

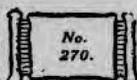
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COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL.52

No.622

OCTOBER 1998

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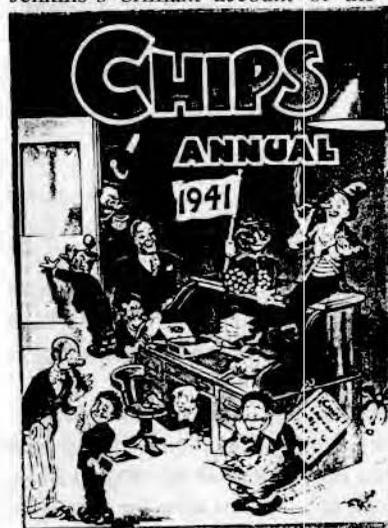
OUR ANNUAL

Last month I promised to give you an advance peep into the pages of our Annual which - as always - promises to be a grand book. Packed with nostalgic gems, atmospheric pictures and interesting reflections on our hobby, it will be an ideal companion for the Christmas and New Year season.

The work of Frank Richards, of course, continues to stimulate the imagination of our contributors. Amongst the Hamiltonian items so far received are Una Hamilton Wright's delightful *Memories of Uncle Charley*, with an unpublished story by the great man; *The Masters of Greyfriars*, Roger Jenkins's brilliant account of the merits, foibles and inter-



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relationships of the school's teaching staff; *Greyfriars Revisited*, a further bumper crop of colourful vignettes by Ted Baldock; a lively dip into the annals of Rookwood by Leslie Laskey, and a shrewdly entertaining assessment of Bunter at his best (or worst!) by Peter Mahony. More Hamiltonia is promised by some of our favourite contributors and, illustratively, we have a C.H. Chapman 'scoop'.

The spotlight falls onto the work of E.S. Brooks in *The Secret of the End Study*, in which Ray Hopkins takes us back to St. Frank's, and in an article from Mark Caldicott. Blakiana is represented by those two stalwarts of the saga, J.E.M. and Reg Hardinge, and indeed it also has an intriguing place in Derek Hinrich's account of a variety of invasion and espionage stories, *Ancestral Voices Propheying War*.

Brian Doyle, an expert not only on old boys' books but in several branches of popular culture, has written a truly star-studded article with an autobiographical slant, *You Ought To Be In Pictures*, while Dawn Marler provides seasonable atmosphere in *Christmas Stories and the Schoolgirls' Own Library*.

I am happy to be able to inform you that Tony Glynn has responded to my recent C.D. appeal for an article celebrating 60 years of the *Beano* while Brian Bunker has contributed a further tribute to the D.C. Thomson publications with *Smith of the Lower Third - The First Few Weeks*.

So far, so fascinating - as I am sure you will agree. And there is much more! Watch this space next month for details.

Meanwhile let me remind those of you who have not yet ordered your Annual that the price, including postage and packing, is £11.00 for U.K. readers and £12.50 for those living abroad. I would appreciate receiving your orders as soon as possible, please.

Happy Browsing, as always.

MARY CADOGAN

THE MAGIC-BEANO BOOK



A GREYFRIARS INSTITUTION

by Ted Baldock

*The gates are mine to open,
As the gates are mine to close.*

Kipling. "Our Lady of the Snows."

William Gosling grunted, cocked an ancient ear, gazed longingly at the half consumed glass of amber comfort at his elbow, then sighed slowly - all Gosling's actions were performed with an absolute minimum of haste - removed his spectacles, folded the *Friardale Gazette* and grunted again before heaving himself from the comfortable recesses of his creaky old basket chair by the fire. Peering at his clock on the mantelshelf which recorded the quarter after ten he muttered "Some young raskil I'll be bound hexpecting to be let in and no report made."

It never failed to give Gosling a certain grim satisfaction, this anticipation of 'nailing' and reporting some unfortunate who, though possibly for quite legitimate reasons, had been unable to make the 'deadline'. Gosling may have been lax (as indeed he was) in many respects, but, be it said, never has he been known to lock up a second after the appointed hour.



There he would be waiting some minutes beforehand, with the heavy old gate key in his horny hand, rather like a starter with his pistol waiting to give the signal for a race to commence. As soon as the first mellow chime produces its usual quiet echo, he will twist the key in the great lock and thus cut Greyfriars off from the world for another night, placing in jeopardy all those who are not yet within 'gates'. We all have certain little foibles which afford us pleasure. Our Gosling is no exception to this general rule. His particular little foible was - as may be imagined - not very popular with the Greyfriars fellows.

Neither was it with the majority of the masters, although for reasons of maintaining discipline they presented an official front of approval. Even Dr. Locke,

that mildest of gentlemen, often sighed in the privacy of his study and secretly wished that Gosling would be just a trifle less militant in this respect.

"Wot I says is this 'ere!" Thus does 'Gossy' proceed with all the verbosity of the ancient, making not the smallest concession to the laws of grammar. And what Gosling says, in the end usually prevails. He has been for far too long the custodian of the old Greyfriars gate to be lightly turned aside. All ancient traditions tend to die hard. In Gosling's case they just refuse to die - perhaps happily for us.

Mr Hacker may remark with his customary acidity that Gosling has outgrown his usefulness, that he "lacks respect due to members of the staff and should be retired". This is very much a minority opinion. In a rather bizarre way 'Gossy', being an institution, is loved and respected by most of the fellows. Even Horace Coker, not the most observant of individuals, grudgingly admits that "Gosling is an old ass - but not such a bad old ass after all". This originating from such a source is praise indeed.

'Gossy' can - and not infrequently does - look back over many years of faithful service at Greyfriars, and has in consequence become a somewhat 'Chips'-like character in that no-one seems to remember a time when he was not part of the school scene, presiding over 'lock-up' and other domestic functions.

He has been known - having been primed and suitably mellowed by the imbibing of several glasses of a certain fiery liquid - to wax reminiscent and has referred, among other activities, to certain glorious occasions when he played a near central part in various 'hoistings'. This is history indeed, for such proceedings passed into limbo many years ago.

Gosling must have been rather more supple in those far-off days. Notwithstanding his crabbed sense of humour (the result of many years of japing and ragging by generations of young gentlemen - Greyfriars fellows and others) he remembers these scenes even now with much clarity and a degree of relish.

It may be observed that Gosling's nasal organ displays mute and irrefutable evidence of his long-time love for and adherence to the great god Bacchus (which deity, from the shades wherever he may dwell, must be awfully proud of him). But 'Gossy', with vehemence natural to such protestations, argues that his nose's rosy glow is the result of the perpetual cold winds from the sea and the sharp frosts of winter.

It could be argued with some justification that he should have been honourably pensioned off years ago and replaced by a younger, more amenable gate-keeper. This would, of course, have created problems, for we are not dealing with characters moving in an ordinary world but a timeless dream world in which the irascible Gosling is as fixed and immutable as were the laws of the Medes and Persians.

We forgive the excesses of this living and grunting legend, this perfect epitome of the 'sere and yellow', and his frequent growls of "Them dratted boys should all be drowned at birth". (A rather drastic outlook for mankind, Gossy old man - not to mention your position at Greyfriars.)

A quotation from Harold Avery's book *The Dormitory Flag* may not be entirely out of place here.

'The unfortunate Hake was being hunted and worried in a manner calculated to make him end his days in a lunatic asylum. It was "Hake, you duffer, where's my other pair of boots?" - "I say, Hake, have you found my fretwork saw?" - "Look here, Hake, you've given me the wrong label." - "Now then, Hake old chap, just pull this strap tight." - "HAKE, ARE YOU DEAF?" - "Have you got a bit of rope? No? Well, if you find any, go and hang yourself."

From all of which we may gather some slight idea of the travails to which 'Gossy' was subjected. Substitute Hake for our own museum piece and one has a fair idea of the pressures under which old 'Gossy' labours at the end of term when everybody requires his services at once.

Fortunately this is a 'palm-itching' time when certain - usually small - remunerations come his way. The philosophical Gosling is aware that an accumulation of small 'tips' soon accrues into something substantial. Thus it is his custom at this time to tone down his grunts and threats. Ancient though he may be, he possesses a certain native guile that is characteristic of porters and gate-keepers at large, and a very necessary defence against the 'japes' and teasings of generations of schoolboys.

Johnson's words would seem appropriate when applied to our ancient porter:
'He was not of an age, but for all time.'



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A HALLOWE'EN TALE

by Reg Hardinge

Gwyn Evans's *Black Magic* (U.J. No. 1101) dealing with modern witchcraft is particularly tailored to chill the wits and bewilder the minds of those who attach any significance to the extraordinary things that are alleged to happen on the night of October 31st.

During his nocturnal surveillance on Hangman's Hill, Tinker was petrified when there appeared in the sky the tattered figure of a gaunt old crone riding through the air on a broomstick in the moonlight. She wore a high-coned hat and long, loose robes. Her grey hair streamed behind her, and the wind seemed to shriek and howl through the downs with unholy glee.

Detective-Inspector Coutts has invited Blake to participate in a case he was investigating in Cheyne Walk - the curious suicide of a young artist named Darnley. The trail led to Lucas Crowe, the black magician and self-styled leader of the occult circle in Chelsea.

Soon Blake discovered that the luscious Selma Dane, the embodiment of Chelsea's 'advanced' femininity and Crowe's constant companion, has enlisted the black magician's aid to rid her of her cousin, Sonia Dane. Sonia stood in the way of Selma inheriting a vast fortune from their uncle, Sir William Buchan, who was seriously ill; furthermore Sonia had stolen the affection of the man, Brian

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Barrymore, whom Selma wanted to marry.

