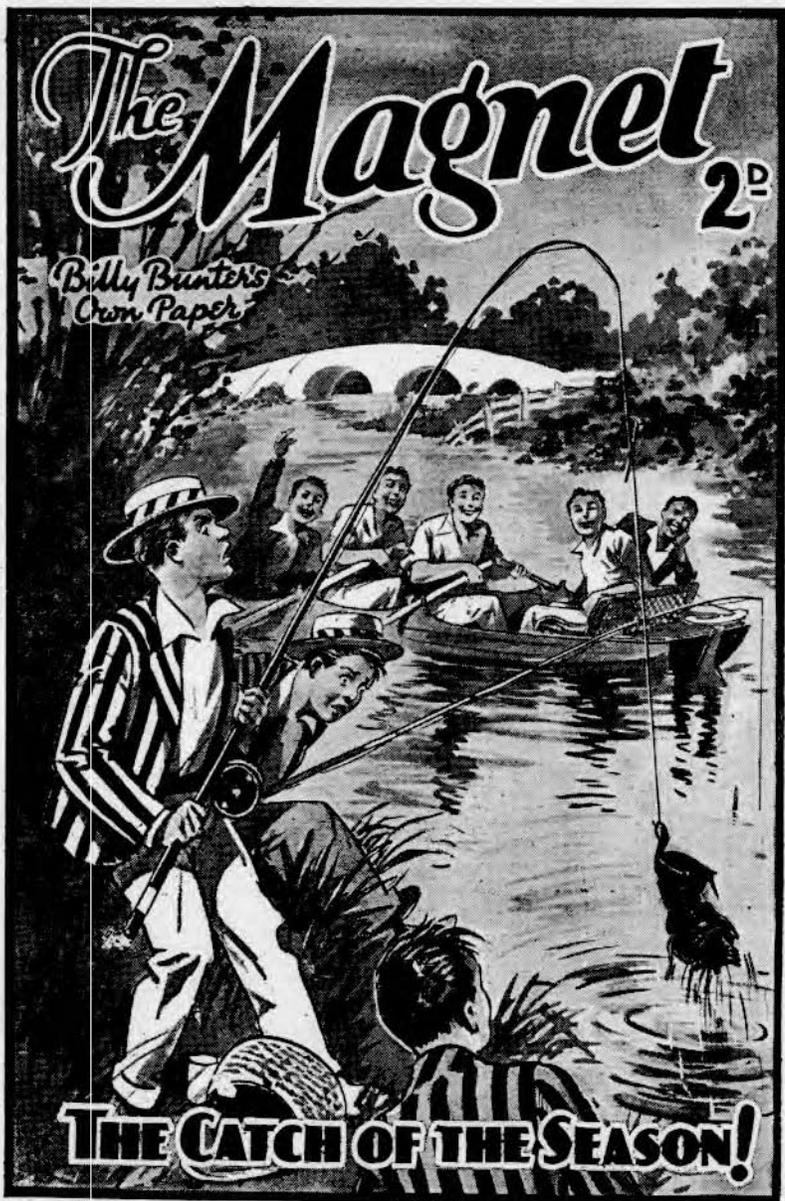


STORY PAPER  
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 55

No. 649

MARCH 2001



# SHADOWS

by Ted Baldock

Come like shadows, so depart.

*(Macbeth)*

Grey weatherbeaten towers I see  
Across the Kentish wold  
Where forest elms grew wild and free  
In times now dim and old.  
Yet Greyfriars stands, as stand it will  
For countless ages yet,  
While passing time will feel the thrill  
And schooldays not forget.  
Harry Wharton's thoughtful face,  
Bob Cherry's cheery grin,  
Hurree Singh's quaint eastern grace,  
Familiar memories bring.  
Johnny Bull's square rugged face,  
Bunter's podgy bulk,  
Dr. Locke's dear old-world grace,  
And Skinner's handdog sulk,  
Smithy's waistcoats, loud and bright,  
Tom Redwing's steady gaze  
The mellow bell that chimed at night,  
The endless carefree days,  
In summer time the cricket field  
Backed by grey old elms,  
The splendid game to which we yield  
In Kent's dear English realm.  
Fleeting facets one and all  
From a long gone time,  
Yet the memory may recall  
So much from that dear clime.  
Greyfriars played a major part  
In those halcyon days  
Forming in our minds the art  
Of noble thoughts and ways.  
Passing shadows of the night,  
Enchanting all our dreams  
Which with the dawn are put to flight  
As though they'd never been.

# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by  
W.H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by  
HERBERT LECKENBY

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It seems very appropriate that the C.D. should appear in its new format as Easter time approaches, with all its promise of rebirth and renewal. As you will see, this number is full of good things and, because of the support of our advertisers, is even a little longer than the promised 64-page issue.

I have to thank you for the *shoals* of understanding and appreciative letters which I received after I announced in last December's C.D. that our magazine would have, in future, to be a quarterly rather than a monthly publication. I trust that it will continue to go from strength to strength, and I thank all subscribers for their loyal support. I also warmly appreciate the excellent and varied features which continue to flow in from contributors. Just one special

plea here – we are again short of Nelson Lee items, so it is up to our many E.S. Brooks enthusiasts to put their pens, typewriters or word-processors to paper!

It is good that so many of aspects of our hobby are catered for, both nostalgically and in bibliographic detail. C.D. readers over the years have indeed done a great deal to keep alive intelligent, lively and affectionate interest in the ‘old boys’ and girls’ papers.

Our new format gives scope for long-ish articles but I would particularly ask contributors also to continue to send *short* features and articles. These add considerably to the liveliness of the C.D., as well as enlarging its scope.

## THE SWASHBUCKLERS

Jeffrey Richards is currently preparing a new Radio 4 series entitled *The Swashbucklers*. It is devoted to four of the famous swashbuckling television series of the 1950s: *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, *The Adventures of William Tell*, *Ivanhoe*, *The Adventures of Sir Lancelot*. The programme includes interviews with the surviving stars of the series (Patricia Driscoll, Conrad Phillips, William Russell, Robert Brown), discussions with experts (including Norman Wright and David Ashford) and extracts from the soundtracks of the programmes. The whole should add up to a feast of nostalgia for those who were growing up in the 1950s. The series is scheduled to be transmitted on Radio 4 in May, dates to be announced.

I wish you all good reading, and a very happy Easter.

MARY CADOGAN.

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**WANTED:** The Mounties Book, D.C. Thomson 1939. **FOR SALE:** Boys' Annuals: *Wizard* 1940, £12.50; *Rover* 1942 (scarce) £15.00; *Greyfriars Holiday Annual* 1938 £15.00; *Rainbow* 1931 £10.00; *Teddy Tail* 1938 £12.50; *Champion* 1913 (first issue) £15.00; *Chatterbox* 1917 (50<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue) £10.00. Postage extra. Also *Picture Show* and other film annuals from 1926 onwards plus *Arabian Nights*, *Grimms Fairy Tales* etc with nice colour plates. *Scout Handbook* (illustrated) 1912. Send SAE for list to Patrick Morley, Spring Cottage, The Batch, Hill Road, Sandford, Somerset BS25 5RH, or email [pmoldrad@aol.com](mailto:pmoldrad@aol.com).

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It is interesting to note that although Charles Hamilton placed boys with somewhat similar characteristics at the different schools, they weren't carbon copies of each other; this specifically applies to his three main schools – Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood. We might take as an example, Vernon Smith, Cardew and Mornington. Then of course we have:- Alonzo Todd of Greyfriars, Clarence Cuffy at Rookwood and the subject of this article Herbert Skimpole at St. Jim's. As most Dickensians know, *Harold* Skimpole is a character in 'Bleak House'. Various descriptions as:- A Sentimentalist, brilliant, vivacious and engaging, but thoroughly selfish and unprincipled; a genial caricature – so far as mere external peculiarities and mannerisms are concerned – of Leigh Hunt. The St. Jim's Skimpole has none of these specialities.

We are made aware of the junior with the bulging forehead and large glasses in *Gem* No. 41. Roger Jenkins considers this one of the wittiest of the ½d Gems. Skimpole has embraced Socialism and describes the great Gussy as an aristocratic bloated capitalist. Using very little tact he tries to comfort a very ragged and dirty tramp, whose name made no impression at the time, but was destined to become probably the most celebrated name in schoolboy fiction! The tramp's name was Bill Bunter – albeit in Skimpole's case the name bore the prefix of "Honest". He tells the tramp he is a terrible example of the oppression of the lower classes. "I have seldom seen a man so absolutely degraded and filthy." We don't have to be told that the tramp didn't take this admonition gratefully – the actual reply being "Thank you kindly, sir!" said Honest Bill Bunter, through his gritting teeth. When one looks at the career of this schoolboy, who seems to have taken up one "ism" after another (when not trying to think up some crackpot invention) one wonders why he wasn't enrolled at a school for idiots. When he wasn't actively pursuing one of his many hare-brained stunts, he would almost certainly be found deeply immersed in some weighty tome; his favourite author being Professor Balmy-Crumpet. So many books are scattered about his study that Gore, one of his study mates (much less longuffering than Talbot the other occupant) has threatened that if he brings in any more – they are going out the window. There is no end to the things that Skimpole thinks he can be or do, each one to be carried out with the utmost dispatch! These include:- being a "top detective" or a "Socialist candidate" for the St. Jim's Parliament. In most of the later stories (including the reprints) he was generally referred to as a "Determinist". Chambers dictionary describes determinism as the doctrine that all things, including the will, are determined by causes – the converse of freewill; necessitarianism. "Socialism" on the other hand is described as follows:- the name given to anyone of various schemes for regenerating society by a more equal distribution of property – and comparing the two it

is difficult to see the connection! Not to mention being an "Extremist" – one who supports or advocates extreme measures or holds extreme views. Another of Skimpole's pastimes was filling page after page in his spidery handwriting for his intended 'magnum opus' on Socialism. One wonders whether his great interest on the subject was due in no small way to his own parents' impecuniosity. Apparently they were always late with his school fees. On one occasion this necessitated him entering the Codicote Scholarship, which, owing to the withdrawal of some of the other candidates, he managed to win. Whether the readers of those early Gem stories, liked Skimpole or not is a moot point, but the fact remains that he certainly seemed to feature quite frequently. When Bernard Glyn, the schoolboy inventor, constructed a life-size walking model, it was made in Skimpole's likeness; this appeared in Gem No. 80. Several weeks later, Glyn improved his creation by installing a gramophone which when played gave



# Herbert Skimpole

the impression that the dummy was giving a lecture on Determinism. If you don't possess *Gems* 80 or 103, but have the 1932 Holiday Annual – on page 41, there is an article entitled "The St. Jim's Inventor" which deals with the further adventures of the mechanical Skimpole – and of George Francis Kerr's great impersonation of the model;

all well worth reading. While on the subject of the Holiday Annual, it should be also noted that the 1930 edition contains a specially written story entitled "Gussy's Latest Stunt". Skimpole gives away D'Arcy's new spring coat and the contents of the study cupboard – ten shillings worth of tuck to a tramp, who had called at the back door of the school. Indeed it is only the presence of Talbot that saves Skimpole from the wrath of their other studymate, Gore. The two juniors had invited Tom Merry and Co. to tea; After reading one of Mrs. Gigg's (the local Extremist) pamphlets, the great Gussy finds himself temporarily under the influence, with very funny results. Deciding that Toby Marsh the page should have the opportunity of learning Latin, he helps himself to Skimpole's foolscap. Having covered half of the sheets with lessons for the page, he is amazed when Skimmy arrives at his study and accuses him of stealing the paper – To quote from the story:- It was in this mood that Skimmy arrived at Study No. 6 in the Fourth. He did not arrive there because that study sheltered another Extremist, who might have supposed, on Skimmy's own principles, to have bagged the foolscap if he wanted it. Skimmy did not think of that. He never did reflect that his remarkable opinions were a sort of two-edged sword that might be turned against his brainy self".

