at St Frank's", *Nelson Lee Library* OS 537, 19-Sep-25).

The checklist of evils which signify the boulder, if you recall from the Augustus Hart episode, comprised smoking, gambling, drinking, cheating, lying and rejecting sport. Fullwood's change of heart is delineated by an equivalent checklist of refusals. He has rejected the cigarette, and next he rejects a game of cards and a nip from a flask.

However, before moving further down the checklist, Fullwood is faced with that which is *de rigueur* for the reformer's rite of passage - the old odds-stacked-against-him problem. Ironically, it was Fullwood himself who, at least to some extent, stacked the odds against Augustus Hart. For Fullwood's own particular period of trial and tribulation, it is Fullwood's good-for-nothing cousin who is at the root of the ordeal.

Gulliver is reading a newspaper report of a shameful incident involving the death of one Oxford undergraduate at the hands of another, this other being Eustace Carey.

Fullwood recognises the name at once, for it is his cousin, but, overwhelmed by the shame of having a possible murderer in the family, does not acknowledge his relation. The name is familiar to Gulliver, but it is some time before he recalls that Eustace Carey is Fullwood's cousin.

When the truth dawns on Gulliver and Bell, they try, as a price of their silence, to persuade Fullwood to resume his old habit. It is with a shock that he realises that he does not want to return to the old ways. A gulf has developed between himself and his Study A chums and "for some strange reason they irritated him beyond measure".

They were different - they were unutterably caddish and mean. They revealed it in every word and action.

And Fullwood, with a jarring jolt, realised that it was he who was different. Gulliver and Bell were just the same as ever - not so very long ago he had been just the same! Now, in some subtle way, his view point was altered. He looked at life from a different angle.

His disenchantment with his former chums increases when they ask for cash in return for silence about Fullwood's relationship to Carey. Cash for silence was not a shocking idea for Fullwood when he tried this ploy with Dr Beverley Stokes, we remember. But now he recognises it for what it really is:

"Blackmail!", repeated Fullwood harshly. "That's your game you contemptible hounds! You know all about Carey and unless I whack out cash at your demand you'll grow careless an' blub the news! Great Scott! And you've always called yourselves my pals! I'm learnin' a few things!"

Blackmail is out of the question anyway, since the sneak Teddy Long has broadcast Fullwood's secret to the school already. Disenchantment turns to revulsion when first Fullwood is ridiculed by Grayson, then conspicuously avoided by Merrill and Marriot. The scoundrels of the school turn upon him, while in contrast the decent types (Handforth and Co, Nipper, Pitt, Archie Glenthorne and others) are sympathetic with his predicament, and, recognising the change in Fullwood, invite him to join their game of football. This affects Fullwood deeply:

For the first time in his remembrance he was experiencing the emotion of gratitude. The decency of these fellows was beyond his understanding. He could not appreciate the very simple fact that they were just their normal selves. Fullwood had always been so cynical, and at the first sign of a human touch, they responded automatically. With regard to his cousin, the news concerning Eustace Carey had made no difference in their attitude towards him.

However, even before he can assimilate this new feeling (and incidentally, in acting positively towards football, dispense with another item from the checklist), a spanner is hurled squarely, but one cannot say fairly, into the works. The hurler is Eustace Carey

himself, who telephones Fullwood from Bannington and demands his assistance in hiding from the police and getting out of the country.

It is, of course, in the value system of the public school, the incontrovertible duty of a fellow to help a relation even if, in doing so, one is undermining the cause of justice which is in all other cases sacrosanct. Fullwood recognises that he would be considered the lowest of the low if he didn't help his cousin, whatever the consequences in the eyes of the law.

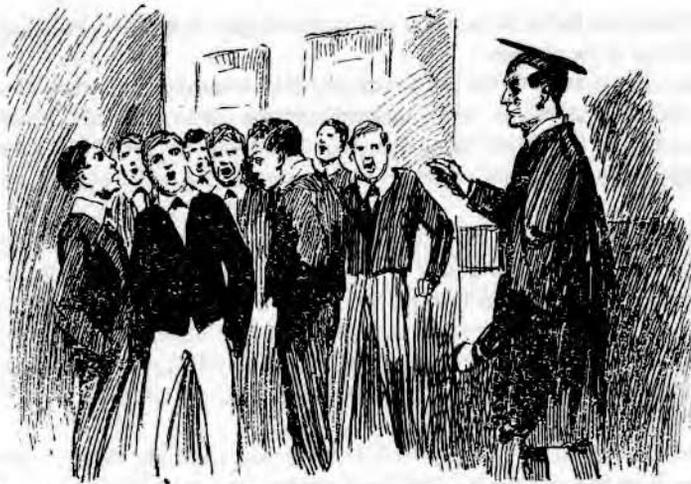
Fullwood decides to hide his cousin in the deserted Moat Hollow building. Part of the problem of the trial for the reforming cad is that it always seems to involve having to act like a cad, but for honourable purposes which cannot be explained to those around him. Thus Fullwood has to break bounds at night to meet Carey and to settle him in Moat Hollow. Next day Fullwood has to refuse to join in football, but cannot explain that this is because he needs the time to take food to his cousin ("The Rival House Captains", *Nelson Lee Library* OS 538, 26-Sep-25).

The continuing taunts from Gulliver and Bell lead to Fullwood vacating Study A and moving into Study I where he does not have to share his thoughts, and can come and go as he pleases. An offer comes from Clive Russell to share Study H with himself and Ulysses Spencer Adams. At one time Fullwood would have sneered at the idea of sharing a study with a Canadian and an American. But his reasons for not accepting the offer now are quite different. "When a fellow's in disgrace he's better alone," he replies. Gulliver and Bell soon find a replacement for Fullwood, and Bernard Forrest slides into Fullwood's former role in Study A. And it is Forrest, Gulliver and Bell who are on hand to witness the ghostly face at the window of Moat Hollow. Word is soon out that Moat Hollow is haunted, and the place becomes a magnetic attraction for Handforth and Co. Carey escapes just in time, and Fullwood makes it appear that Moat Hollow has been occupied by a tramp. Nipper alone remains unconvinced by the evidence.

Only ESB could give any semblance of credibility to the next twist in the plot, for in Bellton Wood Carey meets Stanley Clavering. Clavering is making his way to St Frank's as a new boy in the sixth. He has only just arrived in the country and is unknown to anyone, and has never visited the school before. Carey imprisons him in the ruins of Bellton Priory, and makes for St Frank's with the intention of hiding out in the school by pretending to be Clavering. In Carey's mind it is all the more urgent to disappear from view, since he learns from Clavering's newspaper that the victim of his attack has died.

Fullwood himself knows nothing of Carey's plan. After a fruitless wait for his cousin, who has long since made his way to St Frank's, Fullwood returns to the school ("The Prisoner of the Priory", *Nelson Lee Library* OS 539, 03-Oct-25). Here he faces a mounting tirade of hatred from the less honourable fellows in the school, all those whom Fullwood would previously have considered his pals. Fellows from East House form a circle around him and chant a parody of "Who Killed Cock Robin".

"Who'll hound Fully out? - we said the school . . . Is he wanted here? - No, said St. Frank's"



This "roaring hymn of hate" is ended by Nelson Lee. "Take no notice of them boy . . . You are passing through a trying period, but time heals everything." Lee refers to Fullwood's new interest in sport, but his remarks are accepted with mixed feeling.

**" Stop ! "**  
The voice thundered angrily in the midst of the roaring hymn of hate which was only just getting into its stride. The East House juniors gazed with startled surprise at Nelson Lee, and their song died on their lips.

"Your decision to play football pleases me, Fullwood . . . don't go back. I am delighted to find a big improvement in you. It seems that these troubles have a good moral effect on you."

"Thank you, sir," muttered Fullwood sullenly.

He went off a minute afterwards, boiling. He hated to be told that he was "showing signs of improvement". The very thought of it aroused all his old stubbornness and headstrong devilment. He felt like going to his study and smoking. He wanted to do something to convince himself he wasn't becoming soft. And it made him all the more angry because he knew that Nelson Lee had told the truth. He hated to admit that he was changing although he realised that the change was for the better. It was just the obstinacy of human nature manifesting itself.

