

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL.52

No.623

NOVEMBER 1998

FIREWORK DAY AT ST. JIM'S GOES OFF WITH A BANG!



No. 1,499. Vol. L.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

Week Ending November 7th, 1938.

THE LANE

by Ted Baldock

It took a thousand years or so
To make that narrow lane,
A sheep-track in the long ago,
A haunt for lovers strolling slow,
Or smugglers, when the moon was low
And dark the narrow lane.

A. Harrow

The lane runs by old Greyfriars gate,
 'Tis bosky, cool and green,
What stirring tales it could relate,
 Much history has it seen.
Here monkish figures, cowed have paced
 In dusty sun flecked shade,
At peace with nature they have traced
 Traditions they have made.
The cowls have gone and now are seen
 Advancing to and fro,
The flowing robes of academe
 Still learning to bestow.
Youthful laughter fills the air
 Where chanting once held sway,
Fellows rag without a care
 At the Greyfriars of today.
One sees a sturdy figure roll
 Along the self-same lane,
Prout with measured tread will stroll
 Where abbots lean once came.
A Homburg hat, a swinging stick,
 Through dappled shadows gleam,
A gimlet eye, so sharp and quick
 Our lane has oft-times seen.
The song of youth is heard anon,
 The song which has no end,
Here fellows, known so well belong,
 On whom the school depends.
The lane, the gate, the old grey tower,
 Are fixed within our hearts,
Though years may pass, give us the power
 Like them, to play our parts.

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

S.P.C.D. Edited and Published 1959 - January 1987 by Eric Fayne

VOL. 52

No. 623

NOVEMBER 1998

PRICE £1.30

A BUSY MONTH

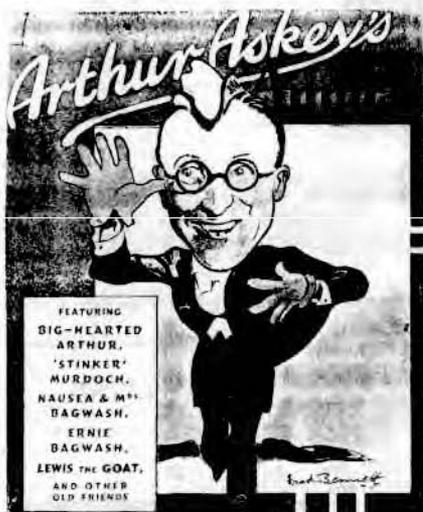
October was a busier than usual month for me. I gave four talks in different parts of the country: on *Children's Book Illustrators* to a local U.3.A. group; about my memories of working for the BBC to the Northern O.B.B.C. in Leeds; on Dorita Fairlie Bruce (creator of the Dimsie books) to a Loughborough WEA Day Conference; and on *Frank Richards: Heritage and Influence* to a Broadstairs audience during the town's 'Gorgeous Glitterati' week. You will gather that I travelled around a lot. I also contributed to a broadcast about Children's Annuals but, fortunately, for this I was recorded at home. (C.D. readers may like to look out for this programme which, I understand, will be transmitted on BBC Radio 4 on or around 15th December. I think other hobby enthusiasts will be taking part in it.)



ANNUAL DELIGHTS

I have also, of course, been working on our own C.D. Annual and enjoying its intriguing contents. As promised last month, I'm now 'trailing' a few more of these items.

Les Rowley has contributed another of his highly entertaining pastiches, *When Bunter Came Home for Christmas*, which catches the Annual's seasonable mood. Hamiltonia is further represented in Bob Whiter's picture and text quiz about Christmas Holiday Houses, and in a letter from Frank Richards to one of our readers, Ian Fewer.



In *Incorporated With...* Bill Bradford assesses the attractions and limitations of several different boys' papers whose 'runs' were comparatively short. Ernest Holman's *Believe it or Not?* recalls strange happenings in the lives and careers of a wide range of celebrities including dance-band personnel, royalty and sports commentators, while Donald V. Campbell reminds us of some literary *Christmas Boxes of Delight*. Norman Wright is in his usual lively form with *Meet the Lone Ranger*, and so too is Reg Hardinge writing about pirates in *Fifteen Men on the Dead Man's Chest*. And there is much more, about which I will give details next month.

To secure a copy of the Annual if you have not yet ordered it, please write to me enclosing your cheque or postal order for £11.00 (U.K. readers) or £12.50 (if you live abroad). These prices, of course, include postage and packing.

IN THE C.D. THIS MONTH...

Whenever possible I like to include articles which reflect the seasons, and, as you will see, several of our contributors this month strike an autumnal - and 'Firework Day' - note. It is a great pleasure to publish in our *Other Favourite Detectives* series another article from the late Bill Lofts, and I am glad to say that there is still more of his work in my files for future use.

Many of you will be pleased to learn, from Brian Doyle's extremely comprehensive review, that John Wernham and I have now collected in one volume over a hundred of Roger Jenkins' fine DO YOU REMEMBER? articles which appeared in the C.D. over many years. An order-form for this book is enclosed. Like our Annual, it would make an ideal Christmas present - for yourselves, or for friends and family.



Also with Christmas gifts in mind, I would like to mention a forthcoming book by another of our regular contributors, Peter Mahony. Full details will be available next month of his fast-moving, Second World War Home Front adventure novel.

HAPPY BROWSING!
MARY CADOGAN



When Crooke, the cad of the Shell, called Koumi Rao, the Jam of Bundelpore, a nigger, the Hindu prince threatened to kill him; and when Mr Ratcliffe, the new House Master, overheard George Gore, the bully of the Shell, also call Koumi Rao a nigger, he caned him with four stinging cuts on each hand. Most of the School House juniors thought that Ratty had no right to punish Gore and should have informed Mr Railton, the School House-Master, of the incident, and left him to deal with the matter. Gore was seething and wanted to get even with Ratty. It was his crony, Levison Major, who reminded him that Ratty always took his evening constitutional under the elms. It would be easy for a chap to sling something at him and get away unobserved in the dark. And so it was that same evening that Gore picked up and flung a stone at the figure in the gloom and then dashed off. Except that it was not Ratty he had hit but his mate, Crooke!

When Crooke was discovered half conscious, with blood on his face, and a bruise and a cut on his forehead, suspicion immediately fell on the Jam of Bundelpore, who fiercely denied having committed the act. Feelings ran high against the Indian prince, and it was agreed by the School House fellows to carry him in effigy in their procession round the quadrangle the next day and burn this 'guy' in the bonfire afterwards. The suggestion for this came from Levison Major in the first place.

**GUY, GUY, GUY! STICK HIM UP ON HIGH! GORE HAS GOOD CAUSE TO
REMEMBER THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER!**

GORE'S GUILTY SECRET!



Round the quadrangle, in a noisy procession, went the guy representing Gore of the Shell. The bonfire was lighted and fireworks were soon cracking and banging, and amid hoots and yells the effigy was brought up to the burning pile.

The imminence of Guy Fawkes Day had spurred Bernard Glyn into action. The Liverpool lad was known as the School House inventor and his chemical experiments had been warmly commended by the science master. His father, a retired merchant and millionaire to boot, provided him with the necessary wherewithal for his hobby. Glyn had started manufacturing fireworks for the Fifth.

Dr Holmes was convinced of Koumi Rao's guilt and ordered him to be confined to the punishment room until an official from the India Office arrived to take him away from St. Jim's in disgrace. George Gore could stand it no longer. His conscience would not allow him to stand by and see the Prince of Bundelore expelled for something that he had not done. So up in Dr Holmes's room, and with Mr Railton present, Gore made a full confession, explaining that on a previous occasion when he had been expelled he had had to endure his father's wrath. He had been given a second chance and allowed to return to St. Jim's. He was afraid that his father would come down more heavily on him this time. Happily, however, Dr Holmes did not expel Gore but ordered other severe punishment instead.

When the news got round the School House that it was Gore and not Koumi Rao who had laid Crooke low, the effigy in the chair was altered to look like Gore and duly burned. Glyn had prepared his fireworks so that when they exploded in the sky they would read "The Head is requested to sack Koumi Rao" and "The New House can go and eat coke". Tom Merry and Co. approached Glyn to get him to alter the wording because of the changed circumstances, but he refused to do so. Whereupon Tom Merry, assisted by Gussy, though not knowing much about display fireworks made some alterations to Glyn's handiwork after he had been bundled out of his lab. The effect was disastrous. When the fireworks were exploded, the sky was lit up with the words "The Head is requested to go and eat coke". Glyn apologised profusely to Dr Holmes for the blunder. The kindly Head smiled and took the whole matter good-temperedly.

The celebrations on the Fifth of November ended with a tremendous feed organised by Fatty Wynn, with Koumi Rao as the guest of honour.

PRIVATE COLLECTOR EAGERLY SEEKING:-

Geo. E. Rochester * Talbot Mundy * P.F. Westerman * W.E. Johns * Collectors' Digest Monthlies/Annals * All John Hamilton/Ace series * All aviation fiction. DAVID BRADLEY, 19 ST. HELENS GARDENS, LEEDS LS16 8BT. TEL: (0113) 267-8020.

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.

FOR SALE. 109 copies of the Dixon Hawke Library, the D.C. Thomson 4d publication of the 1930s, very good condition considering their age. £12 per copy. BEN BLIGH, 55 ARUNDEL AVENUE, HAZEL GROVE, CHESHIRE, SK7 5LD. TEL: 0161-483-7627.



SEXTON BLAKE AND THE MINI-SKIRT MURDERS

by Laurence Price

I was very interested in the Blakiana article, "No Orchids for Sexton Blake!" by J.E.M. in the September CD. I would think the most likely contender for the most uncharacteristic and perhaps most repellent story in the post-war Blakian saga must be *The Mini-Skirt Murders* by Martin Thomas which was published by Howard Baker in 1969. I was expecting a jaunty, tongue-in-cheek "Swinging Sixties" type tale but what I got was, in reality, very much nastier.

First, a few words about the author. Martin Thomas was the pen-name of Thomas Martin and he was described thus in Lofts' and Adley's *The Men Behind Boys' Fiction*: "An expert on the Sexton Blake saga, and has written quite a few stories for the modern *S.B.L.* Has also written numerous stories and articles for other magazines and papers, often with a supernatural theme. Lives in Bristol."

When I spoke to Bill about Martin Thomas a few years ago he was quite reticent about him, but hinted that he had a gloomy, depressing personality which, I wonder, might have been accentuated by his interests in the macabre and supernatural.