As if in support of Skimpole's role in the St. Jim's saga – the 1941 Holiday Annual, the last annual of all, featured the story, "Skimpole the Star Gazer", reprinted from Gem No. 976. It's a funny tale in which other sights were viewed apart from the stars – but I won't say any more and spoil your reading. What a pity the telescope was repossessed, owing to the great Herbert not keeping up the instalments. One never knows, he many have, like Will Hay discovered a new planet. I do realise I have covered only a few of the many amusing incidents featuring Herbert Skimpole of Study No. 9 of the Shell. I just hope these brief extracts will whett your appetites!

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## SYLVIA REED WRITES

### Re: Beryll Cholmondely's letter

I felt I just had to write after reading Beryll's letter and our Editor's note in the November 2000 *SPCD*. Such a super, topping letter, chaps.

But, before I do, I must tell you that since 'weading' Morcove books, I have been calling my cats (Siamese) 'geals' after reading about how Paula Creel talks. Oh deah, geals it is such an addiction, bai jove! Also, interestingly, I have been saying Pamela Willoughby's 'Yes, well' for years before reading *When Pam Made Morcove Wonder*. It must be my strict English upbringing, albeit in Western Australia. My maternal grandmother being a Lancastrian, my grandfather a Cockney (by the sound of Bow Bells) and my paternal grandmother the quintessential upper class English lady, hence my father's being brought up alongside his two brothers with a Nanny, and going to public school, bai jove.

Now, to Beryll's letter. Reading is an addiction with me. I have books all over the house. *SGOL*'s here, there, everywhere. *SPCD*'s here and there. Other books scattered around interspersed with old copies of *Tatler* and English glossy interior magazines.

# The Schoolgirls' Own



**A REFRESHER FOR PAULA!**  
(An incident from the grand long complete story of Morcovia School contained in this issue.)

**2<sup>d</sup>**

No. 82. Vol. 4.] PUBLISHED EVERY TUESDAY. [Week Ending August 26th, 1922.

Daughter Diana is the same with her Babysitters Clubs, Enid Blyton's Malory Towers and St. Clare's and the like, as she is also an addict. She was even dipping into Dimsie last week. (But, quick, hide this book! Mustn't let Mum see I may be starting to like those books!) My mother and sisters are also addicts.

I read a few pages of a *SGOL* with my breakfast and when I go to bed. I sometimes take a *SGOL* to work with me just to put in my drawer so I can have a look; when we go away the *SGOL*'s come along. There are even books/glossy mags in the 'little house'. In times of stress or when everything goes wrong, I think of a story that I have read and try and put myself in it. It is like a secret I hug to myself.

This week my husband and I have been on annual leave and I have been deckhand in his boat, doing recreational cray fishing. Whilst out in the boat I thought of *Treasure Trail of the Tremaynes* as on a couple of the mornings when we were out the weather was pretty rough, and the area is rock and reef strewn. Like Beryll, I also like biography and social history.

On to another author, has anyone read Miss Read? She is an extremely comforting exercise. I saw her books on my Mum's bedside bookcase as a teenager but pooh-poohed them. Now, after Mum giving me a copy to read when I was in hospital having my daughter, I became hooked. My only other acknowledgement of adult literature is Iris Bromige.

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## MORE RIPPING YARNS

by John Hammond

John Buchan defined a yarn as the kind of romance 'where the incidents defy the probabilities, and march just inside the borders of the possible'.

All of us at times feel the urge to read this kind of book, if only as a means of escape from the pressures of modern living. Whether it is the incisive tones of Sherlock Holmes in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* or the thrilling exploits of Jim Hawkins in *Treasure Island* there is something very comforting in re-reading a favourite yarn and losing ourselves in the familiar world of a much loved classic.

Recent issues of *Collector's Digest* have focussed attention on Buchan's splendid story *The Thirty Nine Steps*, which is rightly regarded as one of the most exciting spy thrillers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The fact that the book has been continuously in print since its original publication in 1915 and has been filmed on numerous occasions is testimony to its enduring appeal.

One of the first "ripping yarns" I can remember reading was *The Treasure of the Red Tribe* by Major Charles Gilson. This is a gripping tale of adventure and exploration in the depths of Africa, which held me captivated from the very first page. Since then I have read other adventure stories by the same author, including *Congo Chains*, *The Lost City* and *The Yellow Mask*, but none of these possess for me the magic of *The Treasure of the Red Tribe*. This is a superb example of the genre, for it satisfies all the criteria of an adventure story for boys: it is well written, has believable characters, moves at a cracking pace and moves to an exciting climax in which good triumphs over evil. Gilson was a fine writer who produced many highly readable yarns: one wonders if any of his books are still in print today?

Not long after encountering Major Gilson's stories I discovered another writer called Erroll Collins, who wrote some exciting adventure yarns including *The Secret of Rosmerstrand* and *The Hawk of Aurania*. These are fast moving stories of intrigue and espionage, featuring spies, secret weapons and villains of the deepest dye (who of course get their come-uppance in the end).

My appetite for stories set in Africa had been whetted by Gilson's books and Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*. I then discovered that John Buchan had written a wonderful ripping yarn called *Prester John*, which is one of those books that, once started, cannot be put down. I warmly recommend *Prester John* to anyone wanting to

read an exciting tale written with total conviction by a master storyteller. Personally I would rather have a book like this than any of the Booker prize-winners or the much hyped "blockbusters" of today!

One of the best exercises in the Buchan manner I have ever read is *Rogue Male* by Geoffrey Household. This tells the story of a man who tries unsuccessfully to assassinate Hitler and is then followed to England and pursued by Nazi agents across the Dorset countryside. Written in the terse, documentary style of *The Thirty Nine Steps*, it is one of the most gripping stories I have ever come across. It was filmed in 1941 under the title *Manhunt* and starred Walter Pidgeon and George Sanders (needless to say, George Sanders was cast as the baddie!).

So if you have ever wondered whether tales of the calibre of *The Thirty Nine Steps* have been written since, try *Rogue Male*. You will not be disappointed.

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### CHATTING ABOUT CHATTERBOX

BRIAN DOYLE looks at the history of one of the best-known titles in the history of children's magazines and 'Annuals' – and one that has been little written-about over the years: *CHATTERBOX*, which ran, in various forms, for some 89 years. But it's not generally collected and not too much seems to be known about it. Until now...

*Chatterbox* has been mentioned less than half-a-dozen times during the joint 60-years run of the *Collectors' Digest*, *Collectors' Digest Annual* and *Story Paper Collector* magazines. Curious, when you consider that so many people (those over the age of around 60, anyway!) remember it so well and so warmly.

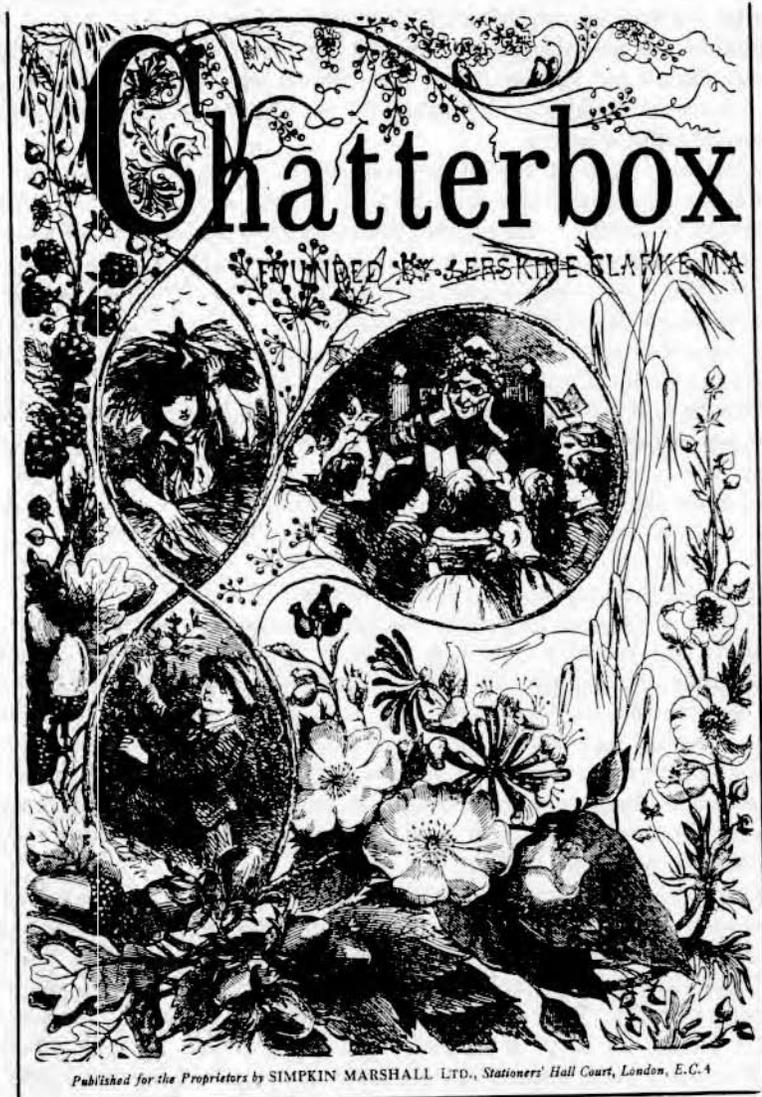
'Oh, yes, good old *Chatterbox*', they say with genuine affection. 'A lovely old Annual with marvellous stories and pictures: I often received it for Christmas – whatever happened to it, I wonder?' And they go on, quite fondly, about it, probably not realising that it was originally a weekly, then a monthly magazine (though the non-existent word 'magazinettes' should perhaps really describe it more accurately).