However, it is at this point that Fullwood realises his problems have only just begun, for as he returns to Study I he finds the newcomer Stanley Clavering occupying his armchair. "With the door handle still in his grip, Fullwood stood rooted. 'Eustace!' he muttered hoarsely."

**To be continued.**

*Special note: Is anyone able to help in my research for this series? I would like to read the "Iron Island" series which appeared in The Gem, particularly the opening episodes 144-154. Can anyone sell, loan or send me photocopies of the Iron Island and Brotherhood of Iron episodes in Gems 144-154, 156-158, 161, 164-166, 172-173, 177-179. I would be happy to reimburse postage and/or photocopying costs.*

*Mark Caldicott, 16 Greenside, Denby Dale, Huddersfield HD8 8SL. Tel: 01484-863808  
e-mail: mark@caldicott.demon.co.uk*

**Part 4: The Assembly Line**

Now that the old sticky tape has been removed and the pages are pressed dry they should look better. For one thing, all creases should have been carefully pressed away, giving a better appearance. So let's adjourn to the den, dining-room or wherever we can work in peace.

As before, we need tweezers, sharp scissors and clear transparent tapes. The 'milky' type or Sellotape 'diamond' make good repairs. The talcum powder mentioned may be required and also one or two art brushes. Also required will be a tube of glue and some paste (a tube of stationery water glue may be preferable). More newspaper is needed and also a mix of bulldog clips. For pressing I use carpentry cramps and timber cut a little larger than the *SOLs* or *Magnets* etc. A soft rubber will be helpful and also a pack of multi-coloured felt-tip pens.

As I described earlier, I use the tiniest pieces of tape to repair tears, pressing and scraping on both sides with a penknife blade point edge. Pencil marks and some dirty marks can be erased. I have used diluted hydrogen peroxide to remove foxing but this is a long job and needs much care. There used to be a product for removing ink (some happy people liked to add their names to the papers). Some dealers in a dog-like way have left their prints on some papers but we must regard them as part of memorabilia.

Where the front covers have parted company I avoid sticky tape as WGB avoids work. After the ragged edges have been smoothed and the pages lined up, I join them with a white strip cut from the edge of a newspaper. Newsprint seems to me the nearest to the old papers and it also fades fairly quickly, so blending in. These strips I stick from the outside - using the water paste - in cases where the covers have parted completely or almost completely. Where the covers are split but hold together I stick from the inside, the result in appearance being the more preferable. The white newspaper strips should be of the minimum width and, if you dare to raid the workbasket, cutting the paper with pinking shears will help to make the repair less visible.

After the strip has been carefully pressed into place, turn the pages over and press every little fold or torn edge down onto the sticky strip with the blade edge. A small wallpaper edge roller is useful for this. Leave to dry well then trim off each end and fold. I use the edge of the desk first to obtain a crease and then match up the edges of the pages and form a knife-edge crease on the flat top.

**Important:** when joining outer covers, whether *SOLs* or *Modern Boys*, it is necessary to ensure they retain the original width. This can be done by using an undamaged double page spread as a template.

Newspaper white edges can also be used to 'fill in' pages where bits have been torn away. Place the filler piece under the hole and mark lightly with a pencil. Cut a small margin round the pencil mark, paste and smooth in place. Trim level with the page edge when dry.

When the *Gem* (whatever) pages have been repaired and dusted where necessary, fold, making sure the edges meet, and press to a sharp edge with careful use of the blade. Assemble when all are finished, obviously making sure that the pages are in the correct order. Those little library numbers at the foot of some pages are useful. The story-paper

can then be pressed between the boards using the cramps - and screwed down hard! - or pressed some other way.

**Important:** ensure that any paste/glue is dry first. Use clean paper (or kitchen paper) as buffers. I use about four bulldog grips to hold the papers in place while I prepare others or a set or a volume.

The *SOLs* present other problems. I believe the *Gems* etc can be left without restapling if they are kept carefully, perhaps in folders or those plastic sleeves - or parcelled in sets/volumes between thick card. If the intention is to have them bound then stapling is unnecessary.

As we know, the damage to an *SOL* is often in the region of the rusty staple. This can also apply to Blakes and other booklets. Each double page needs careful repair. After pressing the double page I stick tiny tape squares over the rust-holes (and repair any adjoining slits). The pages are refolded as described and put in order. Long ago I acquired a quantity of white kite string. This has come in useful for many purposes but best of all for binding *SOLs*. Some collectors use cord to replace the staples but, unfortunately, use the same holes. Because the holes have been rust-damaged, the outer pages usually tear.

I believe it is better to rebind the books in two evenly-spaced places aligned with the original staple. After the *SOL* has been reassembled and double checked and tapped and coaxed so that no edges are misplaced, I use strong bulldog grips to hold it in place.

The *SOL* is put on a piece of timber and the edges marked with a cardboard template to indicate where the binding, about half an inch each, is to go.

I then use a thin nail and a tack hammer to make the holes. The thread is passed through and - this can hurt! - the thread is looped and pulled as tight as possible. When it has been knotted, I use my blade point to press each knot into each nearest hole. I then add a tiny dab of glue to each knot to ensure it does not come undone.

The next stage is to run a little glue down the spine. In the earliest *SOLs* there are usually two sections, and in the later ones, three. The coverless book is placed between two pieces of board of similar sizes and pressed tight with the cramps. Again, white paper is used as protection back and front.

*SOL* covers seem to have suffered much. They can be joined as described earlier, although I have sometimes used coloured strips from magazines in an effort to blend. Sometimes the back page is missing. A piece of good-quality white paper can be stuck to the cover and later trimmed with a cutting blade. Where there is no cover, I use blue-coloured card (from all good stationers, as they say, in most shades). This I glue to the spine and, after pressing the edge into sharp lines, grip it with the 'bulldogs'. When dry, the new cover is trimmed with a razor-edged blade and a straight edge.

**Important:** if the glue should squeeze out and there is a danger of it sticking too much of the cover to the first or back pages of the story, wipe off and dust with the talcum. As an added precaution, before placing into a press, slip strips of kitchen paper up to the 'margin'. At least if they stick they can be 'damped' away with hot water.

**To be concluded.**

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## HARRY WHARTON: HAMILTON'S FLAWED HERO

by Peter Mahony

*"Pride goeth before destruction;  
And a lofty spirit before a fall."*

A study of Harry Wharton's career at Greyfriars reveals a constant battle between pride and humility. Pride, the first and foremost of the capital sins, was the undoing of Lucifer, Son of the Morning, first among the Angels. It was also Wharton's besetting sin - and it brought him nearly as much trouble as Lucifer had.

Again like Lucifer, Wharton had a lot going for him. He was handsome, clever, tolerant (except when his temper was roused), courageous and a born leader. Unfortunately, still like Lucifer, these qualities often became drawbacks when Wharton mounted the 'high horse'.

In the *Gem* saga, Tom Merry began as a cheerful, good-hearted lad who matured steadily as the stories progressed. In the very last *Gem*, "Silverson on the Spot", Tom was still cheerful, straight and good-hearted - despite a fair number of vicissitudes in between. In the *Magnet*, Wharton began as a resentful, angry, self-willed problem child. In the last published *Magnet*, "Asking for the Sack", Harry was angry, resentful and still inclined to 'make waves'. Frank Richards (Charles Hamilton) had not planned to be as cyclical the second time; circumstances (the WWII paper-shortage) just made it happen like that. (I'm certain that the 'wheel coming full circle' idea was deliberate in the *Gem*. Martin Clifford (Hamilton) knew that the *Gem* was going to cease publication, so he ended its career with Tom Merry's innate character matured but intact - a neat and satisfying ending. With Wharton, the carefully nurtured improvements in his character, developed painstakingly over the years, were left at risk - by accident. A reading of *Magnets* 1 and 1683 together leaves the clear impression that Harry has a lot of room for improvement still - even after a saga of more than 1,200 stories.)