It is the "mini-skirt" murders themselves which form the unpleasant foundation of this book, suffice to say they are of the Jack the Ripper variety, with clinical descriptions of the unfortunate victims fit for a Hitchcock film or *The Silence of the Lambs*. The murders are widespread, beginning in Cardiff, then in Bristol, Edinburgh, Birmingham and eventually London. This is when Blake and Tinker enter the picture, Blake still living in Baker Street where his "buxom housekeeper" Mrs Bardell is installed, but now operating from his Berkeley Square office suite where Paula Dane, his "honey-blond secretary", works. Here also are employed the dark-haired receptionist and telephonist, Marion Lang, the middle-aged Louise Pringle and the Junior Partner, Edward Carter.

Blake is asked to investigate the murders by Arthur "Splash" Kirby on behalf of "The Baron" or Lord Charnwood, proprietor of the *Daily Post*, and is soon assisting Detective Chief-Inspector George Coutts of Scotland Yard. So, many familiar faces are in place, including Pedro the hound.

It is not long before Coutts's mini-skirted daughter, Susan, is also in apparent danger but it transpires she is in the hands of someone else, other than the mini-skirt murderer, and will survive her frightening encounter. Another woman is not so lucky, and in a sub-plot, her butcher "lover" has dispatched her, in a method similar to the serial killer, but Blake soon sees through the botched attempt and the butcher is quickly arrested.

These sub-plots do not, of course, lead to the murderer and before long another woman is murdered but **not** mini-skirted and apparently older than the other girl victims.

Throughout the book references have been made to a travelling fanatical religious sect of North Carolina snake-handlers called the Golden Fragment. The latest victim is a deaconess of the sect and it transpires she had been having an affair with the Pastor, Micah Taswell, who Blake, by setting up Paula Dane as bait, discovers is a womaniser. But he is not the murderer.

Blake has also set up Marion Lang and she is nearly killed before she is rescued in the nick of time. And the murderer? In the horrifying denouement it is revealed there are actually **two** murderers! They are the two fanatically religious daughters of Micah Taswell, so inflamed by the righteous "fire and brimstone" preaching of their hypocritical father that they have been driven to kill "temptresses" wherever the mission has visited. The deaconess, who had "tempted" their father, had been the worst of all.

Blake expresses some sympathy with "the maimed minds and warped emotions of these two poor wretches, with their dark, subconscious jealousy of girls in mini-skirts". This shocking, even salacious, tale must surely constitute the nadir of the Sexton Blake saga.



BLACK, WHITE AND GRAY

by Mark Caldicott

Part Nine - Is he in danger of trying to write literature?

Having constructed the Bounders' Checklist, we now find that Vivian Travers would happily own up to at least three of the key Bounder indicators - he smokes, he gambles and he is not above the odd intentional lie. But all the same he is undoubtedly a decent fellow and he has vowed to help his friend Jimmy Potts, the new boot-boy of St. Frank's and, incidentally, a penniless baronet. Potts is being blackmailed by Grayson, the cad of the Fifth whose father was the engineer of Potts' father's financial ruin and subsequent death.

Travers has a grand scheme. The first step in this scheme is to draw Travers into a gambling game. This takes place in Study A, giving cause for the other Remove fellows to believe that Travers is indeed a cad. They urge Nipper to oust Travers from his place in the football team and only strong captainship from Nipper keeps Travers in the side. Travers, though, is not concerned at the views of others, for he has achieved his intended aim. Grayson owes him money and Travers is in possession of his IOUs.

Sam Lloyd is a bookmaker. Travers meets up with him in Bannington ("The Voice of the Tempter", *Nelson Lee Library* 1st NS 92, 04-Feb-28), this meeting being reminiscent of that between Hart and the shady Mr Hooker - a chance meeting in the streets of Bannington after a lapse of time. Lloyd, however, is a different type of bookmaker, a reputable fellow whom Travers is pleased to meet again. Travers, spotted by the others in Lloyd's company,

is open in acknowledging this friendship, thus further souring his relationship with the other fellows.

Meeting Sam Lloyd again is a lucky break which aids Travers' scheme, for with Lloyd's co-operation Travers perpetrates a minor deception. He visits Grayson with a fictional account of debts owing to the bookmaker and of Lloyd's threats to report Travers to the Headmaster if debts are not paid. Grayson does not care that Travers is facing expulsion and could be saved if Grayson paid his dues. However, he does rather foolishly agree that Travers can pass the IOUs to Lloyd. This was Travers' aim all the way through the deception and Travers pays Lloyd to threaten Grayson that if the IOUs are not paid he will report Grayson to the Head. Grayson sees the trap too late and he himself is now in danger, he believes, of exposure to the Head.



"These I.O.U.'s represent twenty-five pounds!" said the bookmaker, waving the slips of paper in his hand.
"That money is owing by you, and I want the cash!" Fiercely, Grayson pointed to the floor. "Get out of here!" he exclaimed angrily.

The scheme is coming along nicely. Potts relates to Travers the fact that his mother, who is also reduced to more humble status and is working as the housekeeper of Moor View School, is withdrawing a sum of money from the bank on behalf of Miss Bond, the Headmistress. This gives Travers the opportunity to turn the screw a little further by telling Grayson that there is money in the desk of Miss Bond at Moor View School. Travers is desperate enough to slide further into the trap, for he does indeed steal the money and pays Lloyd with it. Travers has already suggested that Jimmy tell his mother to take a note of the numbers of the notes, so the fact that they are the stolen notes is known.

Lloyd gives Travers the stolen notes, who now has all the ingredients he needs to bring off his scheme, for he knows that Sam Lloyd will testify to the truth of the matter if needs be.

There is a slight setback whereby Teddy Long, the sneak, discovers the stolen notes in Travers' drawer. Travers reveals the strength of his nerve and self possession when the

other Remove fellows appear in his room ready to search for the stolen money. This is a nasty situation for Travers, since the money indeed is exactly where Long claims it to be, but the others do not discover this only because Travers shows consummate coolness in bluffing the others. He states that he is surprised they are willing to listen to the accusations of a known liar, Teddy Long, and demands they search his study to prove how foolish this is. His coolness is such that the others are ashamed to have doubted him and no search takes place.

Travers now invites Grayson's father, Mortimer Grayson, to a private meeting where he threatens to expose Harold Grayson as a thief. He emphasises that the police are seeking the thief. Harold Grayson, he declares, could find himself prosecuted and, as a criminal, complete his education in Borstal. Mortimer Grayson is introduced to Mr Lloyd, who confirms that he received the stolen notes from Grayson and Grayson himself, crumpling in the face of the shock of discovery and the arrival of his father, confesses the truth. Faced with the consequences, Mortimer Grayson agrees to restore the Potts estates and a sum of £50,000. Jimmy, his fortune restored and no longer required to work as a boot boy, has enjoyed his stay at St. Frank's so much he asks to be kept on as a pupil and he and Travers become study mates.

And so Travers' debut at St. Frank's concludes with a success and, for me at least, this series of stories is notable in that from the same basic ingredients of the Augustus Hart story, Brooks has, in developing a new twist to the plot, created a more complex character than we saw with Hart or even, for all that he is a central and long-established St. Frank's character, Fullwood. For here we have a character which represents an exploration and expansion of traditional norms of schoolboy characterisation.

Is it that in Travers Brooks has broken the habit of a lifetime and written a story whose main purpose is to explore and reveal the character of the central figure? It would be tempting to think that Brooks, in introducing Travers, was consciously trying to see how far it was possible to create a character whose psyche embodied both good and evil (as typified in school stories by the opposition of decent fellow and the bounder), yet transcending these contradictions within a personality coherent enough for the reader to believe such a person could exist, and exist within the cultural milieu of St. Frank's.

If this had been the intention it would be a triumph, for Travers is a believable character and Brooks has indeed managed to draw from these contradictory elements a convincing personality. By emphasising Travers' coolness, independence of thought, recklessness of nature and ability to ignore the judgement of others, he paints the picture of a character whom readers can readily accept as being thoroughly decent, honest and likeable, whilst evidently revelling in the enjoyments of smoking, gambling and dissembling.

If Brooks has indeed managed to produce a more rounded and interesting character than usual, was this intentional? Is ESB setting out to delineate and explore a complex personality?

Is he in danger of trying to write literature?

Happily I think not. I don't think Brooks would have given a fig for the interplay of psyche and culture and all the pretentious guff of the previous couple of paragraphs. The truth is more probably that, as always, he had thought of a plot and he needed to build

characters whose actions in fleshing out the plot into a story would appear convincing, reasonable and rational.

The plot requires a central figure who is out to perform a good deed for another, thus he must be basically a good person. This good deed requires bringing about the downfall of a cad and the way it is to be achieved requires the hero to be someone who "gets on well with the bad lads". The hero cannot be a reformed or reforming character, but a sound fellow who will happily use questionable methods to achieve worthwhile ends. It is as if Brooks has achieved one of his best characterisations by accident - the personality has been generated by the needs of the plot, a paradox which I find most enlightening and which I will pursue again next time.

THE NOVELS OF E. S. BROOKS

by Betty Hopton

E.S. Brooks wrote many novels using several different pen-names, e.g. Berkeley Gray, Robert W. Comrade, Victor Gunn, etc.

However, he did write two novels under his own name of EDWY SEARLES BROOKS. The first one is entitled "The Strange Case of the Antlered Man". This novel was first published in 1935, by George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd.

It appears that this tale was rewritten from a story that had previously appeared in the *Union Jack*. In this novel we are introduced to a pair of sleuths who are refreshingly different from the average detectives of general fiction.

We meet Chief Detective-Inspector "Bill" Beeke, otherwise nicknamed "The Grouser", because he is continually grumbling about the state of his health. The Grouser firmly believed that he had been suffering from a terminal illness for at least sixteen years, and when doctors informed him that he was a healthy man, he stubbornly refused to believe them, convincing himself that they were all frauds who didn't know what they were talking about. In fact the Grouser gets a lot of pleasure from the conviction that he has a serious illness; however, his stamina and his voracious appetite are not in keeping with a man who does not have long to live!

The Grouser is always shabbily dressed, but he is one of the hardest-headed men at the Yard, shrewd, quick thinking and patient, quite prepared to wait for years to get his man, but always gets him in the end.

Beeke (the Grouser) had many assistants, but none of them stayed very long because they could just not put up with his eternal complaining, with never a word of encouragement. In despair, the Commissioner appointed a new young man to be Beeke's assistant and thus we are introduced to Detective-Sergeant Eustace Cavendish. The Hon. Eustace was the son of Lord Halstead and quite superior to the Grouser, as regards family, but had been interested in criminology for quite some time. He was a very astute young man, the only thing he lacked was experience. Eustace Cavendish was always extremely well-dressed, which did not go down too well with the shabby Grouser.

The rest of the Yard could not understand why Eustace Cavendish could stick working with Beeke, but Eustace was quite unruffled by Beeke's snarling remarks, all of his grumbling slid off Eustace's back without making the slightest impression. He knew that the Grouser had a heart of gold under his gruff exterior.

Beeke and Cavendish are sent to a small village called Long Marsley, which is situated in North Essex, to investigate a rather gruesome murder.