So why hasn't more been written about the long-lived *Chatterbox*? Were the contents never studied or researched or liked – or really appreciated? After all, it ran (in one form or another) from 1866 to 1915 as a weekly or monthly publication; then, after 1916, as an Annual only, though still printed and arranged as though it was a 'bound magazine volume, consisting of weekly parts'. The serials were still printed in continuing instalments, as in typical *BOP* or *Chums* annual volumes. Perhaps its fault was that it was far too 'bitty' and tended to lack 'substance'.

I must confess that I have never seen separate copies of either the weekly or monthly issues of *Chatterbox*, though I have seen (as most of us have) and indeed possess some of the annual volumes, which were satisfactorily thick and 'chunky', with over 300 pages, more than 100 black-and-white illustrations, and 8 or more colour plates. There were usually two long serials of varying quality (often school, mystery, adventure or historical, and normally featuring young people in central roles), somewhat irritatingly split up into

30 or 40 instalments of only one or two pages each, plus a full-page illustration for each episode. The volume gave the impression that it comprised a whole year's issues of a magazine of about 8 pages or so.

Not an especially exciting or compulsive publication them, but *Chatterbox*, **did** run from 1966 to the mid-1950s – a span of some 89 years, though its latter 40 or so years were spent solely as an Annual, published in its final years by Dean's, the well-known children's publishers.



An unusual story, that of *Chatterbox*, on the face of it. Let's investigate further...

*Chatterbox* was founded and edited by the Rev. J. Erskine Clarke, M.A. (he invariably included his degree!) in 1866 and the first issue of the weekly magazine came out on December 1<sup>st</sup> of that year, priced at ½d (one half-penny). The Rev. Clarke later became a London vicar and also Honorary Canon of Rochester, in Kent. From 1867, the magazine (consisting apparently of less than a dozen pages) was also issued as a monthly at 3d and, in the Autumn of 1867, the first *Chatterbox* Annual appeared and was so popular that it was quickly reprinted. In the first year or two, it had also acquired an overseas market and was especially successful in the United States.

The magazine was published almost from the beginning by the publishing firm of Wells Gardner Darton and Co., who were originally on the site of the old Newgate Market, in Paternoster Buildings, in London, E.C.4., which was demolished shortly before the new magazine appeared.

Clarke personally invested several thousand pounds of his own money into the launch of *Chatterbox* and started it to counter the "flood of undercover 'blood-and-thunder' literature for children". He admitted that he became depressed and sad to see so many 'errand-boys' reading 'penny dreadfuls' in the street and imagined the harm it might do to these children if they made heroes out of the blood-thirsty pirates, highwaymen, thieves and adventurers they read about so enthusiastically.

Sir James Barrie once told a story about his own connection with 'penny dreadfuls' and *Chatterbox* in the Introduction to the first printed edition of his famous *Peter Pan*. He recalled that he read and enjoyed *Chatterbox* as a boy and admitted that the example of its fine stories and articles stopped him from reading (and writing - he was planning some activity in the field!) 'penny dreadfuls'. The excellent tales in *Chatterbox* made him feel ashamed of his liking for the sensational boys' "bloods" and he took a pile of them, together with his own efforts in the genre, into the garden and buried them there as deeply as he could. Barrie also told this story in the Christmas *Bookman* of 1928 - and *Chatterbox* itself gleefully reported it in its 1929 volume.

Under Clarke, it was said, *Chatterbox* was full of 'shivering crossing-sweepers and penitent delivery-boys hoping to 'win a crust' and to perform 'Good Deeds'. Clarke's message, apparently, was that the lads should do kind and thoughtful things for people, think pure thoughts and ask forgiveness from the Lord for their sins and misdeeds (presumably including such horrific acts as reading the aforesaid 'penny bloods'). *Chatterbox* in Clarke's day was full of aggressive piety and well-meaning but somewhat oppressive muscular Christianity, religious articles, moral tales and verses, and poetry. There was a lot of poetry. 'Catch them - and save them - while they're young,' seemed to be the by-word, as well as the pi-word.

1866 was a busy year for new children's magazines. Among those which started life in that year, as well as *Chatterbox*, were: *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, a monthly edited by Mrs. Gatty (its contributors included Lewis Carroll and Hans Christian Andersen, as well as Mrs. Gatty's own famous writer-daughter, Juliana Ewing). It ran for nearly twenty years and is still collected today. There was also *Boys of England*, one of Edwin Brett's famous ('infamous?') 'bloods' for boys. It promised 'wild and wonderful but healthy fiction', sold 150,000 copies a week, boasted Jack Harkaway as one of its prime attractions and ran until 1899. It was just the sort of paper that the Rev. Clarke was fighting.

*The British Juvenile*, which ran until 1879; and *Kind Words for Boys and girls*, which also ran until 1879, then continued as *Young England* (1880-1937) (some sources say that the title was *Good Words for the Young*, and that it was an off-shoot of the popular adult magazine *Good Words*, which flourished in Victorian times).

It should be mentioned that Clarke had also founded *The Children's Prize* for children in 1863 (simply *The Prize* from 1875) and that ran until 1948! It too was meant to instil Christian principles into young minds; as well as being a monthly magazine this was also issued as a regular Annual.

In 1901, F.J. Harvey Darton succeeded the Rev. Erskine Clarke (M.A.) as editor of *Chatterbox*. Darton had worked in his family firm of publishers Wells Gardner Darton since his graduation from Oxford in 1899 and was to continue until 1928, when the firm was sold. Darton 'flushed out' most of the old contributors of pious and didactic stories and articles in favour of writers of good mystery and adventure tales.

Darton is a familiar name to anyone interested in the history of children's literature, since his 1932 book *Children's Books in England* was the first major and scholarly study of the subject and remains to this day as one of the best (if not *the* best) general books in its field. It has since been reprinted in revised and updated editions.

Darton was editor of *Chatterbox* until 1928 (only the second editor in 62 years!), when another family member, Charles Clark Darton, took over the reins of the publication (then solely an Annual, of course) when it was published by *The Chatterbox Co. Ltd.* with Simpkin Marshall as publishing agent (but still based in Paternoster Square, London, E.C.4.). F.J. Harvey Darton sadly died in 1936 at the relatively early age of 57. From 1936, the *Chatterbox* Annual was published by the well-known children's publishers Dean and Co. of London and the 87<sup>th</sup> Annual appeared in 1954 (it is thought that the final Annual was published the following year, but I cannot at the moment confirm this).

Among its many serial stories, *Chatterbox* occasionally came up with

*continued on page 16*



"For a second the two boys regarded one another in silence."

COLIN CREWE CATALOGUETTE . NUMBER 14

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something outstanding. John Masefield's classic boys' adventure stories *Martin Hyde* and *Jim Davis* both originally appeared as serials in *Chatterbox*, the former in 1909, the latter in 1910. *Martin Hyde* (published as a book in 1910) recounted the exploits of a boy involved in the Monmouth Rebellion of 1685. *Jim Davis* (book 1911) entered upon the adventures of a lad in the Napoleonic War period, when he gets caught up with smugglers (this was subsequently published in America in 1918 as *The Captive of the Smugglers*).

Another memorable adventure serial (almost in the *Treasure Island* tradition) was H. de Vere Stacpoole's *Bird Cay*, which appeared in the 1913 *Chatterbox* volume (five years after Stacpoole's huge best-selling success with *The Blue Lagoon*). *Bird Cay* was published in book-form in 1913 and reprinted many times, also being broadcast as a serial by BBC Radio in 1952. It tells of a young boy-stowaway's adventures in search of buried gold on a tropical 'cay' (or reef – in America they're called 'keys' as in the famous *Key Largo*), and his exploits when he comes up against greedy rivals and double-crossing sea-captains.

Other notable serials (from the ones that I have seen) included *The Strange Adventure of Grey House* (1929) and *The Royal Handicap* (1928) both by Frances Cowen and both illustrated by R.H. Brock (brother of the more famous C.E. and H.M.); *The Lost Reynolds* and *At the Sign of the Mulberry Tree*, both written and illustrated by W. Rainey, R.I. (in 1919 and 1926), who had contributed, both as author and artist, to *Chatterbox* for 50 years!; *The caravan Cousins* by Edna Lake, illustrated by E.S. Farmer (1922) (which George Beal enthused about in the October, 1996, issue of the *SPCD*); *Twisted Chimneys* by Winifred Pares, illustrated by E.S. Farmer (192); and *Twenty Pounds from Uncle Rodney* (1926) and *A Price on Their Heads* (1928), both by G. Belton Cobb and both illustrated by Frank Wright (though the latter sadly died after doing a few episodes of this last story and was succeeded by T.H. Robinson). Cobb later became well-known for his 50-odd mystery and detective novels, while his writer-father, Thomas Cobb, had done even better, with over 70 crime novels to his credit! I regret to say that Belton Cobb himself appeared to be irritable and completely un-cooperative in private life – I had occasion to write to him in 1969 politely requesting some details of his writing career for something I was writing at that time; he wrote a curt note back demanding a cash payment for any information he supplied to me! To quote his serial, he certainly seemed to 'have a price' on his own head! Maybe I just caught him on a bad day, or week – or year...

'Good old *Chatterbox* then. An odd mixture, nothing quite like it, really, rum old assortment of the good and the not-so-good, didactic and over-pious in its earlier years, much more adventurous and exciting in its later 'Annual' times.

But a magazine that lasted, in various forms, for 89 years must have had something. Mustn't it...?

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# A SURVEY OF THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN ANNUAL

by Margery Woods

## Part 1 The Early Years

When Amalgamated Press launched their magazines *The School Friend* and *The Schoolgirls' Own* (the first ever devoted especially to schoolgirls) in 1919 and 1921 they perhaps unwittingly began a small but important revolution now almost forgotten and unrecognised as such in the loftier circles of literature. So successful were they that the issue of linked annuals — deluxe editions at the then quite expensive price of six shillings — was only a matter of time. The paper was of a heavy matt quality that would take a photographic type of illustration as well as black and white line, and the first Annual in 1923 featured a delightful cover by A.E. Bestall, who continued as cover artist until 1930 when T. Laidler took over with his own characteristic illustrations of happy attractive schoolgirls which would continue to delight readers of *The Schoolgirl* during the thirties when he brought the Cliff House girls to vivid life each week. By this time Bestall was greatly involved with Rupert Bear and the fame this brought him, although it seems rather sad that this tended to overshadow his attractive colour work in other fields which so delighted the eye.