305 of the 1683 *Magnets* were written by substitute authors. That leaves 1378 from Frank Richards. Of those 1378, Harry Wharton took the leading role in exactly 100. As leader of the Famous Five he was prominent in another 156 yarns. Only William George Bunter (211 starring roles) and Herbert Vernon-Smith (148) took the limelight anywhere near as often as Wharton. He was the centrepiece of the Greyfriars saga in the *Magnet*; only in the post-war world has Bunter usurped the place.

The early *Magnets* were mostly single story affairs. Occasionally, a yarn stretched to two or three numbers, but it was not until *Magnet* 247 that Richards produced a long series. For nearly five years, Greyfriars existed on single stories - and Wharton was the protagonist in sixty of these (nearly 25%). Bunter's share was only thirty - half the importance of Wharton's.

The general trend of these early yarns was to demonstrate how Wharton's positive qualities developed. His petulant reaction to being 'sent away to school' was exacerbated by early defiance of authority and escalated into passionate resentment of his schoolfellows. He suffered a good deal of bullying and humiliation, but the good-nature of Nugent and Cherry calmed him down. By *Magnet* No. 10 he had supplanted Bulstrode as Remove Captain and he then went from strength to strength.

He formed firm friendships with Frank Nugent and Bob Cherry (both of whom had beaten him in stand-up fights); he met Marjorie Hazeldene in dramatic circumstances; gave the Remove positive leadership and produced competent sports teams. Several times he had to display intrepid bravery. He rescued Nugent from drowning; Molly Locke from a burning building; and a sleep-walking Bunter from a precarious position on the roof. Harry also faced up to Lagden, an escaped convict; rescued Prince Otto and was invited to the coronation of George V; and saved Marjorie Hazeldene from the gypsies who had kidnapped her.

In another test of character, Wharton fought Bulstrode a second time and defeated that unpleasant bully, thus breaking his 'hold' on the Remove. He also led his form-fellows in a number of successful ventures against Hoffman, Meunier & Co. of the foreign academy. Rivalry with Dick Trumper & Co. of Courtfield followed - with honours more or less even; and Harry also put it across the Fifth Form on the soccer field.

This last episode was a unique effort. The Fifth, toadying to the wealthy Coker, newly promoted from the Shell, handicapped themselves by including the obstreperous Horace in their XI. Wharton, with a perspicacity that he later lost, selected a team from the whole of the Middle School. The resulting side was virtually the strongest ever fielded by Greyfriars juniors. Pimble of the Shell (whatever happened to him?) kept goal; Bob Cherry and Tom Brown were the backs; Dabney, Hobson and Fry made up the half back line; and the forwards were Singh, Nugent, Wharton, Temple and Linley. The Fifth were overwhelmed (five to nought) and the Coker bubble was burst. (Why Frank Richards never continued this policy of combining Shell, Fourth and Remove in Greyfriars sports is hard to understand. Temple, who at this stage was a bright, sharp-witted character, deteriorated into an ineffectual dud; but Hobson and Fry were always good players. Those two, plus Scott of the Fourth, really merited regular places in the Greyfriars XIs. The Nugents, Ogilvys, Hazeldenes etc. were really not in the same class. Perhaps their omission was a demerit on Wharton's leadership record!)

In these early stories, Harry Wharton's star was very much in the ascendancy. He did, however, have one or two setbacks. To begin with, he never mastered the art of conciliation. The Bulstrode element were his natural opponents and the tendency, on both sides, was to be confrontational. Bob Cherry's natural bonhomie put him on good terms with everybody - including Bulstrode, even after they had come to heavy blows. Wharton could never summon up a similar magnanimity. If someone rubbed him up the wrong way, Harry fired with resentment. However, he had the sense to extend the olive branch to Bulstrode by including the bully in the Remove teams. Bulstrode, a fine goalkeeper and a reliable wicket-keeper, responded by moderating his opposition, and an uneasy peace ensued.

With others of Bulstrode's set, Harry was much less effective - because he didn't try. The sharp-tongued Harold Skinner was Wharton's particular *bête-noir*. Skinner, much cleverer than Bulstrode, was one of the few Removites whose intelligence was a match for Wharton's. If he had been a worker, Skinner could have outstripped Wharton in class and challenged Linley and Peter Todd for first place. (So, probably, could Vernon-Smith, but we haven't come to him yet!) Wharton, unable to riposte readily to Skinner's jibes, used to get 'miffed' - and show it - a fatal mistake with someone like Skinner. The more Wharton

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# The Magnet 29



## WHARTON IN DIFFERENT MOODS



Harry Wharton walked zeros to the Boudoir, and every occupation in the flag was suspended at once. "Vernon-Smith!" Wharton's tone was quite calm. "You've been gassing about cutting the cricket to-morrow!" "Not at all," said the Boudoir, with an innocent smile. "Kaine's a fact!" "You'll turn up on Little Side at three!" "went on Wharton. "Eats!" "replied the Boudoir.



"Harry, old man, what do you think has happened on this ship?" asked Bob Cherry, pausing in the scrubbing. "Mutiny!" said Wharton briefly.

'bit', the more did Skinner trot out the 'one-liners'. 'His Magnificence' was mercilessly cut down to size on many occasions - but he never learned to 'take it' with good humour.

Skinner was expelled in *Magnet* 196 and Wharton was glad to see the back of him. Eighteen months later (*Magnet* 274) dear Harold wangled his way back into Greyfriars - and Harry's troubles began again. Skinner's wit enlivened a large number of episodes; particularly when Wharton's unreliable temper had put him at odds with authority. (Cardew, at St. Jim's, tried the same tactic with Tom Merry. but, though occasionally 'needled', the easy-going Tom coped much better than the over-sensitive Wharton. Cardew, too, was never as malicious as Skinner.) Generally, if a Wharton situation was fraught, the genial Skinner, with a few ill-chosen remarks, could be guaranteed to make it worse! Not nice for Harry, but highly amusing for spectators - and readers!

Another early thorn in Wharton's flesh was Ernest Levison. Out of the Skinner stable, Levison arrived in *Magnet* 18 and was expelled in *Magnet* 46. Only six months, but Levison caused a good deal of trouble in that short time. His suspicious nature irritated Wharton & Co. considerably, and some of his activities were mischievous in the extreme. He 'palmed' watches; planted items on unsuspecting victim; broke bounds; stirred up trouble with Cliff House; and generally made himself obnoxious.

Then, when he and an innocent Wharton were caught breaking bounds and apparently 'blagging', Levison owned up and got Harry 'off the hook'. Mind you, being Levison, he made Wharton sweat a bit before he came clean. (My guess is that Frank Richards had realised by this time that he had a first-class 'villain' in Levison and wanted to develop him. At Greyfriars, Levison and Skinner would have been too similar. Solution: pass Levison over to Martin Clifford for introduction at St. Jim's when convenient. This occurred in *Gem* 142 - nearly two years later - and what a 'lift' it gave to St. Jim's stories. Levison had a much wider stage than the Greyfriars Remove on which to operate - and did he operate!)

Another tricky relationship was with Peter Hazeldene. In the earlier *Magnets* 'Vaseline' was a nasty piece of work. He tried to cheat Wharton out of the 'Seaton-D'Arcy' prize; got into financial difficulties with Isaacs, the money-lender; and was Bulstrode's supporter in many of his bullying escapades. Wharton was originally antagonistic to Hazeldene - but then Marjorie, his sister, turned up. Why having a pretty sister should be looked on as a redeeming feature for a worm like Hazeldene is difficult to understand - but young men are ever thus. (Probably very few marriages would take place if they depended on the acceptability of the beloved's relations!) For better or worse, Wharton became concerned with Hazeldene, because of the attraction of Marjorie.

Harry consequently took on a continual problem. Hazeldene was a gambler, and often a cheat. He was also an occasional thief. Always, he lacked the courage of his rascality. Nearly always, he was concerned with number one. His over-trusting sister made far too many allowances for him and fell into the habit of expecting Wharton & Co. to rescue Hazeldene from his just desserts. Generally, they managed it; but occasionally they ran into bad trouble on account of the Hazeldenes. Wharton and Bob Cherry were most often involved; though Nugent, Inky and Bull - and, now and again, Vernon-Smith - all paid the piper on 'Vaseline's' account.