The village of Long Marsley had boasted a ghost for centuries in the form of an Antlered Man, described as a grotesque, shadowy thing, with a hideous face, half man, half devil, with great horns protruding from the head and a black body, a wooden club, with a knobby head, clutched in one hand. The villagers all live in fear that they will one day encounter this fearsome apparition.

The local doctor is called out to a case late in the evening, sees the Antlered Man and can hardly believe his eyes. When returning home later that night he discovers a body, lying in the middle of the road. The murder victim was a young man called Ralph Avery; he was a good-for-nothing, hated by everyone, and was the nephew of a wealthy local man named Sir Richard Avery.

Suspicion falls on young Andrew Avery, son of Sir Richard and cousin of the dead man, but local people believe it is the work of the "Antlered Man". The Grouser however does not believe in the "Antlered Man" and is also convinced that Andrew Avery is not guilty, so with the help of Eustace Cavendish sets out to solve the case.

The story moves at quite a rapid pace and later on there is another murder, Sir Richard Avery is also found dead. The villagers of Long Marsley were quite convinced that the "Antlered Man" was responsible and the cottagers barred their windows and bolted their doors.

The story is very well written by Mr E.S. Brooks, keeping up the suspense and excitement right to the end. Just when I thought I knew what the ending was going to be, there came a very strange and unexpected twist to the story, which took me completely by surprise.

"Torquemada" in the *Observer* described the ending as a real double-barrelled shock, with which I fully agree. I feel sure that all enthusiasts of Mr Brooks' detective tales would thoroughly enjoy this excellent story, although this particular title would probably be a little difficult to find nowadays, but it's well worth looking out for.

I fully endorse the words of "Seton Deardon" in *Time and Tide*, who sums it all up by stating the following: "The only adjective I can find to fit 'The Antlered Man' is 'Delicious', I enjoyed every word of it".

Does any collector have duplicate pre-war comics/story papers they wish to sell or exchange? I have various duplicates, e.g. "Champions", "Nelson Lee Library" O/S N/S series, Sexton Blake Library 2nd, 3rd series, various others. Specially wanted Christmas issues. KEN TOWNSEND, 7 NORTH CLOSE, WILLINGTON, DERBY DE 65 6EA. TEL. 01283-703305

FOR SALE: Hardbacks. H.B. Magnet volumes no.11(g)£6. No.45(f) £6. No.46(vg) £5. Holiday Annual 1973 (f) £4. Easter Omnibus 1978 (vg) £4. Nelson Lee No. 3 (f) £4. Hawk: B.B.'s Banknote (mint) £3. Spring: Tom Merry of St. Jim's (v. fine) £2. Spring: Trouble for Tom Merry (fine) £4.50 No. D.C. Many more bargains. Send SAE for lists to ERIC SHEPPARD, 1 FORGE CLOSE, BEMPTON, BRIDLINGTON, YO15 1LX.



DERNEL HOLT - THE ANALYST DETECTIVE

by Bill Lofts

Many years ago, I had a lengthy discussion with Leslie Charteris (of *Saint* fame) on the question of a criminal face, and whether such a thing did exist. To be more precise, the idea was first brought forward by an Italian, his theory being that he could always tell a criminal by the features of his face. Physiognomy, I believe it is called. Some detective writers are fond of using phrases such as "eyes too close together", "shifty eyes and thin lips", "a face like a weasel" or "a pockmarked face". "A vivid scar across the cheek" of course suggests that someone must have been involved in a knife fight and so was involved in some crooked concern.

At the end of my debate with Leslie, we agreed that there are criminals who have been quite good-looking with no blemishes at all. Haig, the acid bath murderer, charmed lonely widows with his appearance, whilst Christie of Rillington Place ill-fame was small and very polite and seemingly a gentle friendly man. (My sister actually lived next door to him, and used to ask him about his wife! Supposed to be up North, she was eventually found buried in the garden!) Another murderer looked like a pink-skinned benevolent Bishop!

Curiously, one of the greatest supporters of the "criminal face" theory was none other than the great Edgar Wallace. I suspect another was our Frank Richards, by his descriptions of crooks in the Greyfriars stories.

Dernel Holt, a detective who appeared in The Trapps Holmes boys' paper *Funny Cuts* in 1907 also firmly believed in it. A practical judge of physiognomy, he had a small office in The Strand. A keen-eyed man, dressed in a grey suit, he was highly successful and nicknamed "an analyst detective". With his business expanding all the time, eventually he took an assistant named Antony, whom Holt had previously helped when his father was murdered.

Who wrote this story? Well, none other than Charles Hamilton, which shows he took an interest in physiognomy before the *Magnet* was created.

PAT O'KEENE - THE VENTRILOQUIST DETECTIVE

Pat O'Keene appeared in *The Funny Wonder* comic in 1920. He was obviously meant for the younger reader, as he had two pets who assisted him in his investigations, Jerry the monkey and Aunt Sally the parrot. Aunt Sally could speak, and Jerry spoke too, but only by his master's throwing his voice. The stories were light-hearted, and remind me of the style of Stanton Hope.

JERRY, THE PET MONKEY, TO THE RESCUE!



'DO YOU REMEMBER?' Reflections on the Writings of Charles Hamilton, by Roger Jenkins. Museum Press (Charles Hamilton Companion Series) 1998. (Compiled by John Wernham and Mary Cadogan.)

This excellent book could perhaps be described as a kind of companion volume to last year's compilation of the late Eric Fayne's "Let's Be Controversial" articles first published in the *Collectors' Digest*, appropriately, Eric and Roger were old friends - and fellow schoolmasters - in real life too.

Now comes this collection, compiled by John Wernham and Mary Cadogan for the Museum Press, of the first 106 articles in Roger Jenkins' splendid series "Do You Remember?" which ran for many years in the *Collectors' Digest*. The very first article in the series appeared in *C.D.* No. 91 in July, 1954, and Roger 'took a breather', as they say, after contributing a mere 250 of them over a period of some 43 years. 'Do you remember when you **didn't** write them, Roger?' one might say . . .

I said 'the first 106 articles' but, strictly speaking, there are 105, since No. 105 seems to be mysteriously missing, but no matter - what's 1 in 106? The sub-title to this volume is "Reflections on the Writings of Charles Hamilton", but here, Roger, in his admirably versatile manner, doesn't merely 'reflect'. He discusses, argues, muses, conjectures, cogitates, considers, meditates, ponders, ruminates, wonders, thinks, explains, questions and debates upon the Sacred Writings of Hamilton (better known, of course, as 'Frank Richards', 'Martin Clifford' and 'Owen Conquest' not to mention his myriad other pen-names). And does so in his usual brilliant, entertaining and witty way, giving food for thought, reviving fond memories and, perhaps most of all, making the reader determined to return to (or read for the first time) some particular story or series Roger happens to be going on about so stimulatingly.

He spotlights and illuminates memorable stories and series, events, characters, places and relationships at Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood, Cedar Creek and other Hamilton schools (also occasionally touching upon other schools and authors too, including Edwy Searles Brooks and St. Frank's). They are all vividly described and discussed, with sometimes intriguing references to Roger's correspondence with Charles Hamilton and the people and places which he created.

The very first subject of Roger's series was *Gem* No. 1220, "Battling Grundy", published in 1931, in which George Alfred is in constant trouble with his form-master at St. Jim's. The second article deals with that very funny story "Bunter the Bankrupt" (*Magnet* No. 640, 1920), in which the Fat Owl decides to settle all his debts, not by that reluctant postal-order, but by the ingenious method of declaring himself bankrupt! Peter Todd, that would-be lawyer of the Remove, is 'engaged' to handle Bunter's affairs and announces that his total debts amount to the sum of £27 - no small amount in 1920. The consternation that ensues when Todd solemnly explains that his overweight client proposes to pay one penny in the pound may well be envisaged!

The many other stories to come under Roger Jenkins' expert scrutiny include:

Magnet No. 776, "The Ghost of Mauleverer Towers" (1922), when Roger notes that 'this was the last occasion when the time-honoured custom of a single Christmas story was observed'. Also *Boys' Friend* Nos. 1140-74 (obviously a long, long series!) concerning the adventures of Jimmy Silver and Co. of Rookwood on holiday in Canada.

Magnet 242, "The Greyfriars Insurance Co."; *Magnet* 1556-9, "The Reynham Castle Series"; and *Magnet* 950-51, which deals with Harry Wharton's rather surprising feud with poor old M. Charpentier (in 1926).

Roger also writes about such notable 'one-offs' as P.G. Wodehouse's marvellous school novel "Mike" (which introduced the inimitable Psmith and which is one of the best 'hard-cover' school stories ever written); the 1920 (and the first) "Holiday Annual"; the *Magnet's* 1000th Number (in 1927); the first hard-cover book versions of Billy Bunter, Tom Merry and Rookwood; a Sparshott School story called "Pluck Will Tell" (Hamilton wrote of this school after the demise of the *Magnet*) in which Bunter appears as a 'guest star' (Hamilton had retained the copyright of his famous character); and a Fernley School story in *Union Jack* (No. 106 in 1905), which must be surely the only story Charles Hamilton wrote in which one schoolboy plots the murder of another . . . !

Do You Remember?



*Reflections
on the Writings of Charles Hamilton*

By Roger Jenkins

Roger Jenkins has been pre-eminent as the leading literary critic (together with the late Eric Fayne) in the field of Charles Hamilton's writing for the young, for as long as most of us can remember. For 50 years or so his writings in this sphere have been perceptive, entertaining, amusing and often masterly. And here we have over a hundred examples of Jenkins at his best (and many, longer examples are to be found in the back numbers of the *Collectors' Digest Annual* - perhaps we may see some of those reprinted one day . . .).

Roger Jenkins has a particularly felicitous turn of phrase at times. Referring to the 'guest appearance' of Billy Bunter at Sparshott in the aforementioned "Pluck Will Tell" and comparing the Fat Owl to the leading Sparshott characters, he writes: 'But even the best of the new schools could not survive the re-appearance of the old; the stars do not shine when the sun comes out'.

Again, in discussing a St. Frank's story: 'Fighting Jim Kingswood, the Headmaster who addressed the Fourth-Form as "you fellows", seems somewhat lacking in dignity'.

And, in his piece on "The Greyfriars Insurance Co.": 'Wingate cured (Bunter) of his first painful illness by homeopathic treatment, i.e. by the application of a cane!'

And a final (and quite true, I think) example of Roger's perception: '. . . the work of Charles Dickens and Charles Hamilton alike can be read over and over again with no diminution of pleasure'.