Pedro provided the initial evidence that the figure in the sky was not supernatural. The bloodhound retrieved a strange black hat, shaped like a cone, from a field in the vicinity of Hangman's Hill. A tab inside the crown bore the name of a well-known Wardour Street firm of theatrical costumiers. It transpired that the broomstick was tipped with magnetic steel. Perched on it was the dummy figure of a witch, supported by two hydrogen balloons, and containing a wireless antenna. The whole figure of fantasy was controlled and guided by a wireless set operated by Crowe's manservant, Ah Foo, a Chinaman.

The evil Lucas Crowe had used a subtle but insidious poison to achieve his ends. The correct dosage produced melancholia which eventually induced its victims to commit suicide. For some unknown reason Crowe wanted Darnley out of the way. The artist was a drug addict and Crowe was able to lace the cocaine he was taking with the pernicious drug. Darnley finally blew his brains out. Crowe also impregnated the cigarettes that Sonia Dane smoked with the drug. When Sonia jumped off Waterloo Bridge Crowe's mission for Selma would have been completed but for Sexton Blake, who rescued her from a watery grave. Crowe, having Selma in his tower, administered the drug to her as well, and forced her to sign a document agreeing to pay him £10,000 from the amount she would receive from her deceased uncle's estate.

Blake, disguised as Crowe's manservant Ah Foo, gained admission to the magician's residence and arrested him pending Coutts's arrival. On two other occasions Blake posed as a Chinaman. In G.H. Teed's *When Greek Meets Greek* (U.J. No. 488) he was a cook on Yvonne Cartier's yacht, the 'Fleur-de-Lys', and his encounter with two vicious crooks in E.S Brooks's *The Affair of the Bronze Monkey* (U.J. No. 800) almost ended in his demise.



BLACK, WHITE AND GRAY Part Eight - The Boot Boy's Friend

by Mark Caldicott

"The Boot-Boy Baronet" (*Nelson Lee Library* 1st NS 90, 21-Jan-28) sees the arrival of Vivian Travers. We meet him boarding the train at Victoria Station, bound for Bannington and his place in the Remove at St. Frank's. Despite the fact that he has a first class ticket, revealing that he is from a wealthy background, he seeks out the company of other Remove fellows who have to be content with Third Class travel. That he is willing to travel Third Class endears him to his new colleagues and they are set to get on well- until Travers lights a cigarette.

This immediately puts doubt into the minds of the others. We know why - it has been well established in our consideration of Hart and Fullwood that smoking is item one on the checklist of attributes of the boulder. Amongst the fellows of St. Frank's, smoking is a hallmark of the weak, the foolish and the 'bad type'. Travers appears neither weak nor foolish, but if he smokes, is he really the decent fellow he appears? Most of the fellows accept his freedom to act as he wishes, but they distance themselves from him. Handforth

is more direct in his disapproval: he snatches the cigarette out of Travers' mouth, causing Travers some discomfort. Travers' reaction to this high-handedness is to smooth over the problem and to accommodate the wishes of his fellows by refraining from smoking for the rest of the journey. By the time Bannington is reached, his stock has risen again.

At Bannington Station Handforth's characteristic reaction to newcomers asserts itself - he picks a fight with Travers, of course. Travers shows that he is a cool customer and that his style is non-aggressive. He is practised in ju-jitsu, which, it may be noted, is the art of defence and not attack. Handforth ends up on his ear - in front of Irene Manners - and entirely through his own doing ends up looking foolish.



Drawing such a character has the effect of challenging some of the standard moralising we saw in the Hart and Fullwood episodes. Hart had rejected smoking; Travers still enjoys cigarettes and condones the habit in his study mates, even though it is against the rules. To some extent this leaning towards the acceptability of smoking could be indicative of changing social attitudes. Brooks writes to a reader in *Between Ourselves* (NLL 1st New Series 94):

I don't see why you should drop your friend merely because he smokes. Nor is that alone a good reason for disliking him. All the other qualities in him which you do like should over-ride this one, although it happens to be distasteful to you. But your friend is certainly exhibiting a very bad quality when he tries to coerce *you* into smoking against your will. Apart from that, you may be pretty sure that there are just as good fellows among smokers as among non-smokers - often better. But I don't think any fellow ought to *start* smoking until he has *stopped* growing.

This seems to be a more lenient view of smoking than would have been found in boys' papers of earlier decades. We are nearly into the 'thirties now - the smoker's golden era. Large advertisements for BDV cigarettes now adorn the back pages of the larger format new series.

Nevertheless this creates a paradox, since although Travers is an extremely good footballer (another sign that he is not a cad), the normal line is that it is impossible to be a successful footballer if you smoke because it affects your breathing and your stamina. Although this issue is referred to, there is no evidence that smoking is affecting Travers' footballing prowess.

Brooks creates further ambivalence by putting Travers into the empty place in Study A recently vacated by Bernard Forrest, the black sheep of the Remove. Forrest, we remember, took the place of Fullwood in Study A, but time has moved on and Forrest, an arch bully, bounder and cad has recently been drummed out of the school. Now it is Travers' turn to take the place of Forrest in Study A, but things are not the same. Forrest's

erstwhile study fellows, Gulliver and Bell, were collaborators in his evil deeds and they are disliked by all the decent fellows of the Remove. Travers asserts himself as their leader and although not impressed by them, nevertheless (reflecting Brooks' views) he does not prejudice them and even offers them cigarettes on his first meeting.

This story also introduces Jimmy Potts. Jimmy is the new boot-boy of Ancient House, but his meeting with Travers renews an old friendship and reveals to us some significant facts about both Jimmy and Travers. We learn that Travers has been expelled from his previous public school for gambling. Jimmy Potts also attended that school as a pupil and is really a baronet. He is at St. Frank's because his father has died as a result of the collapse of his business and Jimmy and his mother are penniless. Potts has had to leave school to earn a living. Both Potts and Travers, then, are hiding their previous history, since revelation could result in their dismissal from St. Frank's. They agree to guard each other's secret.

As the story progresses, Travers is revealed to be fundamentally a sound, honest and honourable person. He is charming, cool-headed, a pacifist - an interesting contrast to Handforth, who is entirely the opposite of these. Travers has been expelled from his previous school, but we do not get the impression that he is a reformed character like Hart, trying to turn his back on his old ways. He does not ever seem to have been a bounder, but at the same time he has some of the characteristics we have come to associate with such - he smokes, gambles and tells lies when it suits him to do so. He accepts that he is 'deep'. He goes his own way and does not care what others think.

Travers has a great deal of sympathy for Potts' situation, particularly when Jimmy meets up with another old acquaintance. Potts is recognised by Harold Grayson, the cad of the fifth. It is Grayson's father, Mortimer Grayson, who was responsible for the collapse of the Potts family finances and therefore, indirectly, the death of Jimmy's father. However, Jimmy cannot allow Grayson to tell the truth, for if it were discovered that Jimmy were really Sir James Potts, the school would no longer be able to employ him as a boot boy and although they may find him a more fitting post elsewhere, he would not be near his mother. For this reason Potts submits to Grayson's blackmail in return for his silence.

Whilst still in shock from his encounter, Potts meets Travers and tells him about Grayson. Travers volunteers to fight Jimmy's corner and in doing so reveals one of the mainsprings of his character when he says: "Beyond football I had no interest in life. But now this omission is filled . . . there ought to be a lot of entertainment obtained out of Grayson". Travers, then, likes to seek out trouble as the spice of life.

"I shall take an early opportunity of introducing myself to Grayson," continued Travers. "He is probably one of the Bad Lads of the Fifth, and it ought to be easy for me to get an intro. I always get on well with the bad lads!"

This statement is the key to Travers' character and we'll come back to it later. Travers, however, explains his unconventional attitude by simply acknowledging that he is 'deep'.

Travers' urge to seek out thrills takes a different turn with the arrival of his new motor bike ("The Schemer of the Remove", *Nelson Lee Library* 1st NS 91, 28-Jan-28). Travers loves speed, but he is an extremely competent rider. He takes the bike around the triangle and, we note, is not above deliberately lying to Nelson Lee, to avoid getting lines. The others view this dimly, but Travers has the capacity for not caring what the other fellows think.

He is in conversation with his new study mates, discussing his love of stunt riding. Gulliver and Bell foolishly dare him to leap an eight-foot gap above a ravine close by the school. He accepts the dangerous dare even when they try to retract out of fear. Potts too tries unsuccessfully to talk him out of it.

Travers rises early to escape the attentions of the other fellows and prepares for his stunt. He manages to leap the gap but swerves on the other side and goes over the edge. He manages to hang onto a tree root and, while Gulliver and Bell flee in panic, it is left to Jimmy Potts, the only other witness, in an incident strangely reminiscent of Augustus Hart's rescue of Riley, to take his own life into his hands and rescue Travers. Travers shows pluck in this incident insofar as he remains perfectly cool even when the roots of the tree are breaking away and threatening to plunge him to his death. Potts is hanging onto Travers regardless of his own safety when Handforth and Co. arrive in time to pull them both to safety.

Jimmy has saved Travers' life at the risk of his own. Travers is now more than ever determined to champion Potts against Grayson and commences on a grand scheme to recover the Potts fortune.

To Be Continued

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BOOK REVIEW

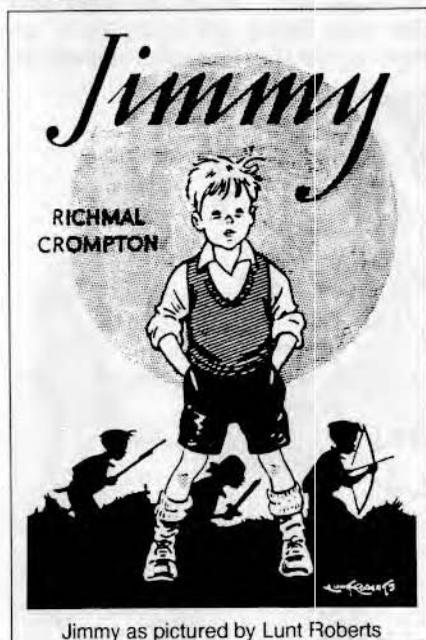
by Brian Doyle

"JUST JIMMY" by Richmal Crompton (Macmillan, 1998, £9.99)

If William Brown had had a younger brother, instead of his elder brother Robert, his name might well have been Jimmy - and here he is, back with us again after too many years, in this delightful reprint from Macmillan's (who have done us all such a great service in recent years by re-publishing the entire collection of *Just William* books).