Harry, whose keen wits saw a good deal further than honest Bob Cherry's, was not under any illusions about Hazeldene. Promises to reform were never kept; debts were rarely repaid; patient friendship was often rebuffed by petulant displays of 'dignity'.

Marjorie, too, gave the Co. little support - she never 'read Peter the riot act'. Her smug assumption that Harry and/or Bob would protect 'Hazel' right or wrong led her swains into trouble on several occasions. Certainly, they compounded felonies which Hazeldene had committed - even though matters somehow came right in the end.

Consequently, it is surprising that Wharton, with regular evidence of Hazel's unreliability, should have selected him for the Remove teams. A 'flashy' goalkeeper and a mediocre cricketer, Hazeldene had no real claims for inclusion. Bulstrode and 'Squiff' were far more reliable custodians; while poor old Frank Nugent had much more ability than Hazel at both soccer and cricket. Yet Wharton, a shrewd skipper in other respects, gave Hazeldene repeated chances - often at the expense of his best pal, Nugent. Skinner's jibe: "Hazeldene is picked because he's Marjorie's brother" had enough substance in it to be justified.

Another aspect of this 'Hazeldene complex' was its effect on the friendship of Wharton and Cherry. Bob, poor soul, was infatuated with Marjorie - and she had a soft spot for him. Harry, however, was handsomer, more talented and cleverer than Bob - facts which Cherry was bright enough to understand - and Marjorie turned to him most frequently in times of trouble. Once or twice, Frank Richards outlined this triangular situation - but he never developed it fully. Bob, conscious of his own shortcomings, seemed to accept that Harry was more in Marjorie's favour. Wharton, clearer-headed than his pal, saw no point in falling out over what was really a temporary situation. Perhaps, too, he was smug, secure in the knowledge that Marjorie would come to him first. If the roles had been reversed, with Bob fixed as Marjorie's Number One, Harry's sensitive nature could well have reacted resentfully. (That might have made quite a story!)

Wharton's character was curiously mixed. He was sensitive, quick to take offence; yet he could be downright insensitive to the feelings of others. Nugent was often imposed upon by him - Frank had to 'understand' Harry; Harry rarely tried to 'understand' Frank. He was tolerant of oafs like Bunter (think of the number of times William George wangled into Wharton Lodge!); yet he was very intolerant of Bolsover Major.

Bolsover was a blustering bully - not a nice lad - but he was a keen footballer. On the rare occasions when Wharton gave him a game, Bolsover found his skipper critical and censorious. Hazeldene, a far less keen player, was tolerated much more readily. If the Hazel brand could be clutched from the burning by encouraging his sporting ambitions, why not the Bolsover brand? A fairer crack of the whip may have made Percy happier - and consequently less overbearing.

There was a nasty streak in Wharton. Usually, his relatives and familiar friends bore the brunt of this; but now and again others suffered from it. Mark Linley, the quiet, painstaking scholarship boy, incurred Wharton's displeasure when Mr. Quelch demoted Harry from Head Boy of the Remove. Linley, Wharton's replacement, got the sharp end of Harry's tongue and was 'set up' to collect a licking from Loder by a nasty trick.

The inoffensive M. Charpentier sailed between the wind and Wharton's nobility (*Magnets* 950-51) and became the object of an unpleasant feud. Though Wharton nearly always 'played the game', he lapsed sufficiently to lose the good opinion of some nice men and boys.

Another friend, exploited by Wharton, was the amiable Lord Mauleverer. Mauly, with an innocent trust in Harry's sterling qualities, failed to realise that he was being used as a

'front' for rebellious behaviour (*Magnets* 883-5). Wharton, in Mr. Quelch's bad books, had been banned from standing for re-election as Form Captain. His reaction was to 'run' Mauleverer as a candidate, and then operate as the 'power behind the throne'. Arrogance caused it all to come a cropper and Mauleverer's regard for Harry was badly damaged.

Another decent chap who incurred Wharton's displeasure was Jack Drake. In Drake's early days at Greyfriars, he became a natural rival to Wharton's leadership. Finding that Wharton had a brittle ego, Drake began poking fun at him in Skinner mode. The ribbing culminated in a series of hats, ever-increasing in size, arriving for Wharton from various local suppliers. Drake had ordered them to accommodate Wharton's 'swelling head'. Harry failed to see the joke and a feud resulted. It ended in reconciliation, but it served to illustrate that Wharton had an inflated self-esteem. Despite his positive qualities, Harry lacked the innate good-heartedness of his counterparts, Tom Merry and Jimmy Silver.

Fairly late in the *Magnet* saga (No. 1498), Wharton fell out with Monty Newland. A misspelt insult 'Sheaney' by Bunter was laughed at by Harry in Newland's presence. The Jewish lad was offended. Then, in an exchange with the tight-fisted Fisher T. Fish, Wharton told him "Don't be a Jew!" - in Newland's hearing. High words followed, with the usually confident Wharton thrown on the defensive. Embarrassed, he made matters worse with more tactless remarks - which Newland believed to represent Harry's true feelings about Jews.

Wibley, also 'miffed' with Wharton over football selection, was enlisted by Newland to exact retribution. Posing as 'Mr. Gordon', a distant relative of Wharton's, Wibley arrived in the full regalia of a 'cartoon Hebrew', complete with lisping accent and oily mannerisms. Harry, very 'hot under the collar', stood up well to the ordeal, but was distinctly relieved when the impostor was exposed.

All of which shows the abrasive side of Wharton's character. He had little time for Skinner, Levison and fellows of that ilk - a highly commendable trait. However, he could also offend decent people - with little regret on his part - if they ruffled his feathers. Linley, Newland, Mauleverer - even Wibley - all deserved better consideration than Harry gave them at various times. Temple and Hobson may have under-valued him as a 'Lower Fourth fag', but the Remove's insular position regarding games owed much to Wharton's determination to be 'top dog'. Greyfriars' junior teams suffered as a result.

However, these issues were minor blemishes on Wharton's mainly successful career. He was a good, resourceful leader, mostly good-humoured and usually upright in his attitude. Brave, loyal to his friends, tolerant of 'lame ducks' (e.g. Bunter, Alonzo Todd), Harry was an appealing enough character. The more complex traits which led to major complications in his school career will be the subject of next month's article.

**To Be Continued.**

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## FORUM

### From J.E.M. (Brighton):

An absolutely spiffing Easter Digest. Donald Campbell's and Brian Doyle's contributions are outstanding. *The Wonderful Gardens* and *Yesterday's Heroes* series each deserves, when completed, to be collected in book or booklet form.

For the rest, Mark Caldicott, George Beal, Ernest Holman and Margery Woods all brought delight while Ted Baldock's pen-portrait of Mr Prout was pure gold. Brian Sayer's continued guide to the preservation of our treasured papers is, of course, invaluable. Then, another excellent Forum (always much looked forward to) and the ever-welcome *Gems of Hamiltonia*. Need I go on? Except to ask, how do you do it, along with all your other commitments? (Your well-considered use of illustration is icing on a brilliantly-baked cake.)

### From DENNIS BIRD (Shoreham-by-Sea):

Margery Woods' April article on Diana Royston-Clarke was first-class. I had no idea Diana first came to Cliff House more or less under the aegis of Barbara Redfern, whose father had been saved from bankruptcy by Mr R-C! I look forward to Margery's further articles on the "villainesses" - is she restricting herself to Cliff House? I really must try to find time to do something on Morcove's own miscreants, especially Ursula Wade (bad certainly, but not beautiful!)

### From D. FORD (Macclesfield):

As a footnote to George Beal's April piece on the card game "Sexton Blake", the first whisper of it was in *Detective Weekly* 323 for April 29th, 1939, in the editor's "Round Table". But it was not until September 9th that it was advertised, when we learned that it was "an exciting man-hunt up against four powerful gangs", price 1/- and 2/6, the latter was of superior quality in colour. Any number up to eight could play, and the address of "Waddy Productions" was given as 27A, Farringdon Street, EC4 - I suspect a subsidiary of A.P.