"Do You Remember?", beautifully produced and printed, is a joy to look at and to handle. This large (just a touch under A4-size) book has cheerful bright-yellow covers, well over 180 pages and more than 150 heart-warming and memorable illustrations, including many full-page reproductions of *Magnet* and *Gem* covers by such famous artists as C.H. Chapman and Leonard Shields. Two of my own favourites are the cover of the "Grand Christmas Number" of *The Magnet* for 1925, showing a group of schoolboys poised to force their way into the front door of a bungalow armed with what appear to be cricket-stumps and a tennis-racquet, while a thug peers menacingly out at them through a fanlight - all this in the snow, of course . . . The other is an H.M. Lewis illustration to an incident in the 1908-09 "American Trip" series in the *Gem* (Nos. 46-50); it shows D'Arcy in this usual top-hat, Eton collar and immaculate suit (and not forgetting his monocle!)

standing in a rough bar in the Rockies; offered a drink from a brandished bottle by a group of tough, bearded cowboys, he demurs as politely as ever: 'Weally, I do not dwink. I shall be pleased to join you in a lemonade on gingah-beer!' It's an hilarious picture and what puts the gilt on the lily, I think, is the key word 'gingah'. You can just hear the delectable D'Arcy drawing it and trying not to cause any offence!

There are even a few photographs of veteran Old Boys' Book Club members (some, sadly, no longer with us) chatting at happy summer meetings. There is also a major double-page 'spread' from the *Kent Messenger* newspaper, with pictures, about John Wernham, worthy nonagenarian President of the London OBBC for many years.

A 50-page story, "Ructions at Greyfriars", faithfully reproduced with the original Chapman illustrations from the 1920 *Holiday Annual*, suddenly appears, without warning or fanfares, in the middle of the book. A rather nice, but unexpected surprise, like finding a silver sixpence in the Christmas pudding! Very enjoyable, but perhaps hardly necessary, though few will complain!

As I believe I said in my review of the otherwise excellent Eric Fayne volume last year, it would have been useful if, at the end of each article, the issue number and date of the appropriate *C.D.* in which it originally appeared, had been noted - for completeness and for reference in case a reader wanted to refer back to that issue. But that's an unimportant criticism of a volume that could hardly be bettered.

"Do You Remember?" is a celebration of Roger Jenkins, as well as Charles Hamilton. He is obviously an affectionate critic and expert on his subjects, and was patently well-educated at Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood and other Hamiltonian educational establishments, where he was Captain of everything (including the schools) and passed with honours every examination he sat. What he doesn't know about the fictional schools of Charles Hamilton (and others) simply isn't worth knowing. What's that? He went to Narkover! Oh well, he doubtless went beach-combing while there before making Hay while the sun shone . . . After all, boys will be boys . . . !

"Do You Remember?" If you don't, Roger Jenkins will remind you and make sure you don't forget. His love and respect for the writings of Charles Hamilton and for the schools he so brilliantly created and those who attended them, shine through everything he writes with wit, expertise, appreciation and deep knowledge. Mr Quelch would have been proud of him - and Harry Wharton would have picked him for the Remove team . . .

"Do You Remember?" is indeed a book to remember.

MYSTERY AT CARRINGTON GRANGE **Part Two**

by Anthony Cook

Unlike the chums, Mr Quelch stood for a while and pondered. In the end he pocketed the fragment of parachute, if that is what it was, and continued down the incline towards the manager's cottage. As he walked towards it he was amazed to see smoke coming from the chimney. Surely Verity could not have returned without making his presence known? To his greater surprise as he came level with the gate the door opened and a figure in Air Force blue appeared. "Hallo there!" came a call. Mr Quelch halted as the figure came towards the gate. The master was confronted by a young man in officer's uniform. He had noticed that he had a pronounced limp and walked with the aid of a stick.

The greeting was acknowledged with a stiff "Good afternoon".

"Are you from the school, by any chance?" came the question. "I am. My name is Quelch. I am acting Assistant Headmaster." The airman held out his hand: "Flight Lieutenant Verity, sir, home on sick leave."

Mr Quelch's eyebrows rose. "Indeed, then perhaps you can tell me what has happened to our Estate Manager at the Grange, Mr James Verity". The young man's brow furrowed. "I was under the impression that Uncle had written to the Headmaster with an explanation." "That is so. But there was no indication as to the length of his absence, and we are being caused considerable inconvenience."

"Ah, well, you see my father, James's brother, has been ill for quite a long period and there are certain things which need to be done: family matters, you know. He thought it a good idea that as I was on sick leave I should stay here at the cottage with my sister for a few days".

"Is it possible to contact Mr Verity by telephone?" persisted Mr Quelch. The officer shook his head. "Sorry, old man, no telephone, and as for an address, I suggest that by the time a letter reaches him he might well be on his way back". Mr Quelch flinched at the 'old man' but he held his peace. He was getting nowhere fast, and suspected that this was intended. "Very well. It would appear that we must await Mr Verity's pleasure." "Fraid so sport."

By this time the master of the Remove was indeed irritated. He turned to go. "Look, I wonder if I might ask a favour of you," said the young man. Favours at that precise moment were not the kind of thoughts which Mr Quelch harboured. He waited. "Well, it is rather a bore with this leg of mine, and I would very much like to take a look around the Grange. I was quite young when Uncle Jim last took me round. Just a quick tour you know!" As a polite refusal came to his lips, Mr Quelch suddenly relented. After all, here was a young man fighting for his country, and he was on sick leave. "Very well. I fear it will not be until tomorrow. That is," he added, "if I am able to find the time."

"Wizard show! I shall be in your debt. Look, shall I give my phone number here at the cottage? I can come straight up then." While Mr Quelch wondered what 'wizard show' might mean, as well as pondering this young man's interest in the Grange, he was handed a scrap of paper on which had been written a number. "Look forward to seeing you soon, sir."

With that Mr Quelch turned back towards the path by which he had come. Although the last thing he wanted was to show the young officer around the Grange his interest had been aroused. He'd had reservations about this young airman from the outset but during the last few minutes his interest, as well as some, as yet, unfounded suspicions were aroused. As the figure in blue limped back towards the cottage, Mr Quelch continued his way down to the lane. His progress was slow but his mind was fully occupied. Late that evening in his study he sat in front of the open log fire reading, although strangely his thoughts were not with the Latin text before him. His present study was a superb panelled room whose general atmosphere of quiet comfort far exceeded that of his study at Greyfriars, and there is no denying that, when time allowed, he enjoyed it to the full. At last he rose from the deep comfort of his chair and took from his desk drawer the letter from Verity and the rescued item from the oak tree. He added to these the scrap of paper that Flt. Lt. Verity had given him that afternoon. After a few moments' reflection he made a telephone call and, satisfied, returned to his reading. It was sometime later that his call was returned. During a protracted conversation he listened with rapt attention to his caller's instructions, then sat back with a satisfied sigh. He had been right to make his call and it very much looked as though the next day or so might be full of surprises.

Earlier that same evening there had been some ragging in the Remove dormitory. To be precise, one of the Remove dormitories, for although there were ample room facilities at the Grange there was only space in each for six beds and the attendant necessary fittings for each pupil. The turret room, as it was now known, housed Harry Wharton & Co. and W.G. Bunter. Questions were being asked. "Where were you this afternoon, Johnny?" Bob Cherry asked. "And Inky for that matter."

"Fallen out with your friends?" Frank Nugent asked. Johnny Bull coloured. "Matter of fact we were up here."

"Up here!" echoed Wharton. "Asleep?" "No, you ass, we were having a look at the wall on the end."

"It's wood you know," Nugent grinned. "With knobs on."

"Ha, ha, ha!" came the collective response.

"Look you silly asses, we were trying to find out if we could get into the jolly old turret room that Harry mentioned last night."

"And?" Harry Wharton queried, with a sudden renewed interest.

"No go, old bean, nothing. Solid as a rock: fruitless search!"

"The searchfulness was terrific," murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh with a wide grin.

"Look, this is ridiculous. There must be some way of getting in. After all, there must have been some reason for building the place." They all gathered together at the end of the dormitory in front of the heavy panelled wall. At that moment Bunter came rolling in. "I say, you fellows, anybody got a bar of chocolate in their tuck box? I can't last much longer." A groan came from the assembled group.

"Someone tell old fat man there happens to be a war on. No spare tuck," came the answer.

"Beasts!" Bunter lay down on his bed and groaned. Harry Wharton was examining the panelling. "There's no sign of a door, yet something must trigger an opening."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Look at this." They followed Bob Cherry's pointing finger. "What is it?" "A funny face."

"Looks a bit like Bunter" Frank Nugent suggested. Amidst the general laughter Harry Wharton was going over the woodwork, feeling his way over the carvings. "If we start from the side and push all the raised parts we might find something."

"What if we all suddenly disappear through the floor?" Bob said. As he dodged a well aimed blow from his captain they set to work methodically. Half an hour later they had gone over the entire wall without success. "No go. Waste of effort." Wharton looked disappointed. Suddenly it was Johnny Bull who gave a cry: "Hang on chaps, look!" He pointed downwards towards the skirting. "That skirting board down there is set back from the rest." He went down on his knees. "And it's worn down." He pushed it with both hands. "Oh my giddy aunt!" came a shout, as a small doorway swung open a few inches.

"Found it!" breathed Harry Wharton. "Come on, let's see what's behind it." He gently pushed the door open. It creaked with disuse and age. At last the entrance was revealed. "Anybody got a torch?" he called back, as he stepped inside.

"Hang on." Frank Nugent went back and procured a torch from his locker, joining Harry Wharton inside. A small room had been revealed, quite empty, but by the light of the torch they saw a flight of steps leading down to the left. "Two of you fellows keep cave," Harry called. A few moments later the two Removites reappeared. "It's difficult by torchlight. There seems to be a flight of steps leading down, otherwise nothing there." "Must be something down the steps." "An iron door, no handle though."

"Shall we have to tell Henry?" asked Frank Nugent. Wharton considered for a moment. "Yes," he nodded. "We must. But let's have a look round first in the daylight." At that moment a loud groan was emitted from Bunter's bed. "What's up with old fat man, starvationitis?" Johnny Bull grinned. "Rotters!" came the reply.

"Hang on, I think I remember a cake still in my box of tricks."

Bunter sat up. "I say, Cherry! Did you say cake?"

"Just the thing for the starving." A moment later a small object winged its way over to Bunter's bed. There was a howl from the Owl of the Remove. "It's soap, you idiot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter failed to see what all the laughter was about as he hurled the cake of soap back towards the group. Soon there was silence in the dormitory, save the snores of Bunter, and, if anyone had been awake, the sound of a lone plane which quickly faded into the night.