Just to fill in new readers who perhaps haven't encountered young Jimmy before: Richmal Crompton originally wrote the 'Jimmy' stories for the London evening newspaper *The Star* in 1947, when they were illustrated by the one-and-only Thomas Henry who, of course, illustrated almost the entire 'William' saga. The new 'Jimmy' tales were much shorter than her usual 'William' stories, and so conveniently fitted onto one page of *The*

Star (plus an illustration) which was 'tabloid-sized'. They were aimed at a slightly younger readership than the 'William' adventures too (but, like all Crompton stories, could be enjoyed by all ages!). Some of the new tales also appeared in the *Liverpool Post* newspaper.



In 1949 a collection of 33 of the stories, together with 15 illustrations by Lunt Roberts, was published by Newnes under the title *Jimmy*. A further collection of 29 more stories, again illustrated by Roberts, appeared in 1951 as *Jimmy Again*.

Abridged paperback editions of these two books were published by Armada Books in 1965. *Jimmy* contained only 15 stories this time around, and 7 illustrations by Roberts, and *Jimmy Again* had 16 stories and 10 illustrations. Also in 1965, Armada brought out *Jimmy the Third*, which was a compilation of 16 stories that had already appeared in the first two books, plus 10 Roberts illustrations.

Still with me!? I go into this detail since I know that many people, especially collectors, are very interested to know all this bibliographical stuff, as indeed I am myself.

Now Macmillan's, and all credit to them, have published *Just Jimmy*, which is just a reprint of that first book of 33 stories but - and it's a big but - they have also unearthed the original Thomas Henry illustrations from *The*

Star archives, so that we now have the genuine pleasure of seeing and enjoying 33 'new' Thomas Henry illustrations. It's quite a touching reunion - as though the great Richmal Crompton herself is saying with a smile: "Jimmy, I think you met Tommy Henry (his real surname was Fisher, but everyone called him Tommy) about 50 years ago - he helped me to bring you to young life. Now here you are, together again - isn't that nice?!"

Well, yes, dear Miss C., it is nice, jolly nice - and gosh! (as Jimmy was fond of saying) these 'Jimmy' stories are really very funny and very entertaining and highly enjoyable - suitable for young and old and everything in between. I laughed aloud many times, although I'd read them all in their original editions and indeed still have those original editions on my bookshelves, next to my 'William' collection.

But, for those who perhaps don't know young Jimmy, let's introduce him Jimmy Manning is his full name and Richmal Crompton effects her own brief introduction at the start of the very first story (*Jimmy Turns the Tables*):

"He had been christened James, but he was always known as Jimmy, except when he was unpopular or in disgrace. When he was unpopular he became Jim and when he was in disgrace he became James or simply 'that boy'. He was seven and three-quarters - sturdy and rather stocky, with an expression of solemnity that was apt to mislead people, and a deep voice that was apt to break into a stammer when he was excited."

There is a 'William' equivalent in the stories too. He is Roger, Jimmy's elder brother (he's eleven, the same age as William) and he has two friends (equivalent to the 'Outlaws'),

Charles and Bill. And it's Jimmy's dream to become just like big brother Roger. His greatest joy in life is to be allowed to tag along with Roger, Charles and Bill and share their small adventures - to young Jimmy the trio are heroic beings from the legendary world of adventure and romance. Jimmy's own great friend is Bobby (the 'Ginger' equivalent). (There is even an equivalent to 'Jumble', William's mongrel dog - Jimmy and Roger own 'Sandy', who also happens to be a mongrel dog!) But when Jimmy and Bobby try to 'tag along' with Roger, the latter doesn't want to have them around (just like elder brothers the world over).

"Go away", said Roger sternly. "We don't want kids. I get sick of telling you, we don't want kids." "I'm nearly eight," pleaded Jimmy. "You're seven and three-quarters," said Roger. "Seven and three-quarters is a kid an' we don't - want - kids." "An' it's no good pretendin' to go away and then to come back again when we aren't lookin'", adds Roger.

Sounds rather like William dealing with Violet-Elizabeth, doesn't it?

And there is a sort of Violet-Elizabeth equivalent in the stories too. She's pretty little Araminta Palmer, and she has an unfortunate speech defect.

"I want to cub with you", said Araminta.

Araminta had had her adenoids removed three months ago but, having

talked through her nose for several years, she resolutely and despite all her parents' entreaties, refused to abandon the process.

"We don't want kids," said Jimmy.

"I'b dot a kid. I'b nearly six."

"You're five and three-quarters," said Jimmy (in faithful echo of his brother's earlier remarks directed at him). "Five and three-quarters is a kid an' we don't want kids I won't let you join in anythin' of mine."

"I dode wad to joid id adythig of yours," said Araminta (or should it be Adaminda?)

"You card stop be cubbing with you if I wad to."

Adaminda, by the way, is fond of chewing 'gub' given to her by 'Abericads' and which she keeps 'on the go' for 'bunths and bunths'. On one occasion, she 'lends' her 'gub' to Jimmy so that he can 'have a chew' - and he swallows it by mistake! Little



JIMMY PUT HIS HANDS ON HIS HIPS AND PLANTED HIS LEGS FIRMLY APART.

Thomas Henry's visual depiction of Jimmy.

Araminta's face darkens with anger. "You've god ad swallowed by gub that I've had for bunths and bunths!" Then her face clears and a smile spreads slowly over it. "You'll have to led be cub with you dow you've swallowed by gub. You'll have to."

You can't really blame Jimmy and Bobby for trying to get rid of her. If they do eventually tolerate her presence, she always wants to play at fairies, with Jimmy and Bobby as her attendant gnomes. She is, as she herself wouldn't dream of saying, 'a paig in the neg'.

This is quite funny stuff, I think - well it made me chuckle anyway

Not so funny is Jimmy's own impediment. He has a stammer which, despite Miss Crompton's assertion that it afflicts him only when he is excited, seems to be ever-present. I remember it tended to put me off somewhat when I first read the stories back in the late-1940s and early-1950s (ever a William fan, I thought I'd give the new Jimmy yarns a try). I also seem to recall that Jimmy's stammer caused some comment in the Press at the time, as apparently some children tried to copy it.

When I worked in a large South London public library in my early years, I also recall that some parents would complain that the books were even allowed on the shelves of the junior library, because they thought they could be a 'bad influence' and made fun of children who stammered. 'Mocking the afflicted' was one phrase used, I think. Despite all this, the 'Jimmy' books were quite popular with the juvenile borrowers and were usually 'out on loan'.

Lunt Roberts, incidentally, who illustrated the original 'Jimmy' books, was a busy and excellent artist, who illustrated many children's books and annuals of the time (including several early Malcolm Saville titles). His work also appeared in boys' papers (including *The Rocket*) and in *Punch*. He wasn't a Thomas Henry, of course, but then who was?

Speaking of Thomas Henry raises a question: why on earth does Jimmy wear a big, rather old-fashioned (even in the late-1940s) baggy, golfing-type cap in Henry's illustrations? Jimmy is rarely, if ever, seen without it and I don't believe it's mentioned in the text

My only other small criticism: it's a pity the publishers couldn't have used an enlarged and coloured Thomas Henry drawing on the cover of this new book, instead of the



somewhat insipid one (by Colin Backhouse) that they have used, which looks nothing like Henry's Jimmy. He appears to have red hair, is far too clean, looks too 'goodie-goodie' and even a trifle soulful and troubled. And his dog, Sandy, is light brown, when he should surely be black

Macmillan's plan to publish a similar new edition of the second book, *Jimmy Again*, (under the title *Just Jimmy Again*) in a year's time. Also interesting is the news that 25 more 'Jimmy' stories (never before published in

book form) have recently been discovered in the British Library. Although Macmillan's as yet have no contract to publish these, they do hope to publish a third volume, containing these tales, in due course.

All this is good news. Jimmy is good news and it's good to have him back again. Like the proverbial bad penny Jimmy has turned up again (though he's really a good penny, when all's said and done). If you've never met Jimmy, now is the time to do so; he gets into scrapes that William never even thought of!

Welcome back, Jimmy!

SECOND TIME AROUND

by Alan Pratt

Flicking through the pages of *Twentieth Century Crime & Mystery Writers* recently, I read reviews of the work of authors that I 'didn't like'.

W. Murdoch Duncan, I was informed, was a prolific and entertaining writer, strong on characterisation, whose novels generally merited a second reading. Curious. I had it fixed in my mind that I didn't like Duncan.

Patricia Wentworth, too, was accorded considerable respect as a whodunit writer of the Golden Age who turned out some high quality fiction. Not for me, though. I've never liked her stuff!

But then I got to thinking. On what was I basing my judgement? In each case, on one book read years ago. How often we make such arbitrary judgements. People visit a town or city briefly and say that they like (or don't like) the natives! All of today's popular music might be written off as rubbish on the basis of accidentally (and briefly) switching to 'Top of the Pops' on one evening last February.

In any event, I decided to give the authors in question another try. W. Murdoch Duncan wrote over 200 crime novels between 1944 and 1977 under his own name and pseudonyms such as John Cassells, Neill Graham, Peter Malloch and Lovat Marshall.