John Bridgwater - *My First Razor Blade* memory - might like to know that in D.W.17 a Canadian reader wrote for the address where he could obtain more Minora razor blades - "your sample was the smoothest blade I have ever had". The wallet became a prize for readers' letters in "Round Table", which were later awarded 2/6 for the best letter and one shilling others. The oddest of these was a long letter sent anonymously written round the margins of an old copy of the *Union Jack*, and the editor asked him to get in touch.

Incidentally, *Wild West Weekly* was advertised in D.W. dated March 12, 1938, and subsequently.

### From DES O'LEARY (Loughborough):

Donald Campbell's article on *The Painted Garden*, a book I've not read, was a model of appreciative criticism. He was obviously not as enamoured of Noel Streatfeild as he is of E Nesbit and his (too short) consideration of the "middle-class" atmosphere of this book as opposed to Nesbit's was extremely interesting. It is perhaps inevitable that the middle class, with its access to education and publishing, should have dominated this field, as

every other, years ago . . . Anyway, I thought Donald's article the best of his series on gardens, not because it was his favourite but because the writing was smooth and balanced, and the judgements well reasoned and convincing.

The other outstanding one, in another outstanding series, was Brian Doyle on *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, which was full of information on this doyen of the English "silly ass/hero" and his creator, all expressed in Brian's typical style, lightly, humorously and straightforwardly. As I've said to you before, a model for us all.

**From NIC GAYLE (Newton Poppleford):**

I always promised myself that I would never allow the Pride of the Gayles to turn into one of those pen-wielding, nit-picking old buffers who produce choleric screeds and sign themselves 'yours disgustedly, Tunbridge Wells', but I saw something in the last issue of C.D. that the shade of the late great Harold Truscott pricks my conscience into saying, it shall not pass!

Re: the article on Baroness Orczy. The lady in question, born in 1865, certainly never met the composer Chopin as stated; he died in 1849.

There. I feel better now!

*(Editor's Note: Brian Doyle apologises for this slip of the typewriter. The composer in question was actually Liszt.)*

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## Temporary Change of Address

From 8th April 1998

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## THOSE BAD, BEAUTIFUL GIRLS Part 3 (cont'd.) Diana Royston-Clarke

by Margery Woods

It was our own editor who, in one of her perceptive explorations of schoolgirl fiction, coined the term 'Bouderesses' for those wilful, wayward girls who broke all the rules and flouted the conventions that governed boarding school life.

Of all the problem pupils at Cliff House Diana Royston-Clarke was the most deserving of that shady accolade and yet became the most fascinating in her complexity of character. There were many lesser bouderesses who entertained the readers and often charmed even as they shocked or repelled but none of them quite achieved the impact of Firebrand Diana or equalled the sheer panache that illuminated her character and her many exploits. In truth, Diana had only one worthy equal who defied, transgressed and went his own headstrong way not so very far distant across the playing fields of Kent. But sadly, editorial policy or politics at Amalgamated Press decreed that Diana Royston-Clarke and Herbert Vernon-Smith should never meet and perhaps clash or collude in some exciting Christmas mystery or dangerous holiday adventure. Few would dare try accurately to predict what such a meeting might have sparked off; heroism, delinquency or daring. Whatever the outcome one thing was certain, it would not have been dull.

The drawing of parallels is tempting.

Both arrived to begin their schooldays in great ostentation, dressed to the nines and totally unconcerned about any adverse reaction they might receive. It has to be said that Diana took the appearance honours. As well as style



she had dress taste and a natural beauty that scarcely needed any enhancement by artificial means. Descriptions of Smithy's early appearance picture a certain weediness and a not exactly handsome physical appearance. It took a while, with a modicum of reform and developing of sporting fitness to turn Smithy into the strong and sturdy lad he became. Diana, however, did not arrive the worse for drink! She had too much feminine respect for her looks and the retaining of her wits ever to over-indulge in alcohol, nor did she need any assistance to sparkle. But, like Smithy, she delighted in shocking authority by smoking.

Both characters were afflicted by vanity as well as bravado. The desire to show off and surpass all others was a powerful motivation in their behaviour. They both had appalling tempers, were selfish, and had indulgent fathers who lavished on them the means to indulge most of their whims. Sadly, both had a cruel undertone in their natures. Oh, Diana and Smithy would have been quite malleable and more amiable had no-one stood in their way. Unfortunately life rarely permits this happy state of affairs. Most people have to learn to give and take in life and accept that the other person is also entitled to his or her point of view. The nonconformists range from the power-seeking dictator to the whining

moaners who sap the spirits of their long-suffering contemporaries and cause much of the woe that besets the world.

Smith's worst display of total ruthlessness and wilful cruelty came in the Crusader series when his desire for power drove him quite methodically to set about getting the Famous Five expelled. Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull first, then Mark Linley, who although not one of the Five did not meet with Smith's approval. Harry Wharton was the next victim, then Bob Cherry decided it was time to call halt. Nor did it take Diana long to depose Barbara Redfern and Clara Trevlyn. Although, as did other contenders before her, she discovered that wielding power could entail hard work and the necessity to conform to some of the rules. Like Smithy, her respect for teaching staff was nil and she never hesitated to defy its authority. Even Miss Primrose, the Head, was not spared when Diana waged her wilful warfare.

In the series "Diana the Daring" (*Schoolgirl* 240-244) The Firebrand was awaiting expulsion, which after her debut assault on Cliff House had been deferred because her father was abroad and there was no-one to take responsibility for her welfare. Surely the most cast-iron escape clause of all time! So at Cliff House she had to remain, under sufferance, until her father returned. The girls thought that nothing could stave off her departure that day and naively expected to see a subdued Diana going to her disgraceful doom. How little they understood about the nature of this disdainful, contemptuous new girl. When summoned to Primmy's study Diana appeared in a yellow polo sweater, a tweed jacket that squared her shoulders and emphasised her slim waist. She swaggered jauntily to Miss Primrose's study, where, during the course of a startling confrontation between her father and the Headmistress, she smacked the face of Stella Stone, Head Girl of Cliff House, and appeared quite confident of getting away with this outrageous act.

The awful truth filtered through to the school. Mr Royston-Clarke had bought out Sir Willis Gregory's holding in the school and was now Chairman of the Governors. Miss Primrose could reinstate his daughter, or go. (Shades of Mr Vernon-Smith holding his sword of Damocles over the hapless head of Dr Locke.) Primmy resigned and took over the Fourth during the absence of Miss Matthews, a sad come-down yet one that brought her a new insight into her pupils and led to a more informal friendship than was possible while she was Head. The ghastly Miss Tyler, actually an impostor, was installed in Primmy's place, which led to near anarchy at Cliff House. Only Diana could do as she pleased. This led to the formation of yet another secret society which apart from its original aim, to reinstate justice, also got involved in the second thread of the plot, which was a search for treasure, brought about by an ancient map of the school which Mr Royston-Clarke had discovered. Miss Tyler was also after the treasure, and incurred Diana's bitter enmity, never a wise thing to do.

Bessie Bunter, having the same affinity with keyholes as a certain other member of her family, was the purveyor of much of the information that reached the chums. Her excuse that she had dropped her crumpets outside Miss Drake's door and couldn't help overhearing a conversation would have amused the chums had matters not become so serious.

Diana is now Captain of the Lower School, and Sports Captain, and she is at her most ruthless as she sets about thwarting Miss Tyler, who actually beats Diana to the treasure's hiding place. There is much interweaving of plot and motive in this long, exciting series,

and little sympathy for Diana when her sins finally catch up with her. Expulsion can't be escaped when Sir Willis returns after recouping his fortune, Miss Tyler has slunk away, thankful not to be handed over to the police, Mr Royston-Clarke is probably quite happy to return his talents to the City, taking his rebellious daughter with him, and everyone is restored to their right and proper place at Cliff House, looking forward to getting on with normal school life. But not for long.