The regulation quota of four colour plates to which A.P. kept in most of its annuals also featured other noted artists of the time, including Savile Lumley, whose historical illustrations were very pleasing. Ben Hutchinson was adept at sporting themes in which he really caught his subjects in action. S.H. Chapman, Mills, and others only initialled or unsigned, also produced plates that added to the superb colour presentation in the Annual. Many of the black and white illustrations were striking in effect, the photographic type was softer, and A.P. never forgot finish. The vignettes that closed many of the stories and articles were miniature gems in their own right, but perhaps taken for granted by the reader's eye anxious to turn the page for the next exciting story.

So what was so special about these two major annuals and the two girls' papers to which they were linked? And why should they be considered a minor revolution in the section of the publishing world devoted to fiction for girls? After all, annuals for girls had abounded for years, some of them dating back as far as the 1880s. Most of the major publishing houses, OUP, Collins, Blackies, Hodder, Hutchinson and others were putting out a large selection of reading matter for youngsters by the early 1920s and many continue to do so up to the present time. But none of them were linked to weekly or monthly magazines as were A.P.'s, apart from the Girls' Own Paper. To track down examples in this category it is necessary to go farther back, to the nineteenth century when it was fairly customary to collect the papers of the previous year and re-issue them in the form of an bound annual, suitably edited to remove adverts and covers and with the addition of a frontispiece and contents list. But how grey and unappealing to the present day eye most of them appear now.

Routledge, publishers of many beautifully illustrated and entertaining books for children, now cherished collectors' items, especially those of Kate Greenaway and Walter Crane, put out the *Every Girls Annual* comprising a year of the magazine, during the 1880s. But Victorian moral duty lay heavy on its pages and the Victorian preoccupation with death was not absent. One lengthy poem, *Tribute To A Dog*, was illustrated with a

line drawing of a young woman holding a flower as she knelt in a woodland scene. The drawing was signed by two artists; doubtless a collaboration in grief with author of the poem. So far away from Clara Trevlyn's tears when she was in danger of losing her beloved Alsatian, Pluto: her tears seemed natural, never maudlin. So no jolly schoolgirls in this offering for girls. However, the annual does have twelve colour plates in the cool and attractive colour process in which Routledge was so excellent in this period.



*The Schoolgirl's Own*

A Splendid  
Long Complete Story  
of the

GIRLS of  
MORCOVE  
SCHOOL

Week ↗

↙ Every

An Enthralling Long Complete  
Story of the

GIRLS of  
CLIFF HOUSE  
SCHOOL



*The School Friend*

*Atlanta*, 1891, a somewhat up market annual for girls in the same yearly gathering, also tended to inflict the Victorian excesses of morality, duty and education on its readers. Despite attempting to encompass a broad scope of reading, from Louis Wain and E. Nesbit (*The Cat's Dental Hospital*) through poetry, art (Illustrations from Wagner's Operas), Stories (Miss Pinkerton's Pupils, rather adult), travel, legends, and articles on duty, there was little in these vast volumes to appeal to the suppressed spirits and longing for fun in the Victorian schoolgirl. Surprising, perhaps, for *Atlanta* was edited by L.T. Meade, who was to pave the way for fiction set in a girls' boarding school. She wrote many school stories which deployed the same basics of jealousy, spite, affections and adventure as enjoyed in the later golden age of the twenties and thirties. She published with Cassells, Collins, Longmans, Chambers and other publishers, none of whom could be considered as slouches and indulgers in cheap books. Yet she is sadly neglected today by researchers, even though she wrote many adult books and dared to venture into territory that shocked, the scandalous baby farming that was common in some strata of Victorian society. This serious side of her must have influenced her editorial policy in *Atlanta* and taken the annual way out of escapism for young girls.

*The Girls' Realm* (Hutchinson/Cassell) and *Our Girls' Annual* (RTS), followed on, none of them completely escaping the Victorian influence, stressing the qualities expected of a girl; being ladylike, modest, helpful and obedient, and thoroughly domesticated in all the duties and responsibilities adulthood would bring. A.P. managed to sugar this pill with remarkable skill. Their schoolgirls always set a good moral code and example to the readers but managed to have a great deal of fun at the same time.

Stories of schoolgirls and boarding schools did leap forward in popularity during the early years of the twentieth century. Annuals from the big publishing houses became profuse. Authors flourished in the genre, led by Angela Brazil, Elinor Brent Dyer, Winifred Darch, Dorita Fairlie Bruce, the redoubtable Bessie Marchant, and many others. The girls began to be allowed more fun, even flashes of rebellion. They had more freedom, more sport, all amongst the conflict of the plotlines. The leading book publishers, especially OUP with their attractive "colour" books, *The Rose*, *The Violet*, *The Golden*, *The Red*, began to leave behind the preachiness of the Victorian legacy, and perhaps in the "colour" books lay a clue, the editor was 'Mrs. Herbert Strang'. There was still a large gap in the market that was gasping to be filled. Yet something was still missing. Two vital elements. And A.P. discovered them in 1919.

Most fiction for girls prior to this date had been penned by women whose imagination was coloured by middle-class living; it came through in their style, and was no less appealing for that. But there was a vast untapped readership out in the spreading industrialised cities of the midlands and north, a readership, alas, who had to count its pennies and hope for a school prize or a benevolent Father Christmas to bring something to read which their pennies --- or those of their parents --- could not stretch to very often. And the other fact that had to be considered was that children in the industrial areas left school at fourteen at that time and went straight into mills, shops or service; overnight they turned from children to adults. They were never teenagers with an extra two or three years of education and a certain amount of latitude to get over teenage rebellion.

The something that had been waiting to happen came in 1919 when A.P. decided to introduce a weekly story paper devoted to schoolgirls. The much loved *School Friend*

was launched, to fill the catchment area of readers roughly between the ages of eleven and fifteen. In it a boarding school was peopled with schoolgirls who would become welcome friends each week in the lives of countless youngsters from all walks of life. The characters of the Cliff House girls were all individual from the serious to the extrovert, from the gentle to the boisterous, and they were all completely believable. They had all the problems that schoolgirls could suffer from spiteful rivals to vindictive prefects and they had great adventures. This continuity throughout the year was one of the elements that hooked the readers, whose hearts the characters stole into and kept. Letters poured into the editor's office and the pen pals column attracted girls up to the ages of seventeen or eighteen. A.P. had given that generation the then unheard of age of the teens. *The Schoolgirls' Own* soon followed, to similar success with Morcove claiming its army of devotees, more friends between the pages who came into the lives of readers, and the stories were enchanting.

This was the key element that made the difference between a book or annual of short stories which one read, reached the end of, and that was the end of that little world of escape -- unless you read it a second time. But now, for the first time, schoolgirls had the kind of serial fiction that had long hooked the adult readership -- and their brothers! Women had been well catered for with weekly romance or cosy family fare, children with their comics, and men with western and mystery magazines. Strange how it took so long for the publishing world to realise this vital gap in the market existed. It certainly provided successful for A.P.

The other vital element, kept secret for so many years, was the fact that the two great schools and their pupils were the creations of a team of male writers. They brought a freshness and vitality to the genre and also a surprising understanding of adolescent girls' hearts. This fooled many readers into taking it for granted that behind all those female author credits were real women. There was also something of a psychological element involved. Many children and adolescent girls experience loneliness, even fear of someone within their school circle, or feelings of insecurity about their family, their future or their lives. To them a story each week featuring the same well-loved characters could provide a familiarity which doubled for security for a little while, even though this could have been subconscious. Something of this could have contributed to the success of books in series, Dimsie, the Chalet School, William, and the well known detective series for adults, who are not always immune to feelings of loneliness or insecurity, and a well written book with familiar characters provides a wonderful escape from invading problems.

In view of all this success it was not surprising that A.P. decided it was time for a super annual, to be published in autumn, in good time to be the ideal answer to gift problems at Christmas. And so in September 1922, with many promotional reminders in the *School Friend* and other magazines in A.P.'s stable, the *Schoolgirls' Own Annual* for 1923 made its debut.

Despite its name it was to share Morcove with Cliff House. The first editorial letter of welcome to readers announced that this Annual was in response to thousands of letters which had arrived at A.P. requesting a schoolgirls' annual.

Play Up School! complete with jolly hockey sticks by Bestall adorned the cover, and the very first story honour went to Cliff House, which could have caused a spot of



# Betty Barton

The Girl Who Won Through



"Our Betty!"—the most popular girl in the Fourth Form at Morcove School; and, one might almost say, the most popular girl in the *whole* school. Neither are her admirers solely confined to Morcove. There are countless thousands outside, who follow Betty's adventures as they appear each week in the *Schoolgirls' Own*. To these, Betty needs no introduction; but, nevertheless, they will doubtless be glad to read here, in this compact form, the salient points of our fine little heroine's record.



touchiness in the Morcove loyalists who considered the title proved the Annual was theirs. The title was *The Mystery Mansion*, described as a holiday mystery but the blurb writer couldn't have read the story for it began with a bus breaking down in the snow and stranding the Fourth Form as they return to Cliff House after visiting a music festival.

There is lots of snow, Bessie Bunter is hungry, Cissie Clare is feeling ill, Marcia and her cronies are complaining, but there is the house of the title nearby. It is in a state of neglect and occupied only by a old lady who has lost her memory but makes them all welcome. Barbara Redfern and the chums soon get the place organised and discover that the old lady had fallen and hit her head just as she was about to depart on a voyage. The ship had been wrecked, causing relatives to assume she had perished. A friendly doctor is summoned from the nearest village and another fall restores the old lady's memory. The long arm of coincidence reaches out when she proves to be Cissie's aunt. So all ends happily. Author credit to 'Hilda Richards', author not traced.

In this first Annual the pattern for the "supporting bill" of short stories and articles was laid down. There had to be a pet story, usually a dog, and usually on the heart-rending side. A father and daughter theme, often against a sea-faring background and ending with a valiant rescue, Grace Darling style, to prove that a daughter can be as good as any son, even if she is just a girl.

A Girl Guide story became a regular item as Guiding was at the height of its popularity at that time and there would be many guides among the readers. Then an overseas adventure, usually in the tough tradition of Bessie Marchant, because there was an increasing readership in the Colonies. The one of 1923 was of the Western genre complete with Redskins.