I had vague memories of one of his stories about a mysterious cowed figure prowling around a large country house and of thinking that this was pretty dull. I now read *The Dreamer Intervenes* from 1968. The Dreamer (Superintendent D. Reamer of Scotland Yard) was a series character used by Duncan in 13 titles between 1963 and 1975. This particular story revolved around the efforts of Reamer and his sidekick, Sergeant Kettle, to track down a sinister killer known as The Strangler in a small country village. Good characters (as promised), an interesting storyline and some nice touches of gentle humour. I can imagine that in 1968 this story must have seemed very old-fashioned to some readers - it is, after all, very reminiscent of Edgar Wallace - but, for my part, I really quite enjoyed it.

My memory of Patricia Wentworth was that she seemed to be obsessed with clothes, furnishings and draperies, etc., and that any enjoyment that might otherwise have been derived from her work was lost in a welter of unnecessary description. But then, of course, maybe I hadn't been in the right frame of mind.

Poison in the Pen from 1955 is really quite entertaining. The author writes well and her sleuth, Miss Silver, who appeared in over 30 titles, is as believable as any of her contemporaries. It is true that we are told in great detail what each character is wearing and how the rooms are furnished. We are even given regular progress reports on the cardigan that Miss Silver is knitting for her niece. But far from detracting from the story, I found

this level of detail highly effective in helping to convey the atmosphere of life in a country village where the smallest event is noted and commented on. The characters are, by and large, genteel and mannered and the dialogue quite credible given the limited class range depicted. It might be said that the means by which Miss Silver unmasks the killer is a trifle disappointing in that the information is largely handed to her and she is not called upon to 'detect' to any real degree. That apart, however, this is an atmospheric and occasionally exciting title and I would certainly read Miss Wentworth again.

There can be plenty of reasons why we don't enjoy a book as we should. Perhaps when we read it we are unwell or stressed. Are we struggling with small print or poor spectacles, or is it just that we are reading a 'dud'? After all, even the 'Greats' produced the odd pot-boiler.

I suppose the message is: "Don't write off an author on the basis of one bad experience. Give him, or her, another try. You might just find it to be highly rewarding!"

FORUM.

From Darrell Swift:

I was interested in Laurence Price's item "I Spy, Big Chiefs, Codes and Redskins" in the September edition of the C.D. I very well recall buying on a regular basis the "I Spy" books when my pocket money would permit during the mid to late 1950s. I used them for some self-help education, working on the principle that it was highly unlikely I would get the chance actually to "I Spy" the contents as the real thing. I had quite a little library of the books - reasonably priced and attractive, I did find them immensely interesting. Unlike Laurence, I did not join the I Spy tribe - I was not into coded messages!

From Ray Hopkins:

Referring to Dawn Marler's article on the second series *SGOL* issues, I was pleased to have the information that Horace E. Boyten was the real name of Helen Crawford. I am a collector of authors' pseudonyms (another source of listaholicism). I presume this is the same author who uses Enid Boyten who first turned up in *SGOL* 29 in December 1947. When I first encountered this I thought this a bit cheeky on the part of the AP as a quick look might cause the innocent child reader to think that the great Enid BLYTON was writing in her paper. A quick gallop through my old notes tells me that Enid Boyten first appeared in the *Girls' Crystal* in No. 492, 24 March 1945. The *Lofts/Adley Men Behind Boys' Fiction* does not give any pen-names for H.E. Boyten. It does however mention that Jack Maxwell is a pen-name of Ernest L. McKeag, given as the author of *SGOL* 398, apparently the only time this name was used in the second series *SGOL*. It was odd too that after all the years this author was known in the girls' papers as Eileen McKeay (final use in *SGOL* 326) the spelling of the surname was changed in *SGOL* 378 to Eileen McKeag.

From Mark Taha:

I always enjoy Peter Mahony's articles and his Wharton series is no exception - far from it. It had never occurred to me that Wharton and Quelch were alike - no doubt that

accounts for their occasional feuds. I must admit to liking Wharton best as a rebel. Furthermore, these series show Quelch at his worst - a beast, and an unjust beast as well! I refer to the first series, in which Quelch loses control of himself and gives Wharton a savage thrashing, adding insult to injury by stripping him of the captaincy as well. He later openly punishes Wharton for offences overlooked in other fellows. The climax of the series - Quelch gating Wharton for nothing, then arranging for a watch to be kept to catch him breaking out at night with expulsion to follow - always gives me a desire to knock Quelch's nose through the back of his head. In the second series - Quelch's victimising Wharton on Bonfire Night made me chuckle over his being tarred and feathered. And his wanting Wharton expelled for breaking detention or not writing lines showed him to be, in his worst moments, another Ratty. Frankly, I think that Wharton made it up too easily with both Quelch and the Co. at the end of the first series.

From Avril Croud:

Thank you for another entertaining *Collectors Digest* - I have particularly enjoyed Peter Mahony's series of articles on Harry Wharton and the last one dealing with the Stacey series prompted me to write. It has always seemed to me a shame that Frank Richards did not carry through Colonel Wharton's threat and have Wharton sent to St. Jim's - even for a few weeks. I understand of course that *The Gem* had fallen from its previous heights by 1935 and that readers were anxious for Stacey to finally get his comeuppance, but I think Wharton at St. Jim's would have led to some fascinating stories.

Wharton may have liked Tom Merry (most people did) but would he have enjoyed taking second place to him? I am reminded here of the rather shabby tricks he played on those who replaced him as Head Boy during the "Wharton the Rebel" series.

Wharton had many qualities including gifts of leadership, and if he were placed in the New House I can easily see him taking over from Figgins as the Head of the Junior House, but how would he react when faced with the always unreasonable and unjust Mr Ratcliffe? Peter Mahony quite rightly points out Wharton's tendency to over-react when faced by injustice, and it is possible that Wharton's reputation as a rebellious troublemaker which he had earned at Greyfriars (courtesy of Stacey) would be confirmed at St. Jim's - although I can see that this would not necessarily suit Frank Richards' purpose in showing that good will ultimately triumph over evil.

It is all speculation of course, although I think I can say for certain that if Wharton had gone to St. Jim's then House rivalries would have taken on a new edge.

From Arthur F.G. Edwards:

Andrew Miles in *S.P.C.D.* number 620 suggested a reason why the boys of Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood played Association Football in the winter but attempted to downgrade it. I do not know how old Andrew is but I would remind him that throughout the life of the *Magnet* at least 95% of the male population went, in their time, to Elementary Schools. Only some of the other 5% went to public schools.

Elementary schools did not have games periods or sports masters, although many men gave up spare time on Saturday mornings to look after teams. Association football was the game of the Elementary school. It could be, and was, played before school and during breaks with any size of ball on the asphalt surface of playgrounds. Thus skills were

practised, games enjoyed. Few urban schools had other than hard-play areas which ruled out practising most rugby skills. Just imagine the casualties which would have resulted from boys diving over a line to touch down for a try, or the number of rugby balls that would be lost if penalty kicks or conversions had been practised. If Andrew had played soccer in the 1920s and 1930s he would not have found it a 'tame and restrained' game, nor did Charles Hamilton depict it as such, references to shoulder charges abounded. When I, in my youth, read stories in which rugby was featured, I did not think them superior to those about Association Football written by Charles Hamilton.

Andrew mentions the need for readers to empathise. While most of public school life was outside the experience of the vast majority, and some aspects would not have been socially acceptable, e.g. stealing food, ruining clothes, tarring and feathering, others, e.g. smoking, drinking and gambling were popular with the working class from soon after they left school. Readers may not have been able to put themselves in the places of the boys of Greyfriars et al during lessons, teasing in studies, sleeping in dormitories or visiting the tuck shop, but they could picture themselves playing football for Greyfriars or St. Jim's or being another Dixie Dean, Alex James, Harry Hibbs or any one of a multitude of football heroes. Knowing nothing of rugby they would not have been able to make a similar transference.

From Ted Baldock:

Much admired by me in the August C.D. was the great portrait by Bob Whiter of the 'instigator of it all', not forgetting his beloved cat. It is my opinion that Frank Richards gave to our century something unique. We shall, I believe, see nothing comparable again.

From Geoff Kay:

I was very pleased to read the article about Hedley O'Mant in the latest edition of C.D. This sort of article and the series "Yesterday's Heroes" by Brian Doyle do C.D. a real credit, bringing, as they do, a revealing light on the lives of bygone popular authors. Is it possible that Brian Doyle could put his series into a book?

Joe Ashley mentions that O'Mant took over a World War I flying series called "Baldy's Angels", in the *Ranger*, from G.M. Bowman. Can Joe tell us if this "G.M. Bowman" is the same G.M. Bowman who wrote regularly in the superb *Air Stories* magazine published by Newnes between 1935-40?

MY SCHOOL "HADHAM HALL" WAS FOR ME "LINBURY COURT" by Roland Jaggard

In July 1958 aged eleven I bought my first 'Jennings' book, *Jennings Goes to School*. This was an auspicious moment for me. I had been listening to the Jennings 'Children's Hour' shows for some years previously, indeed Anthony Buckeridge's Jennings always got the top vote in my 'Request Week' lists. In the autumn of 1958 I started at my new school, a Secondary Modern called Hadham Hall.

WOW, for me it was just like Linbury Court had come to life. Like Linbury the school was set in rolling countryside, in this case Hertfordshire. It had **ponds**, a **real bike shed**, and **boarders**, who were sons of farmers. Oh how **I wished** I was a boarder. I



HADHAM HALL

dreamt of all those late night feasts, tuck boxes, letters from home, etc. However, living only a one mile bike ride away, my chances of being a boarder were nil. The school did have girls, but at age eleven or twelve they could be safely ignored for all practical adventure purposes. The playing fields were huge, and as per Jennings we played spiffing soccer in the winter, along with usually wet cross-country runs over the local muddy farm tracks. Like Jennings we would if at all possible stray off the chosen route to shorten the slog. One shortcut involved running about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile along a river bed, if the water wasn't too deep. In summer we played cricket and did athletics. I was a Darbshire cross-country runner and cricketer and a Jennings footballer and athlete.