Diana reappears quite soon, working as an assistant to the Entertainment Manager at a new deluxe roadhouse not far from the school. Soon she clashes with the chums and almost everybody else, but Diana comes out on top and returns to Cliff House after her courageous rescue of Bessie during a fire. She thwarts the villains and restores the good name of Georgina Skeppington. As she is hailed as the heroine of the hour Barbara Redfern says:

"Diana, I'm sorry we haven't been great friends in the past!"

"But will we be in the future?" Diana asks . . . . She shrugs.

"Who knows? I might even come back to Cliff House. What things we could do together, enemy-friend of mine . . . . Solve more mysteries . . . . Don't worry. You haven't heard the last of me . . . . like the bad penny Diana will turn up."

And she did. To gradual reform and a guarded friendship with Babs, as with Smithy and Wharton. Like Smithy, Diana would always plunge to the rescue of someone in danger, heedless of her own safety, and she would many times offer help to someone in difficulties, even though her Good Samaritan impulses often landed her in trouble with authority. But then, Diana never worried about Authority, any more than did her alter ego at Greyfriars. Both could be philanthropic. Perhaps Smithy was a bit more sincere about it and did not always boast of his good deeds, while Diana liked the element of self publicity her efforts could bring, as in the series where she befriends a small council school youngster who has singing talent. Regardless of expense, Diana nurtures this talent, fending off the snobbish Lydia Crossendale set in the process. But Diana had to queen it as well, taking the credit for her prodigy.

Of the pair, perhaps Smithy became more capable of remorse for his sins and also of loyalty, as shown in the accounts of his close friendship with Tom Redwing, even though his ungovernable temper often got the better of him and ended with a rift. Diana's main loyalty was to herself, but despite this she became capable of caring for the troubles of others, as when she clashed with the treacherous Faith Ashton. In this story Diana discovers what it is like to be the victim of another's plotting. She is pushed out of the leading role in Mabel Lynn's latest play, written by her cousin Raymond. (Amateur dramatics were an absolutely fail-safe plot provider at Cliff House.) But Faith's scheming rebounds on herself when Diana meets a young ex-actress employed by Faith's family and unfairly dismissed. In true Smith style Diana befriends this girl and coaches her in the part, provides her costume, and on the day of the performance spirits Faith away by car and dumps her thirty miles away in the middle of the Downs. Back at the school Diana finds a frantic producer and triumphantly brings in the new star. An earlier Diana would have reclaimed her part but not now, even though she watches with mixed emotions as her discovery triumphs. She has made amends for some of her own mean tricks and she has done a good turn to Mabel's cousin, as well as bringing happiness and the promise of great

future success to an ill-treated young actress. Best of all she has outwitted the scheming Faith, who at present is trudging in rain and a foul temper back to Cliff House.

Faith Ashton would doubtless think twice before she ever again tried to outwit Diana Royston-Clarke.

So another character with the same strange mixture of good and bad enchanted readers of the Cliff House stories, as Smithy had long fascinated the readers of the *Magnet*. There have been whispers of a story that might at last bring them together in a partnership of guile and ruthlessness against crime. Who knows? Perhaps some day . . .



AS Miss Bullivant led Diana away, the Firebrand whirled on Faith. "You spying little sneak!" she blazed. "I suppose I've got you to thank for this!" Babs & Co. watched in dismay. Even if Faith had worked this, how was the play to go on without Diana?

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## YESTERDAY'S HEROES

### The Scarlet Pimpernel Part 2:

by Brian Doyle

There have been many books and stories published in later years and based on the premise of the Scarlet Pimpernel and his exploits. The most notable in recent years has probably been the trilogy of novels by C. Guy Clayton, comprising *Daughter of the Revolution* (1984), *Such Mighty Rage* (1985) and *Bordeaux Red* (1986); sub-titled *The Blakeney Papers*, these purport to be based on the Memoirs of Lady Marguerite Blakeney, widow of Sir Percy, and reveal that she too was secretly a dashing heroine and adventuress. Rather in the tradition of the *Flashman* novels by George Macdonald Fraser, they are aimed at a popular readership. One jacket-blurb reads: "She had the heart of a lion, the body of a goddess - and the morals of an alley cat!" That sound you can hear is that of Baroness Orczy merrily spinning in her grave . . .!

There have been many more 'follow-ups' and 'sequels', notably S. Walkey's serials about 'Jack-a-Lantern' in the boys' magazine *Chums* and George E. Rochester's *Ghosts of the Guillotine* (*Ranger* 1933) and *The Shadow of the Guillotine* (*The Magnet* 1929). There were also novels by Sabatini, Weyman, Henty and Dennis Wheatley.

Orczy was undoubtedly an entertaining and highly successful author, but her prose style sometimes left a lot to be desired. Her characters were forever speaking 'drily' and she was a great fan of the adverb; everyone said things softly, calmly, sadly, excitedly,

laconically, menacingly, and so on, and there were many 'mayhaps' along the way. But her readers didn't seem to mind and her books sold in vast numbers (he remarked drily . . .)

Baroness Orczy and her husband, Montagu Barstow, moved to Monte Carlo after the First World War and lived there virtually for the rest of their lives (though making frequent return visits to England). They had earlier (1908-11) lived at Thanet, near Margate, in Kent, for three years. They were still in Monte Carlo during the German Occupation in World War Two and, in fact, their flat was a stone's throw from the local Gestapo Headquarters! They had one son, John M. Orczy-Barstow, who was born in London in 1899, and who became a barrister, being 'called to the Bar' in 1924.

Orczy died in 1947, at the age of 82, soon after the publication of her autobiography *Links in the Chain of Life*, and four years after the death of her husband. In her photographs Orczy has the appearance of a plump, well-groomed, motherly and benevolent version of that late and well-loved comedy actress Irene Handl.

The very first edition of *The Scarlet Pimpernel* in 1905 carries the dedication: "To Julia Neilson and Fred Terry, whose genius created the roles of Sir Percy and Lady Blakeney on the stage, this book is affectionately dedicated". Which leads us on to the first stage production . . .

In that first, all-important stage production of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, written by Orczy, together with her husband, Montagu Barstow (remember publication of the novel depended upon it too), Fred Terry and Julia Neilson, who were probably, along with Seymour Hicks and Ellaline Terriss, the most important and popular husband-and-wife theatrical partnership of their time - perhaps like Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh in theirs - played the roles of Sir Percy and Lady Blakeney, with Terry also producing. The evil Chauvelin was portrayed by Horace Hodges, and the play opened initially at the Theatre Royal, Nottingham, in October, 1903. After further short runs in Newcastle and Dublin, it opened at the New Theatre (now the Albery) in London's West End, in January, 1905 (with the book, as I've said, being published simultaneously, so that both play and book would hopefully benefit from the resulting reviews and publicity; this was as unique then as it would be today, but it seemed to work).

But the play wasn't an overnight success, by any means. Most of the reviews were lukewarm to bad, and the play performed to half-empty houses for the first week or so. Terry did his best to 'paper the house', i.e. give away lots of complimentary tickets, and even contemplated closing the production if things didn't improve. But, towards the end of the second week, favourable word-of-mouth reactions allied to the star names of Terry and Neilson, began to have their effect, and the show became a huge success and the talk of London. It was a success that was to last for at least the next 25 years, with Terry and Neilson touring the play throughout Britain, and reviving the play for many further London runs. In 1929, Phyllis Neilson-Terry (actress-daughter of the star couple) took her mother's role as Lady Blakeney, opposite her father, at London's Strand Theatre.

Phyllis also played the role again opposite the great Donald Wolfit in yet another revival of the play at the 'Q' Theatre, Kew, Surrey, in 1936. Wolfit had earlier played the role of Armand St. Juste in the play on a tour with the Terrys in 1923, so they were old friends. "Wolfit held my parents in enormous respect and regard, and was also slightly in awe of them," Phyllis once told me when I happened to be on a film location in Italy with

her in 1959. She was then an elderly lady but full of fun and stories about her distinguished career.

Other notable portrayals of Sir Percy in subsequent stage productions included Derrick de Marney in 1938, Robert Eddison in 1940, and Donald Sinden in 1985 (when the play was a huge London hit at Her Majesty's Theatre, when it was a 'sell-out' for the entire run).



Leslie Howard in the London Films 1935 production of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*.