Of the authors credits so far only Hilda Richards was the well-known name but in the rest of the stories the names of what might be termed the A.P. stalwarts of schoolgirl fiction began to appear and herald their popularity in all A.P.'s annuals to come; *The School Friend Annual*, *The Golden Annual*, *The Popular Book of Girls' Stories*, and *The Girls Crystal Annual*.

Joan Vincent (Reginald S. Kirkham) supplied top-rate stories and serials consistently throughout the years. Always entertaining, with a wonderful gift of humour, nevertheless he could suppress this irrepressible tendency when necessary and be serious. But in this Annual humour took over. The Chinese Banquet featured the Danesford Hall girls and a little Chinese pupil called Yang Lie Wen. Kirks was great fun with Chinese characters but today would doubtless draw disapproving frowns from the politically correct, even though his humour was always innocent and totally without malice.

Julia Storm (Gilbert Floyd, a former editor and author of many boys' stories loved the sea and travelling, and also wrote as Duncan Storm) in 1919 began the first serial to appear in *The School Friend*, entitled *The Girl Crusoes* (not to be confused with the girls' book of the same title by Mrs. Herbert Strang – disguising name of two more males who donned feminine plumage for the fiction market – pub. OUP). The first chapters of Storm's serial were reprinted in the 1923 Annual as a short story called *The Island Adventure*, set in the South Seas. One amendment was made in the reprint. The liner Utopia had been raided, robbed, the crew taken prisoner by a heavily armed German cruiser, leaving twelve schoolgirls and three women teachers stranded aboard the helpless liner. However, four years after the original publication, editorial policy at A.P. probably

decided that as the Great War had been ended nearly five years the Germanic villainy should be deleted and a pirate ship substituted. None of this daunted the young heroines, who got the liner going under sail, through a tropical storm, and safely into the haven of Diamond Island, which they proceeded to organise as efficiently as they had the Utopia. Arguably, they became far more entertaining and genuine castaways than some of the spate lately of television varieties. But of course they still had some stores aboard their great liner, now safely parked in the lagoon.

Adrian Home contributed a tale of a forest lass and her pet New Forest pony who joined a circus and saved their farm.

*The Spectre of Merrypit Grange*, by Gertrude Nelson (John S. Bobin) had all the ingredients of the spooky mystery and the setting so beloved of A.P. authors --- and readers. The ancient house, secret panels, great paintings of ancestors who sometimes came alarmingly to life down creepy corridors, lots of groans and creaks and legends and hidden hoards. Lovely!

An historical tale was a must for every volume and this one was *A Cavalier's Daughter*, by Ada Crundall (C.L. St. John Pearce) charmingly illustrated in b/w with a lovely colour plate by Bestall. It featured yet another heroine to add to the legion who helped save King Charles in the realm of fiction.

Interspersed with the stories were articles on various topics with pieces about the girls of Cliff House and Morcove, including a five page feature by Bessie Bunter, as full of herself as ever but far too well written and spelled to be her own unaided work. This would be remedied in later years!

Last of all, to round off this fine Annual came the girls of Morcove in a long story by Marjorie Stanton (Horace Phillips) entitled *The Girl Who Kept To Herself*. A warm-hearted story of a girl, Hilda, whose aunt had been involved in a bad misunderstanding with Polly Linton's father and how this affected both girls when Hilda came to Morcove, until at last the truth came out and happiness reigned once more for Polly and Hilda.

Strangely, there is one disappointing omission in the Annual. Although several of the stories take place on holidays and snow arrives as well, there are no Christmas festivities with mystery for the girls. The sole mention of Christmas is in an article on how to make your own Christmas cards.

But this omission would be remedied in the next annual, for 1924. Perhaps the readers all wrote in again...

(To be continued)

\*\*\*\*\*

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## BILLY BUNTER ON TELEVISION

by

Robert Kirkpatrick

In the 1976 CD Annual, Brian Doyle surveyed the appearances on BBC Television of Billy Bunter, starting with the story of the auditions for Bunter and the selection of Gerald Campion, and going on to provide details of the series which followed. Brian provided details of 4 series, beginning with the first, in 1952, and going on to mention those in 1955, 1956 and 1960. Ray Hopkins subsequently wrote in to the CD in early 1977 and stated that there had been a total of 6 series, the last being in 1961. (The fifth, according to Ray, had been in 1959.)

Then, in 1983, W.O.G. Lofts and Derek Adley published *Greyfriars Since the Magnet*, a slim booklet detailing post-war Bunter and Greyfriars material, which included a listing of the Bunter television plays – which apparently only ran to 5 series: 1952, 1955, 1959, 1960 and 1961.

I was rather surprised that since then no one seems to have tried to resolve the discrepancies between these two normally reliable sources. The simplest solution was to check the *Radio Times* in the Newspaper Library at Colindale. In doing so, I not only confirmed the correct dates and titles for the series identified by Brian Doyle and Lofts & Adley, but I also discovered a hitherto forgotten **seventh** series.



The first series was launched on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1952, with a story called *The Siege* (not *The Siege of the Remove* as suggested by Lofts & Adley). John Charlesworth played Harry Wharton, and Kynaston Reeves played Mr. Quelch. Bunter was, of course, played by Gerald Campion – who played him in all 7 series. The producer was Joy Harington. The rest of the series ran as follows:

26 Feb. 1952	The Report
4 March 1952	Bunter's Christmas Party
11 March 1952	Bunter's Postal Order
18 March 1952	Bunter's Bicycle
25 March 1952	A Piece of Cake

This was followed by two one-off plays: *Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School*, starring Henry Searle as Wharton and Ronald Adam as Quelch, broadcast on 7 July 1953; and *Bunter Won't Go*, again with Henry Searle playing Wharton but with Kynaston Reeves returning as Quelch, broadcast on 1 July 1954.

A second series of 6 plays then began in July 1955, with John Charlesworth as Wharton and Raf de la Torre as Quelch:

9 July 1955	Bunter on the Run
23 July 1955	Bunter the Hypnotist
6 Aug. 1955	Lord Billy Bunter
20 Aug. 1955	Bunter Forgot
3 Sept. 1955	Bunter Takes the Blame
17 Sept. 1955	Bunter Knows How

The last three of this series were repeated on 16 Jan., 3 Feb. and 20 July 1956 respectively, before the 3<sup>rd</sup> series, produced by Shaun Sutton, began its run on 9 September 1956, with Anthony Valentine as Wharton and Kynaston Reeves as Quelch:

9 Sept. 1956	Backing Up Bunter
16 Sept. 1956	Bunter the Bold
23 Sept. 1956	Billy Bunter's Double
30 Sept. 1956	Hunting Bunter
7 Oct. 1956	Bunter on the Warpath
14 Oct. 1956	Bunter's Christmas Box

Such was the popularity of Bunter on television at this point that a series of repeats was broadcast in the summer of the following year:

8 June 1957	Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School	(re-titled repeat of 9 Sept. 1956)
15 June 1957	Bunter the Bold	(repeat of 16 Sept. 1956)
21 June 1957	Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School	(re-titled repeat of 23 Sept. 1956)
29 June 1957	Bunter on the Warpath	(repeat of 7 October 1956)
13 July 1957	Backing Up Bunter	(repeat of 9 Sept. 1956)

However, what previous researchers appear to have overlooked was an entirely new series which began on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 1957:

20 July 1957	Beastly for Bunter
3 Aug. 1957	Bunter Does His Best
10 Aug. 1957	Bad Lad Bunter
17 Aug. 1957	Bunter Keeps It Dark
31 Aug. 1957	Bunter Does His Best (presumably a repeat of 3 August)

This starred Anthony Valentine as Wharton and Kynaston Reeves as Quelch. The producer was Pharic Maclaren, who had earlier produced the last two plays in the 1955 series.

A handful of repeats were broadcast in 1958, and then the 5<sup>th</sup> series began in June 1959, with Richard Palmer as Wharton and John Woodnutt as Quelch, and being produced by David Goddard:

13 June 1959	Bunter's Bargain
27 June 1959	Bunter's Burglar
11 July 1959	Phoney Bunter
18 July 1959	Bunter's Birching
1 Aug. 1959	Bunter Spells Trouble
15 Aug. 1959	Bunter's Bulls-eye
29 Aug. 1959	Treasure Hunter Bunter
5 Sept. 1959	Bunter's Bedtime Story

Amongst the other members of the Famous Five was a young Michael Crawford (Frank Nugent).

The 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> series then ran as follows.

16 July 1960	Bunter the Hypnotist	20 May 1961	Backing Up Bunter
30 July 1960	Brainy Bunter	27 May 1961	Bold Bunter
13 Aug. 1960	Lord Billy Bunter	3 June 1961	Double Bunter
27 Aug. 1960	Bunter's Bicycle	10 June 1961	Hunter Bunter
10 Sept. 1960	Toffee-Hunter Bunter	17 June 1961	Stowaway Bunter
17 Sept. 1960	Bunter Won't Go	24 June 1961	Bunter Goes to Cairo
24 Sept. 1960	Bunter's Party	1 July 1961	Bunter Goes to Venice
		15 July 1961	Bunter Goes to Naples
		22 July 1961	Bunter Goes to Nice

Both these series starred Julian Yardley as Wharton and Jack Melford as Quelch, and both were produced by Clive Parkhurst.

Quite why the 1957 series has been overlooked in the past is a mystery. (Another, minor, mystery is the second and fifth play in the series, both titled *Bunter Does His Best*, although the *Radio Times* gives no indication that one was a repeat.)

Unfortunately, lack of space has precluded including cast details of the remaining members of the Famous Five. However, they are included in the revised edition of my bibliography of boys' school fiction *Bullies, Beaks and Flannelled Fools*, which will be advertised here as soon as it is available.

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## THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

### The history of the picture strip in D.C. Thomson's *Big Five*

#### Part 1 – The Rover

by Ray Moore

Alice, on the first page of *Alice in Wonderland*, bemoans the dreariness of her sister's reading matter by saying to herself 'What is the use of a book without pictures and conversations?'. Well, when it comes to story papers, and in relation to pictures in particular I think most of us would agree with her. Artwork in a story paper, if well done, can be as vital a component to our enjoyment as a telling musical score can be when watching a motion picture. Dispense with it and we are left short-changed and bereft. But, even if we agree that art in story papers is a good thing it still begs the question, 'How much art?'. Heading block illustrations are fine but what of picture serials? Surely from a purist standpoint, by definition, picture strips shouldn't have any place in a story paper. Maybe so, but in an effort to stave off their own obsolescence the Thomson boys' papers ignored this dictum and what follows is the story of the result.

I'm beginning with *The Rover* not because it was the first of the 'Big Five' to publish a picture strip, because it wasn't, but because as a boy in the 1960's it was the only one of the 'Big Five' that impacted on my own childhood.