The next morning before lessons Harry Wharton presented himself to Mr Quelch and informed him of the discovery of the hidden room. He explained, under his form master's astute questioning, how it had been discovered and why he and his chums had been so sure that the room could be entered from the dormitory. He then accompanied his form-master upstairs to the dormitory, showing him his discovery. There was little more than had been seen an hour or so earlier. The steps led down to a small bricked area at which point they were faced by a steel door. There was no lock or handle, and under pressure the door failed to yield. On reaching the top of the stairs again, both Harry and Mr Quelch looked out of the leaded window at the distant fields towards Worcester. As Mr Quelch turned to re-enter the dormitory Harry noticed a circular mark on the window sill. "This looks fresh, sir." He rubbed his finger across the circular mark. "Paraffin, sir." Mr Quelch repeated the process. "You are correct, Wharton." He stood for a moment without further comment, thoughtfully looking out of the window. "Very well, Wharton. I want you to see that under no circumstances does anyone open the door to this room, or they will be dealt with severely. I must, however, congratulate you on your powers of observation. I feel sure that someone has been in this room recently. Apart from what I have already said I suggest that you will inform no-one of my - er, that is, our suspicions regarding recent occupation. Is that clear?" "Very clear, sir" Wharton answered.

They re-entered the dormitory, closing the heavy door behind them. As soon as the Remove master returned to his study he made a telephone call to Flt. Lt. Verity and arranged that he should be shown round the school that afternoon. It was a very thoughtful master who sat at his desk, staring at the instrument in front of him. Making a sudden decision he picked up the telephone again and made another call. It was a long call but at the end of his conversation it was a very satisfied Mr Quelch who hurried down to confront the Remove. Later that afternoon a figure in Air Force blue could be seen in the company of the Remove master, being shown around the Grange. To those who knew Quelch well it was surprising that he had made the time to show a visitor around, but he appeared in good humour and to make an interesting and willing guide. The two men roamed around the building for the best part of an hour, the visitor not backwards in asking questions, his host seemingly only too pleased to answer. Towards the end of the tour they looked in at the room that was used as the Remove common room. As they entered Harry Wharton, Cherry and Nugent rose to their feet. "This is Flt. Lt. Verity," Mr Quelch said by way of introduction. The three chums acknowledged him. "You lads enjoy your new surroundings?" Verity asked them. After they had made suitable replies, Mr Quelch turned to go.

"Excuse me sir, what type of aircraft do you fly?" Verity grinned. "Spits my boy, what else, 615 Squadron Kenley. You interested in kites?" After a brief exchange with the chums the master and his visitor left. "Seems a nice chap," Frank Nugent commented. "Same name as our manager fellow." "Wonder if he's been wounded? Did you see the limp?" asked Bob Cherry. "I wonder why Henry was showing him round?" With all these questions unanswered, the subject was dropped. The juniors would have been surprised to realise that they would see Flt. Lt. Verity again very soon.

To be Concluded.

My first acquaintance with the writing of H.G. Wells began when I re-sat my O-level English Literature examinations, way back in 1967. I had failed miserably the first time around because I had no feeling for and, in fact, positively hated the set book, Conrad's *The Rover*. It succeeded in putting me off ever wanting to read anything by Conrad again for over thirty years. It would be the saviour of the 1967 examination who would finally set that prejudice aside!

Kipps was to be the set book for 1967 and thanks to "H.G." a good pass was forthcoming; a very pleasant way to pass an exam too!

Once away from school, when I could choose my own reading, I read a few of H.G.'s SF works; I liked *The Time Machine* the most and remember finding *The Island of Doctor Moreau* a pretty nightmarish read.

I then left reading Wells books behind me for over twenty years but felt the need a few years ago to rediscover them after this long hiatus; and the best thing of all was that I have found I now appreciate them more than I ever did when I first read them.

So it was that earlier this year, through reading a new edition of a less well known book by Wells called *The Croquet Player*, I read of a book of a similar style written by Conrad called *Heart of Darkness*. I knew I would have to overcome my long-held prejudice and read another Conrad book! I did, and reading *Heart of Darkness* has proved to be a worthwhile experience and it also led me to appreciate Wells the more.

I could not therefore agree more with the sentiments expressed by Alan Pratt in his excellent article "Second Time Around" in the October CD. What a wealth of reading can still await us in the wide world of literature, with books we used to dislike waiting to be read which we may grow to love as much as our childhood favourites!

HELP WANTED - please

TOWARDS the end of 1997 Ian Bennett and I completed our BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE MURRAY ROBERTS' CAPTAIN JUSTICE STORIES. It contained Complete Listings of 'The Modern Boy' serials, 'The Boy's Friend Library' versions of the tales, my 'Adventures of Captain Justice Reprints' and articles by Ian and myself.

PROOF copies of the Bibliography were sent to fellow Captain Justice fans and corrections and additions have been made. I like pictures and that Trial Edition had over 50 illustrations, most of them from 'The Modern Boy' serials.

34 ADVENTURES of Captain Justice appeared in 'The Modern Boy' and 24 of them were reprinted in 'The Boy's Friend Library'. 23 of those reprints had covers by Ernest Ibbetson, who is to Captain Justice what Eric Parker is to Sexton Blake; THE illustrator.

'The Bibliography' will be published in 1999 - 60 years after 'The Modern Boy' ceased publication - and, if possible, I would like it to contain illustrations of ALL 'The Boy's Friend Library' covers. I have fourteen so I'm still short of ten and I'd be grateful if 'Collectors' Digest' readers who have any of the following 'Boy's Friend Library' numbers would photocopy the covers and send them to me.

BOY'S FRIEND LIBRARY No. and Title	
457 Soldiers of Fortune	465 The Earthquake Maker
477 The Rocketeers	485 The Secret Kingdom
505 The World in Darkness	529 The Sea Eagles
533 The Jungle Castaways	626 The Gold Raiders
655 The Outlaw Raiders	689 The City of Secrets

I will, of course, pay for the time and trouble involved - in my experience some of 'The Boy's Friend Library' covers don't photocopy well - but I'll be pleased to have any photocopy.

Thank you, Ronald Hibbert
30, Alton Road, Ross on Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 5ND
Telephone (01899) 564512

THE MYSTERY OF THE MASTER'S STUDY!

SOMETHING wrong, lads? Run out of ideas for creating havoc? What brings you three together and in-doors on lovely day like this?" Jack Spinner spread out his arms as he spoke, in a gesture which seemed to encompass the three bored faces of his two sons and his nephew, Harry.

"In the first place," said his elder son Tom, "We're together because we were supposed to be going to the fair, and —"

"That's been cancelled," added younger son Dick.

"And it's a rotten day," continued his cousin Harry.

"Look — it's pelting with rain."
Jack Spinner look-

A STORY OF BENNY BANTER OF GREENBAKER'S SCHOOL

ed down at them with an expression of amazement. "Mean to tell me that three inventive lads like you can't find some way of amusing yourselves?"

"Perhaps we're just disappointed."

"And fed up."

"And bored." Jack nodded. "I suppose it happens to us all in time. Now, how would you like your old Dad-cum-Uncle to tell you a nice story?"

"Hah. Hah."

"We're not just kids, you know!"

Jack nodded. "Of course. Forgive me. All the same, I'll have what is known in the story-telling trade as 'a bash'." He coughed in preparation. "Here goes."

"This is about school, a boys' school as they used to be. Where lads who weren't too polite to their Dads and Uncles were sent to stay. This particular school was called Greenbaker's School—"

"Funny sort of name," interrupted Dick.

Jack frowned. "It was started hundreds of years ago by a firm of bakers named Green, and it went on for ages afterwards.

"Anyway, it was a pretty harsh sort of place — I'm going back thirty or forty years, you understand? The school was divided into classes called forms. We are concerned here with the Fourth Form,

whose leading pupils are Larry Loughton, Bill Berry and Frank Fragrant. I won't waste a lot of time listing them all. I'll introduce them as we go along."

"Oh goody," said Harry, stifling a yawn.

"The three chaps I mentioned were known to their friends as the Tremendous Trio—"

"I'll bet they were," said Tom.

"And when the story opens they were in the Study Passage, when along came their form-master, Mr Squishford."

"Mr What?" asked Dick. "Mr Squish-

ford. It's quite an unusual name."
"Never heard of it!" "Squishford

was very angry, as it turns out. 'Someone has scattered fish and chips all over the floor of my study,' he said, his face like a beetroot. 'And I intend to punish the culprit to the absolute utmost! Let him stand forth!'"

"Fat chance of that, I would have thought," said Harry.

"Well, never mind. 'Let the boy responsible stand forward, or I shall punish the whole class.' The boys looked from one another, and Larry's eyes fell upon the corpulent figure of Benny Banter. 'I wouldn't mind betting it was him,' said Larry."

"Listen Dad, there's something a bit familiar about all this old rub— I mean stuff! I'm sure I've heard something like it before."

"Have you? Well, I expect a lot of stories have some familiar ring about them."

"Ring?" said Tom. "This one chimes!"

"Oh, shut up, Tom," said Dick. "I'm beginning to get interested. It may be tripe, but it's a good quality tripe."

Jack Spinner held up his hand. "Now listen. If you're bored with it, I'll stop. I'm only trying to help, you know!"

Harry stood up. "Quite right. In any case, it's better that sitting watching the rain come down."

"Thank you, one and all, for that superb accolade," said Jack. "I'm sure that even Laurence Olivier would have been chuffed. May I go on?"

"Right". Larry Loughton looked across at the rotund shape of Benny Banter. "I wouldn't mind betting he's still got the crumbs of the chips on his waistcoat!" "But even Banter wouldn't throw his tuck all over Squishy's study, would he? He'd have scoffed the lot as soon as it came his way." Bill Berry pointed out. "And anyway, he doesn't look guilty, and you know as well as I do, that Benny usually gives himself away".

"You're right, Bill," said Frank Fragrant. "And if anything, he looks upset, sort of deprived!"

By now, their form-master was very angry indeed. "Very well," he said. "As no one has come forward, the whole form is confined to school. No one shall leave the premises until the culprit has admitted his guilt."

"Gosh, that's a bit much", murmured Finkel. "Why should we all suffer when everyone knows it was Banter?" Not a pleasant, chap, was Finkel, but on this occasion, many of the boys seemed to agree with him, and began to mutter amongst themselves. Of course, Squishford heard this, and swung round.

"What's that, Finkel? You know the culprit?" he demanded.

"Well, not exactly, sir, but we all think it was Banter!"

"Banter?" exclaimed angrily. "You say he perpetrated the trick? Banter! Stand forward!"

"It wasn't me, sir! Honestly!"

"What have you to say for yourself, Banter?" queried the angry form-master. "Speak! I command you! Were you in my study earlier today?"

"Er, well, sir, I only looked in. I wasn't going to use your telephone, or anything like that!"

"M-m-my telephone? What are you talking about, boy?"

"I wouldn't dream of using your phone, sir! Even to speak to my pater!"

Mr Squishford stepped forward, his finger extended and pointing. "You went to my study to telephone your father? How dare you?"

Banter was very worried and bewildered now. "It was noise I heard, inside your room, sir! So I went in to investigate."