Leslie Howard and Merle Oberon, with Raymond Massey as Chauvelin, plus an excellent supporting cast, which included James Mason in his film debut in a 'bit' part. Charles Laughton was originally scheduled to play Sir Percy, but plans changed when the public reaction to this juicy bit of news was extremely anti. The joke was, of course, that this oh-so-British film was made by, and starred, foreigners! Producer Alexander Korda was Hungarian, so was Orczy, and Leslie Howard was of Hungarian descent; the art director (Korda's brother) was another Hungarian and even the co-screenwriter, Lajos Biro, was Hungarian too (whether or not he wrote with one was not disclosed!). Merle Oberon was Anglo-Indian and Raymond Massey was Canadian. Even the director, Harold Young, was American.

'The Scarlet Pimpernel' made his motion picture bow in a silent film of that name in 1917. The American film starred Dustin Farnum as Sir Percy and Winifred Kingston as Lady Blakeney. The two - leading stars of their time - had earlier starred in two landmark films of the period: *The Squaw Man* and *Sign of the Cross* (both 1914). *The Elusive Pimpernel* (1917) was a British silent film, with Cecil Humphreys and Marie Blanche; in 1923 came another British silent *I Will Repay*, with Holmes Herbert as Sir Percy.

*The Triumph of the Scarlet Pimpernel* (1928) was a British Gainsborough silent, with the distinguished Matheson Lang and Marjorie Hume as the Blakeneys, and Nelson Keys as Robespierre. This was produced by Herbert Wilcox (who later married Anna Neagle and directed many of her films). This one was re-titled *The Scarlet Daredevil* in the USA, where it was feared that American audiences might confuse the last word of the title with its first four letters . . .

In 1935 came what many people regard as the best and definitive screen version of the story. *The Scarlet Pimpernel* starred

Gossip Department: Leslie Howard, quite a ladies' man generally, it seems, was reputed to have had a passionate love affair with co-star Oberon during the entire shooting schedule. But Alex Korda had the last laugh - she eventually married him!

Orczy herself was not happy with Howard's casting. "He was not Fred Terry," she remarked tartly. "Leslie Howard was short and did not look strong enough to dominate certain situations; nor could he tower over Chauvelin (who was played, as it happened, by a very tall man (Massey))."

Nigel Bruce (the screen's most famous Dr. Watson) played the Prince of Wales, who at one point is asked: "Do you know who he is, sir?" (meaning the Pimpernel). Bruce answered with the famous and oft-quoted line: "I don't, but I confess I feel a little prouder when I know that he is an Englishman . . . ."

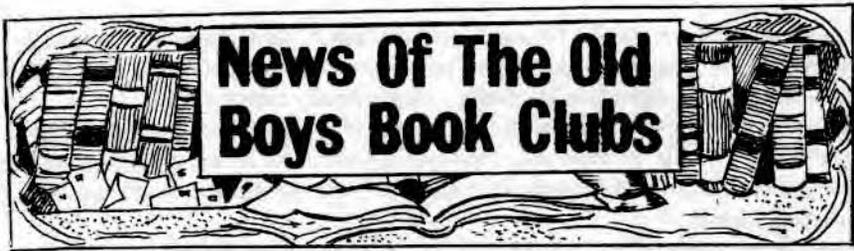
Korda's follow-up to this successful blockbuster was rather less successful. *The Return of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, in 1938, with Barry K. Barnes and Sophie Stewart, and Francis Lister as Chauvelin, didn't really bear comparison. It was Barnes' first picture and, likeable and competent as he was, he lacked the starry charisma of Howard. The latter, by the way, had been offered the chance to repeat his role in the next film, but had politely turned it down to go off to Hollywood to co-star in something called *Gone With the Wind* ... The director was one Hans Schwartz, who at least wasn't Hungarian.

In 1950 came *The Elusive Pimpernel*, again produced by Korda, and directed by the magnificent team of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger. It was a re-make of the 1935 version and was originally intended as a musical! Plans changed and it wasn't. David Niven and Margaret Leighton starred, with Cyril Cusack as Monsieur C. and Jack Hawkins as the Prince of Wales. It was a sad flop (or should it be fop?) both in Britain and the USA where it was titled *The Fighting Pimpernel*.

*Pimpernel Smith* (1941) had Leslie Howard as a modern rescuer of scientists and artists from the Nazis, and *Madame Pimpernel* (1945) had Gracie Fields, no less, as a 'lady Pimpernel' rescuing Resistance workers in Paris during World War Two. *Don't Lose Your Head* (1966) was a 'Carry On' comedy take-off of the story with Sid James as the Pimpernel figure (in this case called 'The Black Fingernail'). In 1959 came the last cinematic word on the subject: *The Scarlet Pimpernickel*, a Warner Bros. animated cartoon starring Daffy Duck . . . !

Space precludes detailed mention of the TV and radio productions, but briefly: The first TV production (live) was in 1950, with James Carney and Margaretta Scott. In 1955, Tony Britton was Sir Percy in a BBC TV production. In 1956, Marius Goring starred as the Pimpernel in no fewer than 39 half-hour episodes on ITV; newly-written adventures dealing with Sir Percy's bachelor days. *The Elusive Pimpernel* was a good 10-part BBC TV series with Anton Rodgers and Diane Fletcher. But the best of all versions of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, in my opinion, came in 1982, with a feature-length TV movie starring Anthony Andrews and Jane Seymour, with Ian McKellen as Chauvelin. Clive Donner directed and it was excellent in all departments. It was repeated in 1995 and 1996. If you missed it, do look out for its next screening. Lots of radio versions, but no room to mention them.

As Dickens said of the French Revolution in *A Tale of Two Cities*: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times . . . ." It certainly became the former for Baroness Orczy when she created 'The Scarlet Pimpernel' - and also for all her many readers . . . .



### **NORTHERN O.B.B.C.**

Easter holiday commitments resulted in a lower than usual attendance at the April meeting. After discussing Club business and the various hobby meetings this year, starting with the William and Biggles & Co. meetings this month, we listened to an interesting couple of talks.

Paul Galvin brought along the recently published *Biggles Does Some Homework* and also read from *Bookworm Droppings* by Shaun Tyas, which is a collection of remarks overheard in second-hand bookshops ranging from the utterly repellent to the bizarre.

After refreshments Darrell Swift spoke on Ken Holt and Sandy Allen versus the Hardy Boys.

**Paul Galvin**

### **LONDON O.B.B.C.**

A compact band of members gathered at the Ealing home of Mark Taha for the meeting on Sunday May 19th, including founder-member Bob Whiter and his wife Marie, visiting from the U.S.A.

A leisurely afternoon's entertainment featured quizzes from Bob Whiter and Bill Bradford, a Biggles reading by Vic Pratt, and Alan Pratt enthusing about the much-maligned third series of the Sexton Blake Library. Alan drew particular attention to the work of forgotten writer Warwick Jardine, a specialist in stories featuring moorland and marshland settings, about whom little is known. But surely someone amongst the *Collectors' Digest* readership can shed some light on this enigmatic wordsmith?

The next meeting will take place at the Parsons household near Salisbury on Sunday 17th May. See the newsletter for further details.

**Vic Pratt**

### **SOUTH WESTERN O.B.B.C.**

Ten members met at the Uphill home of Tim Salisbury for another enjoyable meeting. E. Grant Macpherson read a well-researched article "Grown Up With Greyfriars" by Gilbert Saunders from the Winter 1997 edition of *This England*. He followed this with a talk about Edwy Searles Brooks and the Nelson Lee Library. Of particular interest was a sepia portrait photograph signed "cheerily" by Brooks that "Mac" had received, on the condition imposed by the author, that he send a signed photograph of himself to Brooks! Mac also presented an original typescript of the 1927 story "The Jungle Barring-Out" - no. 5 in the Congo Series; Brooks dictated such stories direct to his wife who typed them out.

Una Hamilton-Wright's talk was entitled "A Cake And A Spot of Sticky" on the subject of her uncle, Charles Hamilton, and food, and amusingly demonstrated how his suppressed childhood longings for good food later found its outlet in Bunter's gargantuan feasts! "A Spot of Sticky" was how her uncle referred to the sweets he gave to Una.