Some outbuildings were Tudor (1520s), the main building of the school was Elizabethan (1570s) and had lovely oak panelled classrooms, small rooms where we could hide away from the teachers, washrooms, the boarders' bathrooms, the kitchens, and the long endless corridors of the Jennings stories. The local village was about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile away and was as at Linbury, 'out of bounds'. Our small library was, like Linbury, stocked with stuffed birds and small animals in glass cages. However, none of us was as brave, or was it as stupid as Jennings to touch them, let alone try them on as space helmets.

Our headmaster, Mr Douglas, was bald and aloof. Our French teacher, as per Mr Wilkins, shouted at all of us pupils and was a good shot with a piece of chalk. We had a portly Matron, the wife of one of the teachers. Many of our adventures at school revolved around the ponds. The odd model boat did make the odd voyage, but as far as I can remember nobody ever actually fell into any of the three ponds. The ponds were considered by most of the boys as a jolly good place to dispose of any of their unsuccessful metalwork projects. "Sorry Sir, I don't know where my toasting fork (et al) has got to!"

It was a wonderful school for us young lads to play 'Cops and Robbers', 'Hide'n'Seek', etc. There were so many places to hide, most of them at risk of detention if we were discovered by a teacher. In retrospect, even the detention classes were not all that bad. A few ingenious but ultimately failed designs were developed to enable multiple rows of 'lines' to be produced simultaneously.



Like Jennings and Co. we had classrooms equipped with lift-up seat desks, china inkwells, blackboards and easels, and best of all (for maximum mischief value) chalk and dusters! On one occasion two boys were sent off to another classroom to collect a blackboard upon which the history teacher had written his notes for the current lesson. Because it was a rainy day they came back with the blackboard held about their heads. Writing upwards! I can still see the terrible look of disappointment and sadness on Mr Logan's face as they put the board on the

easel to reveal nothing but a set of white smears. Shame really, he was **such** a nice man. I'm **really glad** I never became a teacher.

Being an avid fan of Jennings books did prove helpful on more than one occasion. For example, soon after starting at the school we had to write an essay on the subject 'Your New School'. I got 8/10, not bad considering the impressions were cribbed almost entirely from *Jennings Goes to School*.

In conclusion, I must say that generally speaking I had a great time at Linbury Court - oh, sorry! Hadham Hall - and it was with great sadness that I heard in the late 1980s that it was to be closed and the pupils and staff transferred to a school at a nearby town. For me Hadham Hall having Tudor/Elizabethan buildings and being set in the countryside was an 'education' and an 'inspiration' in itself.



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“MYSTERY AT CARRINGTON GRANGE”

by Anthony Cook

This story is set at the time of the Second World War when Kentish coastal areas faced not only the dangers of air-raids but the threat of invasion. Tony Cook presents us with these images of Greyfriars evacuated. Always, of course, there would be the hope and expectation of the school returning eventually to its much loved Greyfriars environs

Part One

Greyfriars School had moved lock, stock and barrel. They left their hallowed home at Friardale immediately after the Christmas vacation of 1941, finding themselves instead occupying the impressive building of Carrington Grange, some twenty miles from Worcester and just outside the small village of Tenbury Wells. Gone were all the familiar names of Friardale and Courtfield: in their places were the equally old and quaint names of Callows Grave, Kyre Magna and Clebury Mortimer. The Grange was the property of Sir Geoffrey Carrington, the ancestral home of the family since it had been built between 1560 and 1562.

The first Sir Geoffrey was knighted in the year 1560 by Queen Elizabeth I for his services to her in matters of law. Not only was he a judge in the city of Worcester but his knowledge of the law had drawn him to the attention of the Queen. It was he who had a great deal to do with the drafting of the Act of Supremacy of 1559. He was, besides his knighthood, granted certain land on which he was determined to build what he said “would reflect all that was elegant of this age and a tribute to our most gracious majesty”. He did indeed do exactly that, and he built on a vast scale for he was already wealthy, and through the succeeding years added two spacious wings together with stables so designed that the upper storeys provided accommodation for servants and workers. Sir Geoffrey was an honest and considerate man and what appeared due to his efforts was one of the most magnificent houses of the Tudor and post-Tudor period. This meant that Greyfriars School, despite its upheaval, entered a building which lent itself more than adequately to its spatial requirements after certain rearrangements regarding dormitory and classroom provisions. Thanks to the combined teamwork of the staff, both teaching and domestic, with the help and advice given by the estate manager who with Sir Geoffrey’s agreement stayed on, the school was soon settled in and running.

It has to be said that one of the prime organisers was Mr Quelch who, far from finding the administration wearing, seemed to enjoy his task to the full. Although wartime restrictions dictated that all signposts, place-names and the like should be removed (including station names) it was agreed by the appropriate authorities that the name of the school be displayed in the main drive. An impressive board in blue with gold lettering read:-



Greyfriars School

FOUNDED 1551

Headmaster: The Rev. H.H. Locke D.D.

Acting Assistant Headmaster

Mr H.H.S. Quelch, M.A.

It was assumed that any enemy agents would thus at least be informed that the Grange was of no military interest. And so early in 1941 the move had been made and things were beginning to settle into the new environment and general routine.

A fine but cold Wednesday afternoon saw Harry Wharton making his way down for football practice when he stopped in his tracks and looked back towards the Grange.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a cry.

Absorbed in his thoughts Harry did not turn to greet Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent as they ran to catch him up.

"Look", Nugent grinned. "Our esteemed captain playing statues".

"What's up?" Bob asked his chum as he came to a halt.

Harry looked puzzled. "Tell me, what is the end of our dorm?"

It was Bob's turn to look puzzled.

"Look at the end of the wing". Harry pointed. "That turret-like projection must be at the end of our dorm".

"Hang on old bean, my bed is on the end wall and there's no doorway" Nugent exclaimed.

"Right" Bob agreed.

"Then how does one get into the turret part?"

"Blocked up, I suppose" Nugent grinned. "You suggesting that Henry uses it as a punishment room?"

On this note the three of them continued towards the field and the subject of the turret room petered out.

"Do they expect us the play cricket on this moth-eaten field?" Bob asked.

Harry Wharton shook his head. "According to Wingate the field beyond also belongs to the Grange".

"It's got sheep on it" Nugent grunted.

"All the better for starters!"

The trio reached the field and for the next hour were occupied with footer practice.

At the same time Mr Quelch received a visitor from the local police, a plain clothes man, his identification announcing him as Inspector Rogers, CID. "What can I do for your, Inspector?" Mr Quelch asked when they were seated. For a moment the man did not answer but gazed around the room until he caught the form-master's eye. "Forgive me sir, I was just admiring the room, it must be quite something to operate in such surroundings".

"Indeed it is, Inspector. There is still much to do until we are fully established, however, and time is at a premium".

The Inspector took the hint. "I quite understand, forgive me. Firstly I must say that I work out of Worcester while at the same time covering the outlying districts. I also liaise with both ARP and Military Intelligence. I mention these facts, otherwise you may think my call of little importance".

Mr Quelch remained silent.

"Two nights ago we were made aware that an enemy plane was in the area, a single plane; it was also reported that at about the same time a single light was seen high up in this direction".

"Do I presume that you are suggesting that we are in breach of the blackout regulations?"

The Inspector shook his head. "No sir, I am not; such a coincidence would be unfortunate. I am suggesting that it was deliberate".

Mr Quelch's features contracted. "And you think it was someone here who was responsible?"

The Inspector shrugged his shoulders. "I would like to say 'no', but the possibility must be pursued. You see, the highest points around the area are here and Mr Verity's cottage. We know Mr Verity of old but your school and staff are new to us".

At this the form-master's brow furrowed, and his gimlet eyes bored into the Inspector who began to look decidedly uncomfortable.

"I'm sorry if the implication upsets you, sir, but every avenue has to be explored in cases such as this".

"I quite understand the situation, it is just unfortunate that such a matter should arise at this juncture. May I ask you one question, however. Are there any military installations in the area in which the enemy might be interested?"

"No, none. Of that you can rest assured. We are, however, concerned about fifth column activities and the like. One cannot be too careful".

"Very well". Mr Quelch placed his hands on the table. "What is it that you want from me on behalf of the school?"

"Having made you aware of the situation, very little. But on behalf of my superiors and national security I would appreciate it if you and your staff, not to mention your pupils, keep your eyes open for anything that is considered out of the ordinary. A word with all concerned might not be out of place".

The Remove master nodded.

"I will of course do as you ask, Inspector. Oh! Dr Locke tenders his apologies for absence but he has been called to London". He rose, extending his hand to the Inspector, who said: "Thank you for your time and understanding, sir. I do appreciate that you have enough on your hands at the moment. Ah, one thing more. I understand that you are employing some local labour. Could I have a list of those concerned please?"

"Of course. Our administrative department should be able to supply a list immediately".

"Thank you. One last thing".

At this point the irritation on the Remove master's face must have made its mark, but the Inspector continued: "I was informed by one of my superiors that while a certain Captain Locke is a relation of your headmaster, you sir have been involved in a professional capacity regarding a certain incident last Christmas time".

Mr Quelch's brow cleared at this. "Indeed so, but I would hardly call it a professional capacity. I was involved in helping to clear up a problem which arose at Wharton Lodge".

The Inspector smiled.

"Quite so, sir. Captain Locke spoke highly of you. That is why I am pleased to have been able to appraise you of the situation today".

With that, a rather pleased Mr Quelch took his visitor down to the administrative office. If he had had any reservations regarding the Inspector they were certainly dispelled now.