"Good heavens!"

"Yes, and I was holding my fish and chips — I'd just bought them, you see! And I heard this noise!"

"Noise?"

"Yes, so I went in, and this creature flew at me!"

"Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"A creature flew at you?" Mr Squishford was shaking with anger. "Banter, this is too much! How dare you tell me such falsehoods? And ridiculous ones, at that!"

Poor Banter was quivering with anxiety, and his face grew red as a beetroot.

"It's true, sir! A great furry animal, it was — black and white and hairy! It flew at me, and snatched the fish and chips, and they scattered all over the place!"

By now Mr Squishford was beside himself in anger. "Banter! I have never heard such a collection of nonsense in all my life! You are telling falsehoods, and you expect me to believe such rubbish? You are obviously guilty of the desecration of my study, and I shall punish you severely! You will come to my room immediately after morning School, and I shall cane you!"

"Oh, lor", groaned Banter, as Mr Squishford stalked off down the corridor.

Larry Loughton & Co. crowded round the unhappy Banter.

"Honestly, you are a silly ass! Fancy expecting Squishy to believe that yarn!" said Larry. "And whatever possessed you to go into his study? You know it's the Holy of Holies!"

Banter groaned. "I only wanted to ask the pater for some cash. I'm a bit short, you see and I went in —"

"With your fish and chips!" broke in Frank Fragrant.

"Yes, but I had hardly got inside, when this huge creature leapt at me —"

"Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"Pull the other one, old fat bean!"

"Sure there was only one monster?"

"It's true!" hooted Banter. "I saw it as clear as daylight!"

Bill Berry patted him on the shoulder. "Never mind, Banter. Don't worry. I expect you're just going off your rocker, that's all! Well, I'm off to the tuck shop before class. Anyone coming?"

He was joined by Frank and Larry, and the trio strolled off across the quadrangle. The tuckshop was just outside the school gates, and as the chums started over the road, Larry suddenly pointed.

"Look!" he said.

Larry's finger was pointing to an Italian organ-grinder, who had set up his organ on the roadside. "It's Antonio," he said. "And look what he has with him!"

Sitting on top of the organ, as Antonio ground away at the handle, was a monkey. Quite a large monkey, indeed, with black and white fur.

"Don't you see? It's Banter's monster!" said Larry.

"You're right!" put in Bill Berry.

"The mystery's solved!" added Frank.

"Come on, let's find Banter!"

Poor Banter was sitting in the form-room, his face a picture of misery.

"Come on, Banter," shouted Larry Loughton. "We've solved your mystery! We'd better see Squishy right away!"

"But— but—" stuttered the Fat Oval.

"Come on, and don't argue!"

And away they ran, almost dragging the astonished Banter as they went.

Mr Squishford was in his study, and not in a happy mood at all. The boys knocked on his door, and his stern voice commanded them to enter. The form-master looked up at them, his grim expression boding ill for any malefactor.

"I trust that this is not any trick or joke?" His tone was very sharp indeed.

"Of course not, sir!" said Larry.

"What we have come about is very important!"

"Very well. You may speak!"

"We've discovered that Banter was speaking the truth after all. There was a creature in your study! It was a monkey!"

Mr Squishford looked up in astonishment. "A monkey? Bless my soul! Is this the truth?"

"Yes, sir," Frank Fragrant continued. "It belonged to the Italian organ-grinder across the road, but it must have escaped!"

"Good heavens!"

"And it was here when Banter came into the room!"

"I see!"

"So he *did* hear a noise, sir!"

Mr Squishford rose. He was a fair man. Banter had, of course broken an important rule by entering his study, but the boy could not be blamed for what happened afterwards.

"Very well. Under the circumstances, I shall not cane you, Banter."

Banter's face brightened. "Oh, thank you sir. You see —"

"But you were greatly at fault. Therefore, as a milder punishment, I shall expect you to write one hundred lines! I shall want them completed by tomorrow morning."

Banter looked somewhat downcast, but he knew that he had had a lucky escape. Mr Squishford started towards the door, then turned towards the juniors.

"Oh, and since you boys were so anxious that justice should be done to Banter, you may complete matters by cleaning up this study of mine. I am sure that Banter will be pleased to take part, too!"

And with that, the form-master swept out of the room. GCB



THE WONDERFUL GARDENS Ann Halam's *King Death's Garden*

by Donald V Campbell

King Death's Garden really does move us forward into the latter end of the twentieth century, that is: to 1986. It claims to be a ghost story and that makes a change - even though *Tom's Midnight Garden* comes close to the genre. It is written by an author better known for her science fiction (Gwyneth Jones) and it is her only children's book so far as I can discover.

The "Garden" of the title is a cemetery. Cemeteries are, naturally enough, common places in which to set the advent of ghosts. Maurice has been dumped on his Great Aunt Ada whilst the rest of his family - Father, Mother and Baby, go off to the Arab Emirates for Father's job. Despite heat and warmth there it is the asthmatic and weakly Maurice who is left behind to make the best of it. Awkward and much of a loner, he has no friends in school having lost the one and only over a mischance. And so we are set for him to like and frequent the old cemetery - which frightens him not one bit.

There are "modern" devices in the book. There is the black home help. An Asian girl appears - a year above Maurice - to whom he is attracted. There is the ever-present asthma and the drugs to counteract it. How far these are necessary is debatable and there is a distinct "add-on" feeling about them.

What does matter is his translation into the past - his dreams on his "magic carpet". Disconnected and leaping from one era to another he begins to realise that what he sees is reality. That the frightening storm and what he thinks is a great bridge is the first Brighton pier being storm-tossed into matchwood. And there is Moth - appearing constantly and given to enigmatic references. But her warnings are meaningless to Maurice. As Moth becomes more and more cryptic so he becomes aware that he is being watched and by someone other than Moth. Mary, for instance knows of his visits and why he comes home so late from school. Great Aunt Ada haunts the cemetery with flowers in hand. And so the mystery builds. He calls out from time to time - "Who are you? What do you want?" There is no reply.

The story gathers pace until he is led to King Death's Garden at night to discover the dead professor's secret. He ends up scared half to death and legs it out of the cemetery in some fear.

What the professor's secret was and how it released the "time-travel" experiences of Maurice is confusing. As with most ghost stories the explanation is usually unsatisfactory. In this book the explanation is mixed up with a kind of "preachy" you've never had it so good message that spoils the run-up to the end. This is unfortunate, because the bulk of the book is scary and tense and full of unexpected "ghoulies" - just out of sight yet just in sight. Doors that open and close mysteriously. People or things only a moment away behind your shoulder. Read by a sensitive soul this could induce that well known childhood phenomenon of "keeping the light on, please".

For those with scruples about death and cemeteries there is never any sense of desecration even though Maurice is caught in what seems to be such an act with a trowel in his hand.

We must assume that as Aunt Ada looks after the little grave of her long dead daughter, Moth is that daughter. And the continuity given to the story by the appearances of Moth give it a link to *Tom's Midnight Garden*. But where there is a clear unifying development of a relationship between Tom and his "ghost" the spirit of Moth is much like her name and we are never sure of who or what she is. This lack of a relationship for Maurice is disappointing and is "covered" by the realisation (forced on him by the author?) that all is not as bad as it seems. That he is the root cause of any friction. That going to the Emirates will not be as bad as he had fancied. A bit too "pat" and moralising for my liking.

The book lacks illustrations and that is a pity because it cries out for them. The wild, fey girl - Moth. the odd nooks and crannies of the cemetery. The inscriptions. The wonderful "dreams". These and other episodes (the pier in the storm, the mud-laden lines of the Great War) would give a good illustrator a field day. But, without pictures, the story stands exceptionally well on its own literary merits.

Observation tells me that the weird and the horrific are to the taste of the young these days. Whether this book would be grabbed up by the devotees of Stephen King is debatable. It demands a lot of thought. It is satisfying in its tension and "creepy" elements. But it suffers from an awkward denouement without clear focus. Still the garden elements are handled well and if part of the intention was to de-mystify the place that is a cemetery then Ann Halam has managed to do that well.

AUTUMN MEMORIES

by Bob Whiter

As November approaches, my thoughts almost invariably turn to Guy Fawkes days in Britain. November 5th, of course, is not celebrated over here. July 4th, Independence Day, is the day when Americans traditionally let off their fireworks (or as they would term it "shoot off their fireworks or firecrackers"). One year I bought some fireworks, and saved them for November 5th, then let them off in the evening! All the neighbours came out and stared in amazement - "What was that mad Britisher doing this time?" These days I sort out all the *Magnet* series dealing with the "Glorious Fifth" and imagine I'm back in the U.K. in the good old days!

Each month over here in the Scouting Calendar, a meeting at the Scout H.Q. is held. It is called the "Round Table". Leaders of packs and troops are invited to come and be shown various ideas to help them run their own units more effectively. The scouter who normally runs these meetings phoned me from Chicago - he wouldn't be back in time - would I organise and run the meeting? Hastily I summoned the Round Table staff and planned a meeting. I had no trouble with the Boy Scout section, Richard Narumi, just back from the Jamboree in Japan, was full of ideas. So I resolved to take care of the Cub Scout section myself (with the help of one of the ladies).

The theme of the month is always taught a month in advance, thus giving the leaders time to arrange their own packs' programmes. Because August had been "dark" - in other words, no Round Table meeting - we had two themes:- "Be a Detective" and "Hallowe'en". I put on my thinking cap and thought about detectives. First of all I made a plaster cast of a footprint in a box filled with soft earth. Made up cards with Police and other important phone numbers to be either stuck on the bottom of the telephone or pinned up near it. I then made arrangements for packs to visit police stations or have a detective visit the various packs and talk to the boys. But I wanted something else, something the adult leaders could make and take back with them from the Round Table. Suddenly I thought of the wonderful Secret Seven series in the dear old *Magnet*!

Getting out my volume for the year of 1934 I went through the issues of the Secret Seven. My eyes followed the pictures advertising the free gifts. In other words "The Sheriff's Outfit". Two of the gifts shown interested me in particular:- The Code and Cypher Key and the "Thumb Print Recorder". By studying the several pictures of the latter, and with the aid of ruler, setsquare, compass and ruling pen, I was able to make the separate drawings. These I had duplicated on stiff card. I changed the inscription in the middle of the inner circle and made it the Cub Scout Code and Cypher Key. I also made up a finger printing card.