For me it all began in late 1965 when I began to receive a regular 'hand-me-down' supply of the already amalgamated *Rover and Wizard* from a lad named Mervyn Spicer. His mother used to bring them around in batches of 8 or 10 but whether this was *largesse* towards a younger boy on her son's part or the result of some unilateral tidying purge of her own I never knew. For despite this most welcome donation Mervyn and I were never friends.

#### THE ROVER

\*\*\*

June 7, 1952.



(1)—The stage is all set for the last round in the grim battle that is raging on Arcos, the purple planet! On one side are three Earthmen, Luffy Howe, Phil Lee and Jim Ashton and a learned old man called Omnia, the All-Knowing. On the other side is The Brain and his army of giant robots called the Deathless Ones. The Earthmen have been chased by The Brain's aircraft, but Omnia has a plan in mind.



(2)—He hurries inside his cave, telling the others to keep a watch on The Brain's aircraft. As the Earthmen gaze aloft, a strange, electrical vibration goes through the air. Then next minute these machines, which had threatened destruction to Omnia's hide-out, completely disappear, as if by a wave of a magician's wand. "Well, how do you like my anti-aircraft defenses?" asks Omnia. "Marvelous," replies Luffy. "Now shall we move against The Brain?"



(3)—"Yes, I think so," replies Omnia. "But first we must get my machine as close as possible to The Brain's headquarters. Come, my friends!" He leads the three Earthmen to a strange machine like a giant X-ray lamp, mounted on wheels. He couples it on to a tractor and soon the tiny army of four men set out against The Brain and his thousands of robot followers. The tractor is able to surmount any country.

Suffice it to say for a year or more I received these regular 'Red Cross' parcels of *Rover and Wizard* and came to accept its prose story only format as being the natural order of things. *New Hotspur*, or simply *Hotspur* as it was by then, *Victor and Hornet* may have included one or two prose stories amongst their picture strips every week but *Rover and Wizard* seemed not to reciprocate.

Then, quite out of the blue, in one of the packages I discovered an interloper. A copy of *Rover and Wizard* out of time, an issue from May 1964. Naturally eager to see what this 'early' issue had in store I excitedly thumbed through its pages. Imagine my shocked surprise when there, amongst all the text, I came across a picture story!

That strip was *Wilson Did It!* a cricketing yarn featuring Thomsons wonder athlete and even now, all these years later, I can still remember the *frisson* the discovery of that picture strip gave me. A key moment in my young comic reading life and as good a reason as any to start this history of the Thomson's boy's paper picture strip with *The Rover*.

For *The Rover* the picture strip incursion began with the sci-fi strip *The Purple Planet* in Feb 1952 (1389-1406) a comic strip version of an earlier *Rover* story, illustrated by Richard 'Toby' Bains *The Purple Planet Needs Air* from 1944. In this story Lofty Howe a test pilot, Jim Ashton his mechanic and navigator and Phil Lee scientist and astronomer set off in their spacecraft Wonder Wing to investigate the planet of the title, named Aeos in the original story and Arcus in the picture version where the evil ruler *The Brain* aided by his robot cohorts, the Deathless Ones, is using a device to counter the effects of his planet's failing atmosphere by siphoning off Earth's oxygen supply.

Appearing throughout its run on the back page, first in full colour to 1395 and then plain b/w from 1397 (missing 1396 altogether) it was more than adequately drawn by Thomson staff artist Ian Mackay but suffered somewhat from the cramped layout it was given. A criticism that could be levelled at most of the *Rover* strips published in the 1950's suggesting that editor John Low, brother of the celebrated Thomson comic kingpin R.D. Low, resented having to publish them in the first place. Whatever the truth of the case the strip version of *The Purple Planet* was eventually deemed worthy of a second printing in the pages of the more accepting *New Hotspur* in 1959.

Following on immediately from *The Purple Planet* came a picture strip featuring the young 'Wild Bill Hickok' (1407-1415) in which the eponymous hero tries to bring two ranchers to justice for killing his father. Drawn by Calder Jameson (1407-1412) and Jack Gordon (1413-1415) this strip fared even worse than its predecessor as it didn't even manage to get a whole page to itself even though, curiously, its layout indicated that it had been designed so that it should. With an inverted 'L' of text bordering the strip on two sides it was awkwardly squeezed into no more than half a page. But, whether awkward or not it certainly wouldn't be the only *Rover* picture strip to be served up in this way in the next few years with the next three to be printed being particularly pertinent examples.

The strips in question all came to *The Rover* in 1954, 'Robin Hood' (1493-1505), 'Morgyn the Mighty' (1506-1519) and 'The Wolf Boy of Badenoch' (1520-1541) and all were reprints from earlier Thomson titles. 'Robin Hood' and 'The Wolf boy of Badenoch', the story of a young Scottish chieftain trying to unite his clan, were both

Wilson works up his bowling speed with stones—then “rocks” the Templars in a terrific match!

# Wilson DID IT!

DR SHALE, President of Stonehshire County Cricket Club, was present at a match between two village sides, Leasford and Mouldham. He saw a remarkable feat in which the Leasford fast bowler dismissed Mouldham in only two overs. Shale found that the fast bowler was Wilson, the famous athlete, who lived in a cave on the moors.



drawn by James 'Peem' Walker and had originally appeared in the short run *Magic Comic* while 'Morgyn the Mighty', no stranger to any veteran *Rover* reader had made this, his picture strip debut drawn by George 'Dod' Anderson, in the very first issue of *The Beano* in July 1938. All good strips and all worth reprinting but sadly, in this instance, the full effect of each strip was lost when all were reprinted reduced size with an original double-page spread now barely covering the equivalent of a single page in *Rover*.

For the next *Rover* strip we saw a return to the back page in colour for the 'Gladiator' of its day 'The Sign they Fear; (1544-1553). In this strip, drawn by George Ramsbottom, Sabin, the son of Queen Boadicea, is captured by the Romans and trained to fight as a gladiator in the Colosseum. The strip being based on an earlier *Rover* story with a very similar title 'The Sign we Fear' from 1944 but not to be confused with yet another gladiatorial saga 'The Sign they Dread' which was published in *The Wizard* in 1937.

It was then nearly two years before another picture strip appeared in the *Rover* and when it came it turned out to be another outing for 'Morgyn the Mighty' (1646-1661) this time in a reprint drawn by Dudley Watkins. In truth however, it wasn't really Morgyn at all but rather Strang the Terrible from *Adventure* sailing under false colours. But the confusion didn't end there as the strip had originally appeared under the title 'Strang the Terrible' not in *Adventure* as might be expected but instead in the *Beano* in 1944 and only in 1950 was it reprinted on the front cover of *Adventure* by rejigging its original two-page format. The *Rover* reprint being a copy of the edited 1950 *Adventure* version again, unfortunately, published reduced size.

All of the strips that had appeared in *Rover* thus far had been published with a block of elucidating text printed beneath each frame but not so the next strip in the series, the enigmatic, 'Trek of the Homeless Ones' (1659-1670) drawn by Ron Embleton. Why enigmatic? Well simply because the strip's western hero was Steven Larrabee an hombre whose adventures were already being drawn by Ron Embleton in the decidedly non-Thomson publication 'Lone Star Magazine'. If this and its Embleton penned follow-up, the western feature 'Lore of the West', were reprinted from *Lone Star Magazine* - and they have all the hallmarks of being so then this is a very rare example, for the time at least, of Thomsons utilising something that had been 'bought-in'.

The last strip to feature in *Rover* in the 1950's began in March 1959 and was the first to be spread over two full pages. This was Robert Louis Stevenson's 'Kidnapped' (1715-1731) drawn by Dudley Watkins. Already twice reprinted Watkins had originally drawn this 'Classic in Pictures' for Thomsons magazine-cum-newspaper *The People's Journal* a decade earlier. It had then been published in book form in 1949 and then turned up, in full colour, in *The Topper* in 1953.

Before we leave the 1950's perhaps this is a good point to mention the only two 'genuine' picture strips to appear in the later *Rover* annuals namely 'Morgyn the Mighty' drawn by James 'Peem' Walker for the 1956 edition and 'Braddock V.C.' drawn by Ian Kennedy for the final 1959 edition. The later annuals were quite generous with their picture features e.g. 'The Pony Express' (George Ramsbottom), 'Colossal Creatures of Long Ago' (James 'Peem' Walker), 'The Motor Marathon' (John Nichol) etc. but that is what they were and can't be classed, to my mind at least, as picture strips as such. A

similar reasoning applying to all those illustrated feature pages that became so much a part of *The Rover* from the 1950's onwards e.g. 'It Happened This Week', etc.

*David Balfour lays claim to his estates.*



2—Alan and David stood where they had landed, watching the boat draw farther away from the shore. The brave girl at the oars had helped to cheat the Redcoats, for the soldiers, still certain that the outlaws were penned in the north, would continue to hunt for them in the same area as before. Alan gazed after the boat for some time. "She is a very fine lass," he said. Then they turned and walked off along the beach, seeking a hiding-place near the shore.

DAVID BALFOUR, heir to a Lowland estate, and Alan Breck Stewart, a Highland outlaw, stood at last on the south bank of the Firth of Forth. A young servant girl had secretly rowed them across the river. Alan and David were wrongly sought by the Redcoat soldiers for the murder of the King's factor in Appin, and had fled through the Highlands to the Forth. In Queensferry, David hoped to contact his family lawyer, and Alan sought a passage to France.

After 'Kidnapped' it would be a full five years before another picture strip made it into the *Rover* or *Rover and Adventure* (21/1/61-26/10/63) as it was by then. This was the comedy western tale 'Ragtime Cowboy Dan' (21/6/63-16/11/63) printed on the now red/black centre pages of the paper and drawn by Bob Webster. This strip, in which the hero uses clubs rather than guns to keep the peace in lawless Mushroom City being a reprint from the early issues of *New Hotspur* where it had appeared under the comprehensive title 'Bandy Walker – the no gun sheriff with clubs in his boots'. This itself being an adaptation of the 1938 *Wizard* prose story 'Bandy Walker – the Ragtime Sheriff' which had been complimented with heading block art provided by Jack Gordon.

During the run of 'Ragtime Cowboy Dan' *Rover and Adventure* reverted to being plain *Rover* 2/11/63) and in the week following the end of the strip the last great story paper amalgamation saw the emergence of *Rover and Wizard* (23/11/63-9/8/69). 'Ragtime Cowboy Dan' being the only strip to run in *Rover and Adventure* just as the next strip in the sequence 'Wilson Did It!', the strip of my own fond remembrance, would be the only strip to run during the lifetime of *Rover and Wizard*.