On the same afternoon James Verity, the General Manager of the Grange and its attendant lands, was making a last check on the stable blocks. When his employer, Sir Geoffrey, had intimated that the Grange was to be handed over to Greyfriars School for the duration he had wondered what the future held for him. After all, he had been employed at the Grange since he left school, having worked his way up the ladder to a position of total responsibility. He was now too old for the forces and his life centred on his estate work. When he had been asked to stay on he had been more than pleased to accept. The only odd job man to be 'imported' was Gosling, the old and rather dour character who would certainly not be able to cope on his own in a strange environment. The stables had long since been modernised and on this particular day Verity was occupied in seeing that all the facilities in the masters' rooms were in good working order and that they were as comfortable as possible. As he made his way back down the slope to his cottage he pondered on his luck, thinking that things had turned out well for him. As he neared the cottage he was surprised to see an unfamiliar car drawn up outside. A young man in his early twenties and a slightly older woman stood by the car. "Hallo there", he was hailed as he reached the gate. "Are you Mr Verity?" He acknowledged this, and after a short conversation the trio went into the cottage.

On this particular Wednesday Mr Quelch, Harry Wharton and James Verity had set the scene for something that none of them would have thought possible. A strange web of events was being spun.

It was two days later that an agitated Dr Locke found Mr Quelch shortly before his first lesson with the Remove and handed him a letter, neatly written and signed by James Verity. This informed the Head that he had been called away suddenly as his brother had been taken ill and there were family matters which needed his immediate attention. The postmark was Birmingham but no address appeared on the letter.

"This really is not good enough, my dear Quelch; we rely on Verity so much at the moment, he could have at least informed us in person so that temporary arrangements could have been made for a replacement".

Mr Quelch nodded in agreement. "I do agree, Headmaster. This is most inopportune, to say the least. There is no indication as to the length of time he might be away, I notice".

"That is so". Dr Locke shook his head. "And further, no address at which he can be contacted".

There was silence for a moment. It was Mr Quelch who broke the silence. "May I suggest that we let the matter rest for forty-eight hours and hope that his two handymen can cope with the day-to-day running of the Grange. Possibly they may be able to enlighten us further. May I keep this letter for the time being?"

The Head smiled wearily. "Yes of course, my dear fellow. I'm only sorry that so much has fallen to your lot".

The master smiled benignly at Dr Locke. "Please do not worry yourself on my behalf. I feel sure that the situation will resolve itself quickly".

At this the Head brightened. "Let us hope so. Times are not easy and we must make the best of things".

Mr Quelch tucked the letter into his pocket as the Head left the form-room. Later that day the Master of the Remove searched out the two handymen, showing them the letter. Both were surprised at the content but confirmed that the writing and signature were indeed those of James Verity. They had, they said, been given a list of jobs which would take them through the week. It appeared that this was normal procedure. As to his whereabouts, they knew nothing.

It was Saturday afternoon when Harry Wharton and Co. decided to take a walk into the local village by way of the footpath adjoining the Grange. As they reached the garden arch which led directly to the footpath skirting the top field there came a shout from Bob Cherry. "Somebody been trying to fly a kite?" He pointed to a nearby oak, barely in bud. The rest of the Co. followed the direction of his pointing finger. From one of the middle branches could be seen a piece of white material flapping in the breeze and what appeared to be a number of strings hanging under the branch. "Too many strings for a kite" reflected Nugent.

They stood underneath the tree trying to get a better view. "I say, what about a parachute!" Bob Cherry grinned at his friends. "Perhaps someone's trying to sabotage the school!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came the chorus of merriment.

"Hang on!" Harry Wharton had suddenly become serious. "Can we get it?"

"My giddy aunt, Harry wants us to play tree-climbing!"

Without waiting for further comment the Captain of the Remove shed his coat and set about climbing. A sturdy lower branch gave him good purchase and in no time he had reached his objective.

"It's bigger than it looks", came his shout to the assembly below. "And it's wedged in a branch".

At last his rather dishevelled figure dropped to the ground. They gathered round to see what the strange object was.

"Impossible to get it without a struggle. It was fixed hard in the cleft of a branch. Someone's been trying though, it's been cut through as though whoever it was might have been in a bit of a hurry".

The white material was silk and the strands of cord were attached to it by metal rings.

"It jolly well is a section of a parachute".

"I told you" began Bob Cherry.

"And what, may I ask, is this gathering exactly?" came a familiar voice. A few yards away, walking stick in hand, was Mr Quelch. "Well, Wharton?" He looked at the Remove Captain's dishevelled state. Harry stepped forward holding out the object he had just brought down from the tree.

"We saw this in the tree, sir".

Mr Quelch took it. "And pray what importance do you attach to this?"

He was then given an explanation of what the Removites thought the object was.

"You did say, sir, that if we saw anything suspicious we were to report it".

"Quite so, and you consider this suspicious?"

"Yes sir". Harry Wharton went on to explain why, and that the material appeared to have been cut off as it was so firmly embedded in the fork of the branch. At this his form master became interested.

"Very well, you will leave this with me, Wharton. I shall say no more regarding your tree climbing escapade. I suggest that you continue your walk".

At this the chums muttered their polite "Thank you sir" and continued on their way.

To be continued.

YESTERDAY'S HEROES

Bruce Graeme's BLACKSHIRT (conclusion)

by Brian Doyle

What of Bruce Graeme himself? Who was he? For one thing he was one of the most prolific, versatile and highly-regarded popular authors of his day, averaging two books a year for 54 years (he published a total of 107 books during this period). But let's begin at the beginning

Bruce Graeme was born on May 23, 1900, and his real name was Bruce Graham Montague Jeffries. He was educated privately and his schooling was interrupted by the advent of the First World War. In 1918, as soon as he was old enough, he volunteered for service in the Queen's Westminster Rifles and served for a year or so.

He was descended on his mother's side from John Evelyn, the famous 17th century Diarist, and his uncle, Edward Draper, was a founder of the Savage Club in London, and also a well-known contributor to *Punch*. This ancestry, he once said, inclined him to a writing career. When he left the Army, he joined the staff of the *Middlesex County Times* newspaper, and later worked as a freelance journalist. He also began reading for the Bar. He wrote and published several short stories during the early 1920s. He developed a keen interest in the silent cinema and became briefly involved in film work, financing, producing and selling a one-reel comedy picture. He had two stories published in *The Thriller*

magazine, "Winner Takes All" in issue No. 347 in 1935, and "The Snatch Racket" in issue No. 361 in 1936.

Following the success of his first Blackshirt novel in 1925, he abandoned his law studies and concentrated upon a full-time writing career, also running a small literary agency for a time.

As an adjunct to his Blackshirt stories, Graeme subsequently wrote four novels about an ancestor of Blackshirt, under the pseudonym of 'David Graeme'. "Monsieur Blackshirt" who swaggers through this quartet of colourful historical novels was actually (fictionally speaking) Raoul de Rohan - 'Monsieur Le Noir' or 'Monsieur Blackshirt', so-called, he liked to boast, from the blackness of his deeds as much as from the colour of his doublet and cloak, which were, of course, black. This swashbuckling stuff was introduced in "Monsieur Blackshirt" (1933), then came "The Vengeance of Monsieur Blackshirt" (1934), "The Sword of Monsieur Blackshirt" (1936) and "The Inn of Thirteen Swords" (1938).

Graeme used several other pseudonyms, probably the best-known being Peter Bourne, under which he wrote several major and lengthy historical novels, including "Black Saga" (1947) and "Gateway to Fortune" (1952).

But most of his many books were published under the familiar name of Bruce Graeme and, apart from the Blackshirt saga, he wrote a long series of detective novels (beginning in 1931 with "A Murder of Some Importance") featuring William Stevens, a Superintendent at Scotland Yard, and Inspector Pierre Allain of the French Sûreté; another series about Theodore I. Terhune, a young bookseller in a small British town (starting with "Seven Clues in Search of a Crime" in 1941); and a later series featuring Det. Sgt. Robert Mather of the Bretton police (introduced in "The Quiet Ones" in 1970). Graeme happened to sail on the *Queen Mary's* maiden voyage and this led to "Mystery on the Queen Mary" (1937). "Epilogue" (1933) was a fascinating modern continuation of Charles Dickens' unfinished book "The Mystery of Edwin Drood", with Supt. Stevens going back in time to solve the mystery through modern CID investigative methods. A highly-praised novel was "Through the Eyes of a Judge" (1930) set largely in a courtroom. Graeme's only children's mystery novel was "Danger in the Channel" (1973). He also wrote a few factual books, including "The Story of Buckingham Palace" (1928) and "The Story of Windsor Castle" (1937).

During the 1930s Graeme lived in Ealing, West London, but lived for much of his subsequent life in an Elizabethan farmhouse near Ashford, in Kent. During the 1930s he also maintained an apartment in Montmartre, Paris. He loved travel, doing historical research, studying foreign police investigation methods (especially in France), and playing golf. He died on May 14, 1982, aged nearly 82.

Graeme married Lorna Louch, also a writer, in 1925, and they had two children: Roderic, born in 1926, and Linda, born in 1933. Both also became writers.



Bruce Graeme's Blackshirt was portrayed as a crackman even after he began to devote his energies to fighting crime. This stark illustration appears on the dust wrapper of the first American edition, published by Lippincott in 1936, of *Blackshirt the Audacious*.

In 1952, Bruce Graeme, tiring of his famous character, handed Blackshirt over to his then 25-year-old son, Roderic, who was a writer and lawyer, with his blessing. Under the name 'Roderic Graeme' he published his first Blackshirt book, "Concerning Blackshirt", in 1952, following it with "Blackshirt Wins the Trick" the following year. Roderic eventually turned out 20 Blackshirt books of his own at a rate of more than one a year, the final title being "Blackshirt Stirs Things Up" in 1969. So Blackshirt 'lived' as a character for well over 40 years.

Almost as prolific and versatile as his father, Roderic wrote, in addition, some 50 other crime and detective novels and nearly 20 children's books, using half-a-dozen pen-names, including his real name of Roderic Jeffries. As far as I know he is still writing and published his latest detective novel, featuring his popular series character, Inspector Alvarez of the Spanish Police, in 1997, set in Majorca (Roderic has lived in Spain for many years).