I was really gratified at the Round Table. Each leader was given the duplicated drawings and a pair of scissors, with which to cut out the two discs. These were then joined together with a brass paper fastener which allowed the inner circle to be rotated inside the outer one. I divided the leaders into pairs, but stationed them apart so they could communicate with each other by code. It was a great success. They also loved filling in the finger print cards. My thoughts went back to 1934 when, as a boy of ten, I obtained the Sheriff's Kit from the *Magnet*. I remember I was proudly wearing the Sheriff's Star whilst on the swings in the playground. Suddenly to my dismay I found I'd lost it! Very sadly I started to go home, when I was stopped by a man - "Here, sonny, would you like this? - I just picked it up!" It was my Sheriff's Star! In my childish way I thanked him profusely - talk about luck! But if anyone had told me that 64 years later and 6,000 miles away, I would make use of two of the other gifts - I would have thought that they were crazy! Thanks to Frank Richards and the *Magnet* I received lots of plaudits for a very successful Round Table meeting.



It's nice to imagine that the Remove Scouts of Greyfriars and the Curlew Patrol of St. Jim's in the shades are also nodding their approval. I was also very fortunate - in the closing ceremony, the aforementioned Richard Narumi presented me with a fine rubber stamp of Lord Baden-Powell complete with signature!

FORUM

From Des O'Leary:

The letters in the October C.D. were unusually interesting. Arthur F.G. Edwards raised a point about the soccer v. rugby debate. Having played both - badly! - I have always been puzzled by those who think one was 'better' than the other. They're both grand games and, in South Wales at least, rugby was as 'working class' as soccer. My son's school, Loughborough Grammar, switched to rugby only after the War when a new Welsh teacher (from my home-town of Neath) introduced it.

Larry Morley repeats a point I made a long time ago in an article for CD that *Magnet* and *Gem* were unknown by many. My elder brother, in the 1930s, said he only knew the Big 5 of Thomsons. I am glad to have had the good fortune to meet Frank Richards' work through C.D. and Howard Baker, not to mention Blake etcetera, and to expand my appreciation of boys' writers and artists. Once again the C.D. provides food for thought and debate.

From Joe Ashley:

My small item on Hedley O'Mant has caused Geoff Kay to ask if G.M. Bowman wrote the air stories in Newnes between 1935-40. I should imagine only the late Bill Lofts could answer that question, or maybe Brian Doyle. I remember Bill Lofts stated that, when he interviewed G.M. Bowman, he found that Bowman was reluctant to discuss his earlier writings in juvenile publications. I should think it is a fair bet that Bowman wrote the Newnes stories although he wrote Detective and all kinds of stories, etc.

He favoured flying stories. He served in the R.A.F. in the Second World War rising to the rank of Group Captain. In 1955 he wrote a best seller about parachutists called 'Jump For It'. Another novel 'Pattern in Poison Ivy' also received excellent reviews according to

W.O.G. Lofts and Derek Audley's 'Men Behind Boys' Fiction'. Bowman was a features editor on the Evening News.

I too enjoyed Brian Doyle's 'Yesterday's Heroes'. I will try some of my contacts who worked at the old A.P. to find out about Bowman. When I asked one of them of O'Mant he had never heard of him. To be sure he is of another generation!

From Ted Baldock:

It is my experience that certain images, scenes and occasions, even chance remarks, in some strange way set in motion a series of memories which have lain long dormant in the recesses of the mind.

Such was the case when I saw the cover illustration of the October C.D. The old - ever young - *Penny Popular*, that wondrous amalgam of all our favourite schools, and countless other attractions. The half-way house - as it were - between the *Magnet* and the *Gem*.

Most of the stories, I recall, were of necessity short, but oh how welcome! The young reader in those now distant days seemed to have plenty of time for reading, even after devouring the current issues of the two companion papers each week. The *Penny Popular* filled the vacuum admirably.

Who was the unsung genius - for such he was - who instigated this great little paper? In the early days, the twenties, it seems we could not get enough information concerning the 'Famous Five', the 'Terrible Three', or the 'Fistical Four', those Rookwood heroes who gallantly brought up the rear. These characters became our life-long friends.

All credit to Bob Whiter for 'capturing' that old reprobate Gosling to a nicety in his drawing for my article.

I once knew a 'Gate-keeper' who was just such a stickler for accuracy as our own antique. It would seem to be a characteristic of the species. My old acquaintance had that which may be described as a 'crabbed' sense of humour. How many fellows he locked out during his career I wouldn't care to guess.

From Martin Waters:

I was very pleased to see an article by Bill Lofts in a recent C.D. Bill's untimely death is to be greatly regretted and I hope that you will be able to keep his memory alive in the magazine. I was also pleased to see the reference to the 'I Spy' booklets in the latest issue, I well remember these interesting little books in the early 1950s.

I was interested in the article on the character 'Blackshirt' in the latest chapter of Brian Doyle's series on heroes. I have vague memories of reading stories about this character in picture strip form c1960. I think one of the Fleetway pocket libraries included detective stories in picture strip form. I probably had Blackshirt's hooded costume in mind when I created the costumes worn by Heather Eastwood and her friends in my stories.

I am not a particular fan of the works of P.G. Wodehouse, but I greatly enjoyed the reference to the character Roderick Spoke and his fascist type organisation the 'Blackshorts'. In one of the recent TV versions of the adventures of Jeeves and Wooster, the bullying Spoke receives his 'comeuppance' at the hands of a very tough young curate just come down from Cambridge - the 'man of the cloth' flattens the bully with a single blow.

From John Bridwater:

Once again it is time to place my order for the splendid CD Annual. I can hardly believe a whole year has passed since I ordered the 1997 Annual. The CD has, as usual, been going great guns in the intervening period. I particularly liked Peter Mahony's Harry Wharton articles. I hope we shall see further series about characters featured in the old

papers. Today I came across something associated with the *Magnet* in a very unlikely place. Browsing among the compact discs in our local record shop my eye caught the HMV dog with a steam locomotive coming out of a radio speaker under his nose. The CD title is "The Great British Experience: 50 original light music classics". Listed among many old favourites on the back I found "Sea Songs (Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School) New Concert Orchestra conducted by Nat Nyll" sandwiched between two items conducted by Sidney Torch. Naturally I snapped up the two CD pack. It is, of course, an EMI product. On reading the booklet enclosed with the CDs I found the following: "Sea Songs - by contrast we next feature one of Britain's great classical composers of this century, Ralph Vaughan Williams . . . It appears in our collection through the inspired choice of the flowing middle theme as a signature tune for Billy Bunter's television escapades in the mid-1950s". Well, well! The older I get the more I learn! The incident provided a very enjoyable and instructive afternoon for me. I only saw a few of the Bunter TV shows but I recognised the "flowing middle theme" as soon as I heard it. I think the CD collection "Great British Experience" an excellent selection of British music, much of it of great nostalgic appeal, and I recommend the two CDs to everyone who enjoys "our CD". I wonder who made the inspired choice of RVW's theme for the TV Bunter?

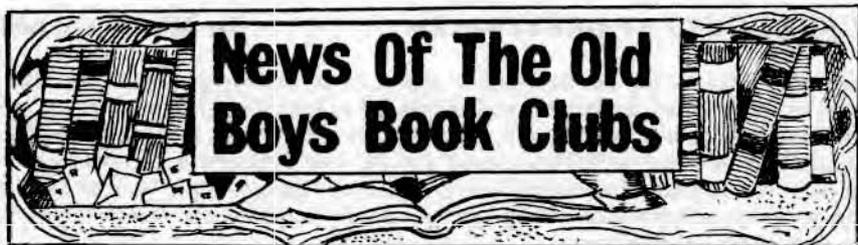
From Mark Taha:

Watching 'This Is Your Life' recently, I think I spotted the actor who would have made an excellent Quelch in the 70s. Frank Thornton - tall, slim, with the gimlet-eyed look: even the voice sounded right! So in the 70s, Frank Thornton as Quelch, Arthur Lowe as Prout, Michael Hordern as Dr. Locke - Robin Bailey as Sir Hilton Popper?

(Editor's Note: I can't say that I've particularly envisaged Frank Thornton as Mr. Quelch, although I've admired this extremely talented actor for many decades. His most famous role must, of course, be that of Captain Peacock in the recently successfully revived 'Are You Being Served?'. However, I still think of him as he was when I first saw him acting on the London stage during the war as the young romantic lead in Donald Wolfit's Shakespearean company. He was extremely compelling, with a great feeling for the language and poetry. I interviewed him and his wife Beryl Evans (whom he met when they were both with Wolfit) about two years ago in their London home. They were charming, with a great sense of humour and floods of amusing theatrical experiences! How I wish that some of Frank's Shakespearean scenes had been recorded in some way. All that part of his career now seems lost to us - except, of course, in our memories.)

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.

Do not forget to order this year's C.D. Annual.



NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

The best attendance of the year greeted the annual visit of our speakers Mary Cadogan and Derek Marsden. By popular demand Mary continued with the theme Working at the B.B.C. With special reference to her broadcasts with Arthur Askey and Arthur Marshall we were entertained with a Who's Who of comedy and variety in the late 1930s and early 40s. Stars such as Kenneth Horne, Wilfred Pickles, Anne Zeigler and Webster Booth, the radio doctor Charles Hill and countless others who passed through the doors of "The Corporation" were brought vividly back through Mary's personal reminiscences. We never did get to know if Mary did beat Tommy Handley at table tennis, though!

Derek Marsden's talk was about Humour In The Big Five (*Wizard, Rover, Skipper, Hotspur and Adventure*). The jokes came fast and furious and some were even funny. Characters such as Nero and Zero, Nutty Ned, Slim Sam, Peter Pumpkin all did a turn but what shone out like a beacon was Derek's wonderful enthusiasm and knowledge of the subject.

Paul Galvin

SOUTH WESTERN O.B.B.C.

A small, but enthusiastic, group met at the Uphill home of Tim Salisbury for our Autumn meeting.

The first half of the meeting centred on readings and discussion on Sexton Blake and Greyfriars; Reg Andrews, visiting us once again from Salisbury, was able to fill in much historical detail about both sagas.

A reading of Bunter enjoying Christmas fare at Wharton Lodge led us conveniently into the lavish study spread so generously provided by Mrs Salisbury.

Tim shared some interesting video clips varying from Billy Bunter to puppet characters as diverse as Muffin the Mule, Mr Turnip, Sooty, and Pinky and Perky. Nostalgic television memories for all!

Laurence Price completed the afternoon with a talk on H.G. Wells and *The War of the Worlds*, his great story of the invasion of the Martians, published in book form one hundred years ago and deeply prophetic of the mechanised warfare we have endured in the twentieth century.

Laurence Price

LONDON O.B.B.C.

The October meeting took place at the home of Mark Taha in Ealing on the 11th.

Bill Bradford entertained members with a talk about the Home Guard which dealt with his own experiences and their similarities with (or differences from) the public's conception of "Dad's Army". He also provided one of Bob Blythe's quizzes.

Mark Taha presented a film quiz and a talk on stage and screen adaptations of the works of Charles Dickens. Duncan Harper read from the *Union Jack* and members were reminded of the "Next Move" series first published in 1932.

Vic Pratt.