'Wilson Did It!' (9/5/64-27/7/64), drawn by Bert Van De Put, was also a reprint this time from the *Wizard* where it had appeared under the more appropriate title 'The Summer of the Shattered Stumps' in 1961. It was the story of how the wonder athlete turned his sporting attentions to the summer game, bowling in particular, and won England the test series against the Australians in the process. It was published to coincide with the Ashes series of 1964 just as the original prose story version titled 'The Year of the Shattered Stumps' had appeared in *The Wizard* to coincide with the Australians 1953 tour. Interestingly echoing events in the original story England regained the Ashes in 1953 by beating Australia in the crucial final test. Although it wasn't the bowling of

Wilson which won the day but that of Lock and Laker. Sadly, reviving the story in picture strip form in 1964 didn't work the oracle again. We lost!

By the time another picture strip appeared in *Rover* in May 1971 the writing was well and truly on the wall for the last of the 'Big Five'. From this point on it would be forced to publish a picture story every week, all of them reprints from the now more successful picture papers.

First up was 'The Smasher' (8/5/71-26/6/71) a reprint from the *Victor* in 1962 drawn by Alan Philpott. 'The Smasher' had first seen the light of day in the *Wizard* in 1931 and, from his hot-water boiler body with its headlamp 'eye' to his galumping shoe-box feet, he still bore all the hallmarks of the appealing low-tech robot-monsters of that time. Indeed the Smasher with his predilection for destroying dams and railway lines in places as far apart as Africa, Canada and South America was one of Thomson's most travelled creations both literally and figuratively. From his debut in the *Wizard* he had travelled to the *Dandy* where he had appeared in a picture strip illustrated by James 'Peem' Walker as early as 1938 before then lumbering his way into *Rover* then *Victor* and back into *Rover* again. Yes! The Smasher and his nemesis, the construction engineer Glasgow Harry, certainly got around!

Another reprint from the *Victor* 'Mick Muggins - Britain's Worst Boxer' (3/7/71-4/9/71) came next with artwork provided by ex-Thomson staff artist Pete Sutherland and this was then followed by four completes from *Hornet*. An R.A.F. story set in Africa in WWII 'Boomerang Burke' (11/9/71) drawn by Bill Mainwaring, a vintage car story 'Don't Knock the Crock' (18/9/71) drawn by Redvers Blake, a Fleet Air Arm story 'Find, Fix and Strike' (25/9/71) drawn by Bonato and a story of London firemen 'Four-Storey Foster' (2/10/71) drawn by Gordon Livingstone. The Spanish artist Bonato being also responsible for the next picture serial 'The Badge Roberto Wore' (9/10/71-19/2/72) a tale set in Italy during WWII. It having first appeared in 'Victor' in 1961 under the title 'the Cap that Carlo Wore'.

The penultimate *Rover* strip was the wrestling yarn 'Grappler Grant' (26/2/72-29/4/72) a last reprint from *Victor* drawn by C.E. Montford followed finally by 'Lonely Larry' (6/5/72-13/1/73) which ran until the *Rover's* final issue. The story of a young lad making the best of being shipwrecked on a remote Pacific island and originally published in the *New Hostpur* in 1960/61 it featured the work of three artists Guido Buzzelli, Steve Chapman and Bill Holroyd.

So we come to the end of the *Rover's* picture strip history and what a catholic history it turned out to be, from the distant planet Arcus to a remote tropic isle and from the Roman arena to the cricket squares of England, you never really knew who, or what, was coming! It may not have embraced the use of the picture strip as a selling point in quite the way that some of its 'Big Five' stablemates were wont to do but then, thanks to its continued success as a story paper perhaps it didn't have to. It's success allowing it to merely dabble with genre for the best part of twenty years until at last, embattled and alone, it was forced to bow to the inevitable and grasp the 'poisoned chalice'!

(All illustrations copyright D.C. Thomson)

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**BY THEIR DEEDS..."**  
**(How Charles Hamilton applied his Christianity)**

by UNA HAMILTON WRIGHT

From early in youth Charles Hamilton had a reputation for kindness and understanding. He was tolerant and forgiving and did not bear grudges. He was driven by his sense of duty. He was extremely fond of his mother and was a dutiful son. He wanted to support her when he began to make money from his writing. His mother, however, thought differently: she remarried, suddenly without telling Charles beforehand. He was devastated when he heard the news – he was in the West Country on a cycling holiday at the time. His mother wished to cling to her independence. He also wanted to take responsibility for his sister Dolly and offered to adopt her. Dolly dreaded this because although he was so kind, he could be somewhat dominating. She, too, valued her independence. Charles took it for granted that Dolly would not marry – people thought that her eyestrain would spoil her looks. Brother and sister shared two flats after their mother's remarriage, at Dorset Square and Belsize Park, Hampstead. They got on very well together, there was no need for a legal bond of adoption.

Charles' disposition was calm and peaceful 'Charlie the peacemaker' he was called from teenage onwards. He never got into a temper, his emotions were always in control. He took an interest in other people's lives and their problems and was already to give wise advice, prefaced by the query "Shall I give you a little tip?" And he would tactfully urge on them the idea that perhaps if the problem were approached from a different angle a solution might be found more easily.

It was as though he were saying to himself "Now what would Jesus Christ do in this situation?" One felt that his concern and generosity, although spontaneous, were nevertheless based on deliberate thought. This was reassuring as he saw things through to the end, unlike people driven by urges that are only based on passing whims.

His kindness also manifested itself in the giving of tips – small sums of money that were gratefully accepted. About his house, Rose Lawn, little piles of coins were placed strategically ready for use, on the windowsill, on the bottom of the banisters and anywhere else where there was a suitable ledge that was easy to reach. He had found that copper coins soiled the linings of his trouser-pockets and he would therefore extract them and leave them in little piles – ready to give to a child to buy sweets. Silver coins stayed in his pockets ready for tipping taxi-drivers who brought people to the house and any one who delivered anything or who came to do an odd job. Sixpence was the standard tip in the twenties and thirties. Threepenny bits were discarded as being too low in value for rewarding workmen for services rendered, so they kept the piles of coppers company. But the *Piece de Resistance* was the half crown, reserved for my friends and me, nice new shiny ones straight from the Bank. He had an arrangement with the bank for sending him packets of coins (silver) for his out-of-pocket expenses. For him a florin was no substitute for a half crown piece. Florins had not really a place in his plan.

Charles loved giving people presents – to me, my friends who were staying, to my Mother and Father. He would ring up Bobby's in Cliftonville and order a little doll, or a doll's dress, or a box of beach toys, two of each if one of my friends was there. And sure enough there would be a delivery sometime in the afternoon.

Gifts made everybody happy: Charles loved to be a giver and provider and I and my young friends were very happy to be receivers. He loved to think ahead and produce little gifts that would fit in with what we were doing but that we had not yet felt the lack of. Making people happy was almost a form of self-indulgence to him. His kindness showed itself in kind *deeds*. Nothing was too much trouble, especially if it helped somebody else. Mother's bungalow Mandeville had no phone and it was no trouble to Charles to cross the road to Rose Lawn to make a telephone call for her. Similarly if something needed to be fetched 'from across the road' he would spring out of his comfortable armchair with alacrity and go across to Rose Lawn to fetch it.

Charles's nature was a protective one – almost that of an idealised father figure. Safety and health were his priorities and he saw them as part of his duty to protect the young from the dangers of life. Having a very strong imagination he could see dangers and risks where other people could not. He would invariably point out all that he saw and thus help to make young people more aware of the risks they ran. When cycling with me he provided a running commentary on what to do and what to anticipate. I think he felt that he was so much more aware than most people and that therefore it was his duty to take charge. I was perfectly happy with the arrangement and never resented his 'duty of care'. I can still hear his voice in my mind's ear warning me of risks he thought I was running, not to bang my head, not to graze my knee, and so on.

The author's Christianity underlay his very keen sense of fair play. Greyfriars was a mix of all different sorts of boys, Scholarship boys, aristocrats like Lord Mauleverer, grasping characters like Fisher T. Fish, mixtures of good and evil such as the Bounder who broke the rules as a matter of course but yet had a conscience which saved him from the consequences of some of his worst excesses. Hurree Janset Ram Singh was created to introduce a coloured boy as an equal, a very successful ploy on the part of the author. Hurree Singh was equal with his class-mates and everybody accepted him and he was never laughed at nor looked down upon, notwithstanding his use of English, an example of 'political correctness' eighty years head of its time.

The Christian attitude of the author shows very clearly in the way Billy Bunter is treated: he gets rough justice in the shape of kicks and slaps but is never grievously hurt. In their hearts his classmates know that he cannot really help being the way he is: he could *try* a bit harder to mend his ways but his driving force is self-centered and selfish, quite unchristian in fact, but without changing his basic drive he could never think and act like a Christian. The kindly and forgiving attitudes of the Removites such as Bob Cherry and Lord Mauleverer are an example to all the readers to forgive inadequate people never mind how tiresome they may be.

The underlying message of the Greyfriars stories is a Christian one – because the author was a Christian. The comfort and inspiration that those stories gave derived from their author's Christianity. Charles always claimed that he put 'a pill in the jam' and this is well borne out in the Greyfriars stories. These stories of everyday life at school gave hope to their millions of readers. Their underlying Christianity made them believable despite the gradual decay of Christian morality in the twentieth century world around them.

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My earliest recollections of story papers is from the 1931-1932 period when I was allowed to make my own choice, and thus began an interest and hobby that has been a boon to me over the years, especially in difficult times. For my own pleasure and, hopefully, for those of you who have an interest in earlier publications, I would like to think back to my earliest purchases. I had a massive collection in 1939 but, alas, my stepmother gave almost all to salvage during the War, an experience not unknown to some of you.

Amongst the 'survivors' were my first purchases of *Chums* and *Boys' Own Paper* which are beside me as I type. After all these years it is difficult to be positive as to the sequence of acquisition. However, I had a chequered childhood and events therefrom often act as a milestone. Anyway I will start with

***Chums* No. 2042. 31.10.1931 2d. 16 pages 9½" x 12½"**

The front cover is a Paul Hardy illustration of the current Walkey serial and the back cover is a reprint of a picture of Francis Drake bowling on Plymouth Hoe. The first story is a 4-page instalment of *Drake Goes West* by S. Walkey. This tale, set mainly on the Spanish Main, was to run to 14 episodes but unfortunately was never reprinted, despite being one of Walkey's best stories.