Roderic Graeme once said: "My father presented me with a gift as valuable as it was unique: Blackshirt. I was given a character who was a household word and who had already notched up world-wide sales that spread into the millions. I was able to write - and sell - to an established market." Graemes Senior and Junior produced a joint total of 33 Blackshirt books.

Roderic was called to the Bar in 1952 and practised briefly as a lawyer. But apparently after losing his first six cases he decided to concentrate his energies upon writing, at which he was conspicuously more successful! He had earlier served in the Merchant Navy (1943-49) when he rose to the heady rank of Third Officer

Bruce Graeme's daughter, Linda Graeme, also became a successful author of children's books in the 1950s and 1960s, using several pseudonyms as well as her own name for her books, which were often aimed at young girl readers, with titles such as "The Ballerina Mystery" and "Helen in Musical Comedy".

Together with his friend and fellow-author, John Creasey, incidentally, Bruce Graeme co-founded the Crime Writers Association, which still exists today.

An ad in *John O'London's Weekly* magazine in 1944 stated that Graeme's Blackshirt books had sold over four million copies. They were up there with the best-sellers of the time by such authors as Wallace, Charteris, 'Sapper', Orczy, Wren, and others. His books also appeared in translation in many foreign countries (where Blackshirt retained his English name, except in Spain, where he became 'Camisa Negra').

The stories are still very readable today, and very enjoyable too. Blackshirt's only personal fault seemed to be his verbosity. On occasion he would, during an otherwise normal conversation, launch into something akin to a lengthy political speech. In *Blackshirt*, the first book in the series, in reply to his lady-friend, Bobbie's, innocent remark about what it must be like to live in the country, after being used to London life, Richard Verrell takes more than two pages to give the poor girl his detailed views on the subject, with illustrations from home and abroad. His enthusiastic word-flow is eventually stemmed when his attention is caught by a worm "pursuing its way along the uneven ground" (seriously, folks, I'm not joking!). Bobbie murmurs something softly (or is she just stifling a yawn?). Later she darts him a loving look and he abandons all thoughts of Town versus Country - and even, presumably, the itinerant worm - for the important things in life, including a possible kiss, which doesn't actually happen, "causing him to wrinkle his

forehead in doubt". Our Richard is better as a devil-may-care crackman than a potential lover (though he does gain confidence as the series of books progresses).

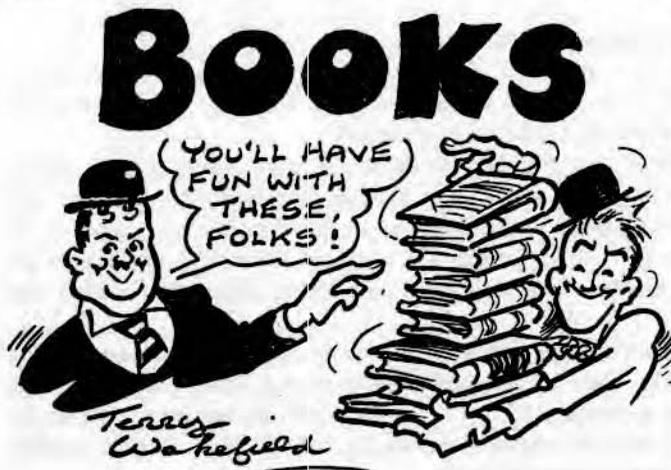
He's also very good at restraint. When "trussed like a fowl" and helpless, he is beaten and mocked by a master-villain. His only reaction, apart from a glare or three, is resorting to an outburst of foul language. "You cad!" he gasps, straining against his bonds. He can't even reach into his special pocket and produce his silk topper - now that would frighten off the crooks.

In fairness, this is Blackshirt, 1925 vintage. As he develops as a character and as a man, he does become tougher and much more 'hero-like'. And, in his later career, he devotes himself more and more to fighting crime, as well as becoming an unofficial secret agent for his country.

Blackshirt, then, was certainly one of the most popular fictional heroes of the period 1925-70 (if you include Roderic Graeme's continuation of the saga as well). Even my own father, who wasn't a noted book-reader, had a couple of 'Blackshirts' on his shelf, along with a Gerald Verner, several Edgar Wallaces, and half-a-dozen Christies. I remember this because I was a boy growing up during the early World War Two years and they were among the first 'proper' books I read - simply because they were there!

Which makes it all the more astonishing that the Blackshirt adventures were never portrayed on film, stage, radio or television. All the other popular fictional heroes made it onto the cinema screen, for instance - even 'Norman Conquest' in a brief and minor way. So why, I wonder, didn't Blackshirt? It surely couldn't be that the very word 'Blackshirt' conjured up nasty connotations in people's minds? Successful movies were made about the Nazis, for example. Bruce Graeme would have been strongly in favour of the idea, for he was, I understand, something of a film fan and, as I've mentioned, even dabbled in the medium early in his career.

It's perhaps a pity, by the way, that Richard Verrell never did play cricket, like his illustrious forebear, A.J. Raffles. At least it would have given him a chance to swap that damned black shirt for a white one!



Books

BLUE BLOOD RUNS RED by Captain W.E. Johns, published by Norman Wright.
Reviewed by Mary Cadogan.

This is indeed a rarity from the pen of the creator of such men and women of action as Biggles, Worrals and Steeley. *Blue Blood Runs Red* is accurately described in the book's introduction by Jennifer

Schofield (Johns's biographer) as "a witty and charming love story, without a hint of adventure and not even the distant drone of an aero-engine". First published in 1936 (rare original copies are now collectors' items) it seems to have been Johns's answer to a challenge from a lady dinner-party guest that he would not be able to write a romantic novel.

Blue Blood Runs Red is certainly romantic; all the trappings of the genre from a gracious country house, moonlight and roses to longing, lustrous looks and the attraction of opposites are there. Johns appears to have revelled in out-romanticizing the romantics. His hero, the upright, aristocratic English Glen Lomax, and heroine, the American millionaire-entrepreneur's daughter Gloria Womberger, strike sparks off each other from the moment they meet. Their dialogue ranges - rather like that of a 1930s romantic-comedy film - from crackling challenge to high passion, and the always lively mood is spiced with occasional tongue-in-cheek narrative touches which represent Johns's writing at its best.

The book's overall atmosphere, as Jennifer Schofield suggests, is akin to that of a Dornford Yates novel. This is by any standard a stylish and an enjoyable read. It is, of course, of particular interest to enthusiasts of Johns's stories, if only for the fun of comparing Glen and Gloria's great romantic moments with the rare and understated intensities of the Biggles and Worrals sagas. We recall Biggles being so romantically unnerved by the enemy spy Marie Janis (that "vision of blonde loveliness") that he had rapidly to curtail his encounter with her on the pretext "that his magneto is nearly shorting" - and Worrals dismissing the loving declaration of Bill Ashley, her Spitfire pilot admirer, by saying sternly: "Be yourself. You'll laugh at this nonsense in the morning". *Blue Blood Runs Red* creates a very different mood. Not to be missed, it is now available in a good quality paperback with cover and frontispiece illustrations by Andrew Skilleter. Do not delay; this is a limited edition. Copies can be ordered from Norman Wright, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, Herts WD1 4JL. The book costs £18.50, plus post & packing of £1.20 for UK readers. Overseas postage is as follows: BY AIR: Europe £1.75, USA/Canada £3.70, rest of the world £4.30. BY SEA: 1 copy £2.00, 2 copies £3.50. Cheques should be made out to Norman Wright in sterling, drawn on a UK bank.

GLORY GARDENS Reviewed by Ernest Holman.

A misleading name, really - it is not a well-laid-out park area or a centre for flower display and purchase. It is, in fact, a strip of land known as The Rec. where youngsters play games. Here it is that a juvenile cricket team is formed.

A group of them are aided by a teacher from the school which many of them attend, who arranges to form them into an under-11 team and associate them with his local club team, The Priory. They are adopted as the Priory under-11 team but are pleased to be allowed to call themselves the Glory Gardens C.C. Their subsequent adventures are recorded in a publication entitled "Glory in the Cup", where they enter a local cup competition.

This book is the first of several now available for reading. They are published by Red Fox Publishers at £3.50 each. They are an unusual set of cricket stories. For one thing, various batting and bowling techniques are very well illustrated throughout the stories by David Kearney. A glossary of cricket terms is included at the end of each book, together with fielding positions. The author is Bob Cattell.

The stories take the team on to becoming an under-13 team and describe their various ins and outs of league and cup competitions. They do not win all their matches, but on the whole are a successful combination. There are a variety of players, including an efficient girl all-rounder named Erica. The teacher - known as Kiddo - sees to their coaching and one of the players' sisters acts as organiser and scorer - and is autocratic enough to keep them well in hand. One point of interest is the fact that loyalty comes to the fore frequently. The original players all take part, in the main, in the progress of the stories. There are a few 'characters' - a cumbersome but at times useful individual known as Ohbert. There is a fifth-rate wicket keeper, whose speciality is telling corny jokes ("Doctor, I feel like a cricket bat". "How's that?") As, however, they are part of the original founders, they (improbably!) retain their place. Hooker, the skipper, has a tricky job at times conducting his group, but on the whole manages well. Cal, a tall spin bowler, has the greatest knowledge of the game and is often consulted earnestly by the Captain. When, though, at a later stage, Cal assumes the captaincy, he soon finds it 'quite a task' and goes back to being chief adviser. The last story ends up with a tour of Barbados, with the final remark that the Barbadians will see them shortly in England for a further match.

The stories are very readable and the technical illustrations of players in the team very informative. Whether readers will take to such a lot of cricket is not yet apparent. I tried the first book, enjoyed it and now possess the six so far published. (Incidentally, the same publishers have at least a dozen Biggles stories at £3.50 each.) W.H. Smith has them all on the shelves in my area, in the section which includes Enid Blyton, Anthony Buckeridge and Richmal Crompton.