One of the reasons for the tremendous appeal of the storypapers was not always apparent to children at first reading but perhaps tended to reveal itself in moments of more mature reflection. Could it be the sense of security the stories lent to us in a world that often seemed to be founded on shifting sands? For the youngsters fortunate enough to live in stable home surroundings this security was always there, there to come back to when the escape to adventure palled and they were hungry. But for others not so lucky security had to be sought in more vicarious ways.

While school provided a modicum of routine it could provide only fear at times instead of the long term emotional security most of us need in life, even if this need is only subconscious beneath the quest for adventure and discovery. Some of the storypapers, especially those featuring our all-time favourite Alma Maters, gave us this in abundance. Come what may, each week took us into a world that, while it was crammed with adventure, humour and intrigue brought us an ideal stability. Now it is sometimes scoffed at as escapism, but it is more than that.

The chums were always there. We might have been miserable, scared, victims of bullying or an unsympathetic new teacher, laid low with measles or threatened by a move to a new house or different circumstances. But the chums came with us. They dealt with all the problems we faced, and they overcame them, sometimes bringing us uproarious mirth, sometimes even a tear. And in later years the Peter Pan element remained with us, helping us escape briefly the trials and tribulations disturbing our adult lives. For there was still that wonderful stability, a stability that only one of the most evil maniacs in history could bring to an end. Yet still we knew that the Easter boating trips, the fantastic summer holidays, the magical Christmases and the New Years full of hope with our faithful chums still lived on in the vital cycle of memory. In our secret world no milestone was ever forgotten. The dramatic, the emotional, and the comic, and certainly not the Fifth of November.

A very early Greyfriars Fifth really belonged to Bunter (*Magnet* 91). This was the Fifth when Bunter had one of his wonderful schemes for a bargain. This one would bring amazingly cheap fireworks, provided of course that he was supplied with the necessary funds to get the scheme going. Sadly, the Remove juniors were too dense to comprehend the benefit of this brilliant scheme. It was also near the Fifth when the Chinese junior, Wun Lung, a keen cook, even if in a way not always tempting to the Removites, tried out a special Chinese recipe. Bunter sneaked into Wun Lung's study to sample this delicacy. Not until he had scoffed four helpings did he discover that the main ingredient of the delicious stew was rat.

Nothing to do with fireworks, really, until Bunter was consoling himself with one of Mrs Mimble's pies, unaware that Skinner had slipped a primed jumping jack into the pie's interior. It made for hilarity, but must have made a mess of the long-suffering Mrs Mimble's tuck shop.

And then, insult of insults, they made Bunter the guy. It was agreed it was a superb replica, perfectly dressed; Bunter to a T. But the indignant Bunter had the last laugh - almost. When the great bonfire was lit under that lifelike effigy, dreadful groans and cries for help came from the flames. The juniors twigged instantly that Bunter was indulging in ventriloquial revenge, but Carberry, at that time the most hated prefect at Greyfriars, plunged heroically into the flames to rescue the 'living' guy. Bunter and everyone else thought it was hilarious until Carberry departed in fury to anoint his singes and the bonfire was freshly restoked. Bunter the Second blazed away on his fiery throne and suddenly, Bunter was no longer amused . . .

Things were a little more complicated in "All the Fun of the Fifth" (*Magnet* 1238), when Sir Hilton Popper, the choleric governor of the school, attracted the attention of a

pickpocket, one Alfred Herbert Parker. The Famous Five, close on the scene, gave chase, crashed into Bunter, who collapsed yelling and was tripped over by Sir Hilton, also in pursuit. Sir Hilton took this as a personal insult from Bunter and got in a little carpet-beating practice on the hapless fat owl before continuing in pursuit of the thief. Meanwhile Temple, Dabney and Fry of the Fourth were deep in plans for their Guy Fawkes celebration. Their guy was to depict Inky, otherwise the Remove's own Nabob, Hurrec Janset Ram Singh, and their chosen hiding place was the woodshed. This woodshed also seemed an ideal place for the fleeing pickpocket to take revenge, and the guy an ideal place to conceal the stolen pocketbook, where he could retrieve it when the chase died down.

Unfortunately he ran straight into the arms of Hobson of the Shell, whose cry brought half the school on the scene. Sir Hilton and the Head arrived, and after a great deal of unseemly mirth the pickpocket was searched without any trace of the pocketbook being found on his person. Sir Hilton lost his never very secure temper and set about Mr Alfred Herbert Parker with his stick and pursued him out of the school gates.

Prout said it was scandalous.

Mr Wiggins said it was unprecedented.

Such behaviour from a governor of the school, sighed Mr Twigg.

There is much fun in the twists and turns of the story of the pocketbook hidden in the guy. Loder got involved; Bunter thought he was on the right trail; Gosling was keeping a weather eye on the whole business and the secrecy of Temple, Dabney and Fry concerning their secret in the woodshed soon gave rise to suspicion. The pickpocket must have begun to wonder if it was all worth it as he endeavoured to sneak into the woodshed to retrieve his loot. Time was passing, and the deadline was definitely November the Fifth.

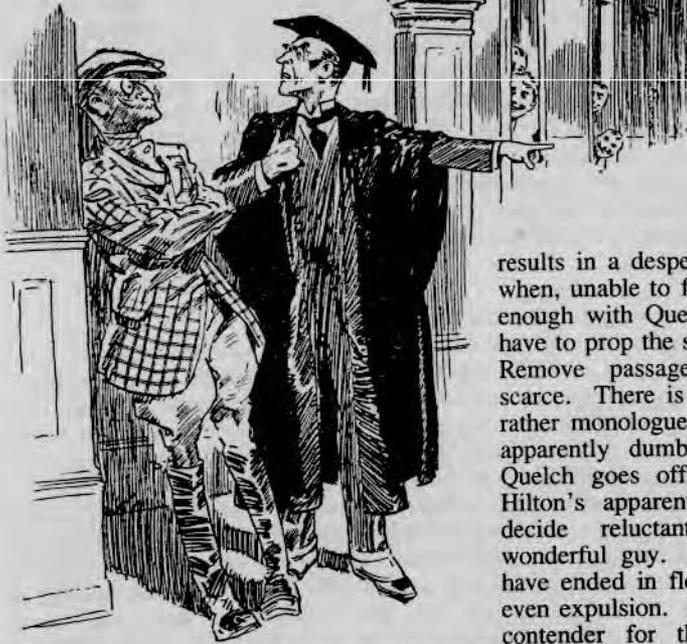
Sadly for the protagonists, the Famous Five entered the scene when it was necessary to rescue Temple, Dabney and Fry from the desperate combatant attentions of Alfred Herbert Parker, and in the process the guy was discovered. When the Famous Five saw the insulting effigy of their own Inky they paused only to deal with Temple, Dabney and Fry in the most suitable manner before giving the guy the treatment it deserved. And Abracadabra! Lo! there was the missing pocketbook. The recovery of this put Sir Hilton in quite a good mood, for once, though doubtless not for long. All that remained to be done was the making of the Remove's own guy, and what better choice than a certain Master Temple? He'd insulted an honoured member of the Famous Five; now it was his turn. He was suitably adorned with tar and paraded to the bonfire. The final humiliation came when the Fourth demanded their guy back, and Wingate ordered the Five to return the Fourth's property. Which they did!

Sir Hilton also featured, no, starred almost, in an earlier celebration of the Fifth, a much more dramatic episode; well, the Bounder was deeply involved that time and life was rarely less than dramatic when he was around.

In "A Great Fifth at Greyfriars" (*Magnet* 1029) this episode was part of the series known as The Toad of the Remove. Tom Redwing had already thrashed the toad, also known as Edgar Bright, the son of the money lender of Lantham, to whom Sir Hilton is heavily in debt. The Toad is only accepted at Greyfriars through a spot of moral blackmail by his father forcing Sir Hilton to recommend the unpleasant youth to the Head.

Meanwhile Bob Cherry has decided that it is time for a spot of revenge on Sir Hilton for all the trouble he has brought down on their heads at one time and another. What better than a guy of the peppery Sir Hilton? Bob finds a ready ally in the Bounder and preparations begin. Wun Lung is a whiz at modelling in clay and is deputed to fashion the mask, and Bob and Smithy set off on their bikes for Courtfield to buy a suitable wardrobe of secondhand clothes and fireworks. They encounter Sir Hilton on horseback on a narrow bridle path. The reckless Bounder and his bike have a right-of-way argument with the horse which the horse wins. Bob rushes to aid the crashed Smithy and is horsewhipped by

"Instead of requesting you, sir, to quit these premises," shouted Mr. Quelch, "I order you to do so. You hear me, sir?" Mr. Quelch's angry voice rang out loudly, audible in every study in the Remove passage. But still the "second baronet" remained silent.



Sir Hilton. Any doubts Bob has had regarding the wisdom of the guy plan are banished. Despite the protests of Wharton and Co. the plan goes ahead and a superb effigy of Sir Hilton is created. But the plotters reckon without the unpleasant Toad and his spying. This

results in a desperate but hilarious incident when, unable to find a hiding place quickly enough with Quelch on the trail, the boys have to prop the second Sir Hilton up in the Remove passage and make themselves scarce. There is a wonderful exchange, or rather monologue, with Mr Quelch and the apparently dumb-struck Sir Hilton. Mr Quelch goes off in high dudgeon at Sir Hilton's apparent rudeness and the boys decide reluctantly to dismantle their wonderful guy. It would almost certainly have ended in floggings all round, perhaps even expulsion. And they now have a new contender for the honour of being the

Remove guy! With Smithy as the willing ringleader, the Toad is caught and gagged with a duster, then his mean face is cheered up with red and blue and green paint, a false beard and moustache, and the new guy is ready for the parade.

The Head and Sir Hilton and Mr Quelch view the proceedings and Sir Hilton is satisfied at last that no insulting effigy is fashioned in his image. Mr Quelch is positively benign and congratulates his dear boys on the lifelike guy whose eyes are flashing with demoniacal fury. They boded ill for the Removites in the future but for the immediate time of the calendar he would have to keep out of their way. Freed at last, within inches of the crackling flames, he fled from the fiery sparkles of fireworks, and in days to come the cry of "Here's another guy!" pursued him through the school. But just wait . . . He did not know just how many unpleasant sneaks and troublemakers had defied the Famous Five . . . and the Bounder . . . and paid the price. The Toad would not see another November the Fifth at Greyfriars, even as one of the greatest guys at Greyfriars!

COPYRIGHT. This non-profit making magazine is privately circulated. The reproduction of the contents, either wholly or in part, without written permission from The Editor, is strictly forbidden.

*Editor: Mary Cadogan, 7 Ashfield Close, off Brackley Road, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 1SN
Printed by Quacks Printers, 7 Grape Lane, Petergate, York, YO1 2HU. Tel. 01904-635967*