This was a most apt time to break for the usual study spread provided by Mrs Salisbury. Newcomers Patrick Morley and Reg Andrews, the latter all the way from Salisbury, were certainly impressed by the lavish choice of comestibles on display, not all of which was consumed, as no Bunter was present!

**Continued on page 31.**

# Books



Reviewed by  
MARY  
CADOGAN

**DICTIONARY OF BRITISH COMIC ARTISTS, WRITERS AND EDITORS** by Alan Clark, published by The British Library, £40.00

This is a book which, despite its very high cover price, deserves a place on many private and public library shelves. The author, Alan Clark, is well known as an authority on British comic papers, and for the magazine *Golden Fun* (now, alas, apparently defunct) which he and his wife,

Laurel, produced over several years. Expectedly, his appreciation of the work of the artists, and to some extent the writers and editors, shines through this informative book. With 196 pages and many well chosen black and white illustrations from a wide range of comics, as well as some photographs of comics' contributors, it is a valuable reference book - as well as a nostalgic treat.

However, striking a critical note, I feel that it should be called a 'guide' rather than a 'dictionary'. It is in many ways (as the author says in his introduction) 'far from complete'. But there are strange omissions - and even stranger inclusions! The book supposedly deals with comics, but obviously story-papers frequently crop up. I have no argument with this, as of course many illustrators worked on both comics and story-papers (as well as on newspapers and magazines). Still, in this context it seems odd that, for example, Flora Klickmann, a

From Alan Clark's Dictionary.



'Sexton Blake on Secret Service' by Alfred Taylor:  
THE KNOCK-OUT COMIC 1941

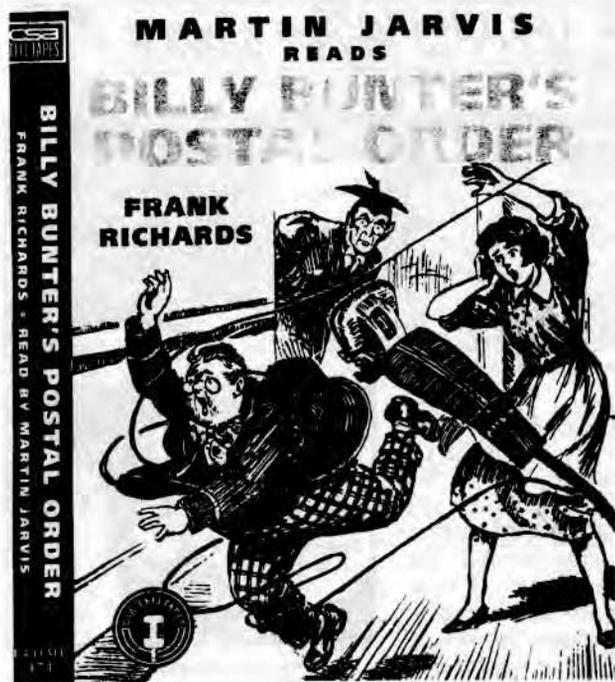
fairly early editor of the (then) staid and absolutely far-from-comic *Girl's Own Paper*, is given an entry while Charles Hamilton, whose characters inspired many comic and story-paper artists, is not. (He gets in only as a very brief 'aside' in the entries on C.H. Chapman and Frank Minnitt.)

As well as baffling omissions, this Dictionary is sometimes surprising in the way in which it allocates space to the entries. T.E. Laidler, for example, who did such prolific work for the Amalgamated Press, is given only seven short lines (which do not even mention the fact that he was the regular Cliff House artist in *The Schoolgirl* for so long) while many lesser lights are allocated long and detailed sections of the book. Alan Clark is, nevertheless, to be congratulated on his determination to throw light on so many contributors to British comics who, for decades, were published only anonymously, and his book will be welcomed by many hobbyists and historians.

**CADS, privately published by Geoff Bradley, 9 Vicarage Hill, South Benfleet, Essex SS7 1PA.**

I have been browsing through this most intriguing "irregular magazine of comment and criticism about crime and detective fiction". Issue number 32 contains amongst other interesting features a check-list by Robert Kirkpatrick of school-based crime novels (this mainly deals with adult books and excludes novels set in girls' or primary schools, or stories in juvenile papers). Comprising eighty A4 pages, *CADS* at £5.00 a copy for U.K. residents (and extra for postage to those overseas, of course) is a good and stimulating journal.

**BILLY BUNTER'S POSTAL ORDER** by Frank Richards, Double audio cassette from CSA Telltapes (£8.49)



Martin Jarvis, the award-winning 'king of the spoken word', is already celebrated as a reader of Richmal Crompton's William stories on radio and cassettes. Last year he turned his attentions to Frank Richards with a cassette reading of *Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School*. He has now followed this up with *Billy Bunter's Postal Order* (based, of course, on one of the post-war Bunter books). It is a delight and, happily, its cover is an adaptation of one of Macdonald's illustrations for the book, a great improvement on the rather grotesque caricature of Bunter which adorned the earlier Jarvis cassette. Hopefully this more attractive cover will help to ensure that *Billy Bunter's Postal Order* reaches the wider audience that it

deserves. It is obtainable from bookshops - but, in case of difficulty, please contact CSA Telltapes, 101 Chamberlayne Road, London NW10 3ND: telephone number 0181 960 8466.

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**THE COLIN CREWE PERMANENT WANTS LIST:** of boys' and girls' storypapers, comics, libraries and annuals. Both loose issues and bound volumes sought. I will pay good prices for quality items & collections. I support the Old Boys' Book Clubs & Collectors' Digest. I will keep your treasures circulating merrily around the members of our hobby circle.

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**Continued from page 28.**

Laurence Price then spoke on the theme of *Alice*, both about the fictional and the real Alices, together with a little about Lewis Carroll and Tenniel too. Some extracts from the *Alice* books were read, with numerous editions by many illustrators for those assembled to pore over.

**Laurence Price.**

\*\*\*\*\*

**It helps the C.D. if you advertise your "For Sales" and Wants in it. The rates are: 4p per word, £5 for a quarter page, £10 for a half page and £20 for a whole page.**

\*\*\*\*\*

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Dandy Monster Comic for 1952. Some flaking of spine covering.

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2" split down back inner hinge - easily repaired. Internally a tight copy. £42.50.

Dandy Book 1962 G+ only. £8.50

Dandy Book 1965. Name on name space else a virtually fine copy. £35.00.

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Kit Carson's Cowboy Annual 1955 VG/VG+ copy. £8.00.

Kit Carson's Cowboy Annual

1960 VG £7.00.

Knockout Fun Book 1941 1st issue.

Has been re-spined. Boards are very worn, covers rubbed. Some margin chips,

pages a little browned. Only G+ but a scarce book. waf £75.00.

Knockout Fun Book 1945 Price clipped. Colouring picture partly completed. Edges little bumped.

Generally a nice copy. £50.00.

Pip & Squeak 1931. Front inner hinge strengthened, some colouring on about 7 pages.

Generally VG £9.50.

Radio Fun 1948 Front hinge just slightly loose. Corners bumped, covers rubbed. A G+ copy.

£15.00.

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**Matthews, its one time editor.**

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Jul-Dec 1943 nos 227-252.

Amalgamated Press File volume. Comics lovely File Volume stamps on binding else VG

£225.00.

Jul-Dec 1945 Nos 332-357. In Amalgamated Press file binding.

Binding very worn and split at front hinge with the first page of the first comic attached to the fep.

£175.00.

Jan-Jun 1947 nos 410-435.

Comics generally VG or better in fine binding. £125.00.

Jan-Jun 1950 nos 567-591

1 page of one comics has had four tiny strips cut out (the captions to an 'Our Ernie' strip) 1 page taped in else VG in VG+ binding. £110.00.

KNOCKOUT: Complete half

year loose copies:

Jul-Dec 1949 nos 540-566, so

27 issues. 7 just less than VG

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Editor: Mary Cadogan, 7 Ashfield Close, off Brackley Road, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 1SN

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