Two books have been published each year so far - 1995 to 1997 inclusive. Nothing yet is out for 1998 but I am hoping the present autumn book season will include further exploits of the Glory Gardens Cricket Club.

REVIEWS FROM MARK TAHA

The Finest Years: British Cinema of the 1940s - Charles Drazin (Andre Deutsch, 1998)

British cinema in its greatest era (in the author's opinion, at least) - from A - Anthony 'Puffin' Asquith, a Prime Minister's son who specialised in filming Terence Rattigan's plays - to W - Herbert Wilcox, Anna Neagle's husband and top film producer. Never favoured by the critics - but the public thought differently and he had Hollywood-like flamboyance and style!

The problem faced by British film-makers in the 1940s was that the public preferred Hollywood - and who could blame them? Let's face it, even the colour looked better! J. Arthur Rank's rash pledge to fill the gap when Hollywood cut off supplies over a 75% tariff in 1948 could never have succeeded for this reason; while John Davis, the hard-headed businessman who ran the Rank organisation, has been bitterly criticised for his penny-pinching and lack of artistic soul, he had little choice. Rank had been paying out Hollywood sums with no guarantee of access to Hollywood markets. Davis himself admitted that Rank films were "not made for critics" and insisted that they be of "broad appeal" - as a frequent sufferer from critically-acclaimed boredom, I'd like to thank him for that! Certainly, when the Board of Trade insisted on a circuit release for the film "Chance of a Lifetime", it flopped.

You can read about many interesting people in this book - I may cite Robert Hamer, cynic, drunk - and director of perhaps Britain's greatest film, *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. Harry Watt, director of *Target for Tonight*, who admitted that he "went into the film business because I wanted to eat. I had no artistic bent whatsoever." As a documentary maker, he went on military operations but "found reality dull too much waiting around". Sydney Box, whose *The Seventh Veil* was a low-budget movie that started without a leading man - until James Mason expressed an interest! Gabriel Pascal, a fanatical admirer of George Bernard Shaw who filmed his plays, spent money like water, but at least had style. And Jack Beddington, third Director of the wartime Ministry of Information film unit. The first, Sir Joseph Ball, had favoured closing down the film industry for the duration. The second, Sir Kenneth Clark, was appointed because he was an "authority in pictures" - as Director of the National Gallery!

Reader - I hope that's whetted your appetite!

The Unknown 30s - edited by Jeffrey Richards (I.B. Tauris, 1998)

Subtitle - the quota quickies weren't so bad! The argument is made that the quota of British films to be shown in every cinema imposed by the 1928 Act saved the British film industry from extinction and that the quickies should be seen as British B-movies. Certainly, there weren't many films being made in Britain before the quota came in and its imposition was followed by a short-lived boom in investment in the British film industry. Nor can one really argue with the view that the quota provided a lot of job opportunities for Britons, even with American companies setting up British subsidiaries to get round it. However, film fans still preferred Hollywood!

The book is certainly well-titled; it taught me a lot of things I hadn't known. For instance, the most popular British star of the years 1932-37 was Tom Walls, star of Ben Travers farces, and the most popular British film of the time *Jack's The Boy*, a 1932 farce starring Jack Hulbert and Cicely Courtneidge. British musicals were big at the time - for instance, *Me and My Girl*, filmed as *The Lambeth Walk* but with some vandal having cut most of the songs! There was also Britain's first "H" film - *Dark Eyes of London* starring Bela Lugosi.

Several individuals get chapters to themselves - actor Conrad Veidt, directors Bernard Vorhaus, Berthold Viertel (*Rhodes of Africa*) and Robert Stevenson - in the 60s, Disney's top director. In the 30s, he directed such films as *King Solomon's Mines* and *Tudor Rose*. The best chapter in the book, however, is by Richards himself and on the legendary Tod Slaughter. It seems that Slaughter actually took his films seriously - which is probably more than the audience did! I must admit that I'd like to see more of them. Also - he died in the same year that Hammer revived the Frankenstein films. Tod Slaughter as Dr Frankenstein

The book ends with a chapter by Tony Aldgate on films that dodged the censor in an all-too-short period of confusion; unfortunately, the BBFC were soon interfering again, even banning the naming of foreign countries if the film was criticising them!

I heartily recommend this well-written and informative book.

LARRY MORLEY WRITES:-

May I write in to say how I enjoyed the article on American comics by John Kennedy Melling in the August issue of C.D. A refreshing change from Greyfriars, St. Jim's etc. There is perhaps a certain amount of snobbishness among the older generation of comic collectors who regard American comics as being inferior to the English ones. At the risk of causing a storm in a teacup, I consider the American comic books far better than their English counterparts in layout, artistic merit and presentation. Some of the strips were little works of art. Consider *Flash Gordon* by Alex Raymond, beautifully executed - a wealth of detail and marvellous script work. Raymond could stretch himself to the limit as there were only four or six panels to the page. Then we had Al Capp's *L'il Abner* with its sly digs at the American political scene and wonderful comic characters. And Lee Falk's *Mandrake the Magician* - surely comic art at its very best. I didn't think much of the *Superman* strips - found them rather wishy-washy. Millions of people thought differently: they are still popular today.

Woolworths in pre-war days, and into the early days of World War Two, used to sell them at 4d or 6d each - they had a limited selection - so I got all mine from an old fellow on the Saturday morning market. He had hundreds of them at fourpence each - *Detective Comics*, *Famous Funnies*, *Don Winslow of the Navy*, *King Comics* (the best of the bunch) - *Jumbo Comic* (the same size as a broadsheet newspaper) - and a dozen more titles.

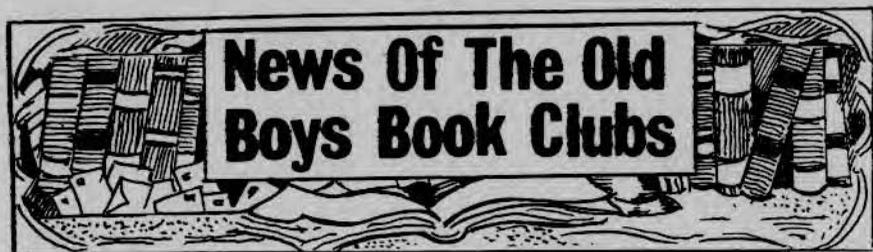
I still have a few 1930s issues - *Famous Funnies*, *Funnies Detective*. I understand they are quite rare now and fetch a good price among collectors.

Regarding Bill Bradford's piece on Thomson papers (July C.D.) the Thomson papers reigned supreme in my part of the country, Derbyshire. Hardly any of the boys in school read the *Magnet* or *Gem*. Indeed, the first time I came across the world of Greyfriars was when a neighbour of ours was called up for the R.A.F. in 1940 and he presented me with my collection of *Magnets*. I was in bed at the time with some childish ailment, chickenpox or measles, and he brought me them. There must have been several hundred because they reached the top of the mattress from floor level.

One of the reasons why the famous five Thomson papers sold so well was that they had a good publicity machine - in the shape of 'throwaways'. Several times a year they would issue a four-page paper advertising a chapter or two of *Wizard*, *Rover*, *Adventure* etc. together with excerpts from one of the women's papers, *Red Letter*, *Secrets* etc. to whet people's appetites.

I also bought back issues from the old chap on the Saturday market at half price, the twopenny papers at one penny each and the penny comics at a halfpenny each - many of them still had the free gifts inside - all right if the gift was a toy or book, but sometimes the gift was a bar of Walter's palm toffee. As some of the books were dated the late 'twenties or early 'thirties you can imagine the result. Even Bunter would turn his nose up at them!

Finally, thank you, Mr Melling, for bringing back so many happy memories of childhood.



NORTHERN OBBC

This was a rare occasion indeed, when our Secretary was unable to be with us owing to a very important family commitment. However we were pleased to have with us Gordon Hudson from Chester-le-Street.

Our speaker for the evening was Russell Dever, making a return visit to us after two years' absence. 'New Technology in Publishing' was his theme. Russell heads a small publishing house in Leeds which has been innovative in producing books for small children. Russell outlined to us the modern ways of producing books, especially the illustrations. Computers now can play a large part in this. A few years ago, a print run of 30,000 - 60,000 books was regarded as being good but as the popularity of books has fallen, a run of 7,500 - 12,000 is regarded as good. The 'spin-off' sales these days are very important - more important often than the book or film itself. Items produced under licence can bring good rewards to the original creators.

Russell did agree with several members that in some respects, the dominance of modern technology is very sad when we consider the traditional ways books have been produced. Fewer and fewer people need to be involved and a complete book can now be produced from a computer disk. More and more original artwork for books will disappear. Russell's talk was enthralling and we hope he will be able to visit us again to give an update as methods appear to be changing very quickly.

Our next meeting is 10th October - our Annual Lunch followed by chat and afternoon tea at the home of our Treasurer in Leeds. Our evening meeting with Mary Cadogan, our President, and also guest speaker, Derek Marsden speaking about 'D.C. Thomson Story Papers'. For bookings for lunch, please contact Darrell Swift 0113-267-1394.

Johnny Bull Minor

LONDON OBBC

Many members and their families assembled for the Annual Luncheon of the London O.B.B.C. which took place at the Brentham Club in Perivale on 13th September 1998. There was much to celebrate: the Fiftieth Anniversary of the O.B.B.C., the Ninetieth Anniversary of the *Magnet* Library and the publication of a collection of Roger Jenkins' articles on Hamilton from the *Collectors' Digest*.

Proceedings ran smoothly, with toasts from Bill Bradford, Roger Jenkins, Alex Cadogan and our President, John Wernham. After a fine luncheon, members congregated at Bill Bradford's house for tea and cake.

Vic Pratt

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