Next we have *The Drifter*, a 4-page Western adventure by G. Glabon Glover, followed by *Wake Up Marston* by Michael Poole, the 4<sup>th</sup> episode of a 12 part serial. *Listen To The Coach*, a page by Hylton Cleaver on how to improve at football and on general knowledge of sport. Finally *A Boy With A Grievance* by Reginald Crunden (Hylton Cleaver), a 3-page story of an ugly misunderstood boy whose only pal is his dog.

The inside of the back cover had a few short articles plus letter from the Editor. Then and now my favourite paper.

***Boys' Own Paper*. October 1932. 1/-. 62 pages 10½" x 8"**

With a full colour cover by Ogle, it also contained 20 pages of adverts from miscellaneous at 4d per word, to the BOP Club, stamps, books and annuals and Foyles with over two million books in stock. In particular, I am fascinated by a Gamages ad. for a box of 36 lead soldiers for 4/-, which could be worth at least £500 today! Each monthly part included a full page colour plate, usually relevant to a story within.

The first story is *The Banner of the Prophet* by Robert Harding, later to become Editor. The first of a two part tale of the North West Frontier of India. His personal



travels in that country and Arabia qualified him to write with authority. Apart from a monthly serial, usually completed in 2 issues, there were normally a few 3 page stories. In this issue we have *A Howling Success* (R.A.F. tale), *The Leader* (adventures in Labrador), *The Beacon* (Vikings) and *The Balloon Race* (school holidays) all by little known authors. Also plenty of rather 'dry' articles, although regular popular features were *The Editor's Page*, *The BOP Club*, a nature study conducted by Hedgerow, a correspondence page and *Behind the Scenes*, which ranged from Ocean Liners to the Royal Observatory. Finally, *Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree*, a page of schoolboy howlers, allegedly submitted by Readers. Considered by parents to be superior and more educational than Chums, I always much preferred the latter and read the BOP for its serials by the like of Harding, Rochester and Westerman.

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I can only recall 4 other publications from this period, but as they made little impact on me I shall be brief.

***My Favourite.* No. 150. 6.12.1930. 2d. 12 pages 15" x 12"**

Never a fan of comics I have vague memories of *Tiger Tim* and *Rainbow*, but *My Favourite* was the only one I brought frequently mainly for the serial *Kit - The Boy Cavalier*, who always spoke of his Lady Mother and was plagued by an evil Puritan tutor. Looking at this issue I see there were other full page serials, *The Princess of the Third* and *Warwick of Waynechester*, both school stories, *The Black Pearl of Ofmapula* (South Seas and *Phantom House* and *The Ivory Pagoda*, both of adventure. Thus half the paper was solid reading.

A half page picture serial *Jack Steele The Boy Detective* was better than average. Many illustrations were by Leonard Shields, who seemed to appear almost everywhere about this time.

**Nelson Lee Library. 2d. 44 pages. 8" x 5½"**

I think I only purchased this once and although I can remember the shop in Cowley Road, Oxford where I bought it, I can't recall much about the actual issue, except that it did not hold me. By this time it was nearing the end of its life and had 'gone off the boil'. As an ex-Nelson Lee librarian I am ashamed to admit that this was never one of my favourite publications and I still find it heavy going. Sorry Bob (Blythe)!

**Bullseye. 2d. 28 pages. 10½" x 7"**

I first read this about the same time as investigating the *Nelson Lee* and was not 'hooked'. I did enjoy *The House of Thrills*, its longest running series, each week a complete tale in which a crippled ex-game hunter would pay a £100 for any thrilling story offered by a visitor. I never read it during one of the runs of the famous *Phantom of Cursitor Fields* or I might have bought it regularly. The blue and black covers were most eye-catching but its greatest asset was undoubtedly its main illustrator, the prolific G.W. Wakefield.

**Boys' Magazine. 2d. 36 pages. 9½" x 6½"**

I think this is the only other paper I bought during this period. Known as the "Pink 'Un" because of its gawdy covers, I think it was the only boys paper published by Allied Newspapers, and it ran for nearly 12 years, which must say something for it! Personally I was not impressed; not a single story comes readily to mind and I did not care for the general presentation. In later life I have acquired and delved into most issues and have enjoyed stories by George E. Rochester, E.S. Brooks and John Hunter, who was probably the main contributor and is worthy of a bibliography, although it would be a mammoth task.

BOYS' MAGAZINE. 21  
A RIP-SNORTING YARN OF THE JOYOUS JUNIORS' JOYFUL JINKS AT THE OLD COLLEGE.



Well, that is about it. Each subsequent year would add to my interests but that is another story, and papers such as *Triumph*, *Champion*, *Ranger*, *Skipper*, *Modern Boy* etc. would require an overlong article each. I have enjoyed reflecting back over some 70 years and hope you may find something to stir memories or arouse curiosity.

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4 ROOMS OF STOCK. VISITORS MOST  
WELCOME BY APPOINTMENT.  
YOU WILL BE AMAZED.**



## SEXTON BLAKE AND THE SWINGING SIXTIES

by Andy Boot

Life-long devotees of Sexton Blake signalled initial qualms when the 4<sup>th</sup> series ushered in the new era of Berkeley Square, Paula Dane and Marion Lang, and a Tinker who would rather be called Edward Carter. Under the editorship of W. Howard Baker, the series carried on until its eventual demise in 1963. Fleetway stopped the 64pp format, and it took the industry of Baker, under the guise of his Press Editorial company, to revive the series for the 5<sup>th</sup> series, which ran at ever more intermittent intervals through paperback house Mayflower, until its demise. The sixties saw the death knell of Blake, whose final curtain in the 5<sup>th</sup> series was in the last year of the decade, and who only really appeared in reprints from this point onwards.

Seventy years of mostly good sales from his debut in 1893 to the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> series in 1963, and then seven years that saw the legend decline. Why?

It seems that the sixties saw the confluence of several interacting factors that together killed Blake as a commercial force, none of which – in my view – had anything to do with the quality of the work.

Certainly, both series shared many authors. As well as Baker himself, and a characteristically idiosyncratic offering from Jack Trevor Story (*Company of Bandits*), there were also contributions from Wilfred McNeilly, the pseudonymous W.A. Ballinger and Desmond Reid, Rex Dolphin, a couple of reprints (one being a rewritten Arthur McLean story, the other a 1920's Pierre Quiroule tale), and some more recent additions to the Blake pantheon such as Ross Richards and Stephen Christie. Most importantly, there were several contributions from Martin Thomas, whose work pinpoints one of the reasons for Blake's demise, and presages the formats that Howard Baker took from the ashes of the *SBL* 5<sup>th</sup> series.

There were two immediate differences in the paperback format to set it apart from the past. The first was that the word count had increased: instead of 64pp, the books now ran for at least double that, some going to 140pp and even – in the case of *The Abductors* – over 170pp. The other was in the graphic style used on the covers. Whereas the older series had used painted covers of the type so popular with collectors, the new titles pursued a more photographic style, with models taking the place of the painted figure in either a representation of a scene from the story, or a montage to suggest atmosphere (*Such Men Are Dangerous* is representative of the former, while *The Man In The Iron Chest* fulfils the latter). An interesting aside to this is that Press Editorial later used some of these photographs, recut and styled, for other titles – for instance, the Baker-penned

*The Dead And The Damned* uses some of the material from the *SBL Treasons Remembered*, and the later Zenith reprint of *Every Man An Enemy* uses photography from the title *Vengeance is Ours*. When paintings were used, they were symbolic rather than illustrative of particular incidents.

This was an attempt to bring Blake into line with the prevailing hip trend in spy and crime novels. To illustrate this, consider the Jimmy Sangster spy novel *Touchfinger*, which has a photographic composition of a gorgeous girl laying into a thug set within a colourful set of graphics; or Desmond Skirrow's *I'm Trying To Give It Up*, which has a blonde in a silver mini-dress standing in front of a silver Rolls Royce, with action scenes inset beneath. This kind of eye-catching graphic was the kind of thing the more traditionally staid Blake had to compete with...

For the paperback boom was at its height, and the form had eclipsed the earlier format of the *SBL*. There was some justification in the hero of the Beatles song wanting to be a 'Paperback Writer', as in the perceived social revolution of the sixties, the hardback and storypaper forms were something from the past, whereas the paperback was where the hip new writers could be bold and revolutionary... and commercially successful. And in the middle of this, the trendy new forms were sci-fi and spy fiction – not, perhaps, new in themselves, but acting as vehicles for forward thinking writers seeking to gain commercial success and escape high literature conventions and forms.

Michael Moorcock – no stranger to older forms and the *SBL* – was editing *New Worlds* and breaking barriers in his own genre-twisting writing as well as introducing new writers, while spy fiction had been glamorised from the austere Graham Greene fifties image by the intellectual rigour of John LeCarre, the glamour of Fleming's James Bond, and the laconic anti-hero of Len Deighton's novels. Special mention (personal prejudice) for Adam Hall's Quiller novels, the first of which (*The Quiller Memorandum*) was one of the finest spy movies of the sixties. Baker attempted to bring these strands into play with the *SBL* 5<sup>th</sup> series in order to increase sales and compete with the newer writers and heroes.

The problem Baker faced was this: in Blake and his entourage, there existed a set of characters who seemed old-fashioned. More than any other decade in the twentieth century, the rapid turn-over of popular culture and the proliferating forms meant that anything that wasn't invented today was old and past its sell-by date. In later years, the concept of 'retro' would temper this, but for an editor trying to sell Blake to a new audience, it was a problem. The social mores and ideals of Blake seemed to jar with the increased violence, the sexual permissiveness, and the political and drug culture of the sixties.

So why, you may say, try to update Blake? Why a new audience? For the simple reason that the Blake audience – as with any long-running series – was ever-shifting. Some readers stick with a series for years, others come and go: but unlike any previous decade, there was a marked shift between the young and old in the sixties, and in order to attract the new, the series had to be seen to, in some way, jettison part of the past. Making Edward Carter and Marion Lang more of a focus, and increasing the daring drug and occult references in the books (step forward Martin Thomas) was one way. Another was to jump on the spy boom: had Blake ever worked for Eustace Craille and the secret service more, proportionately, in any other *SBL* series, or his *Union Jack* days?

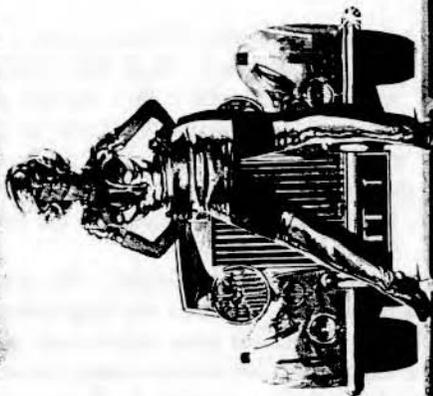
*Sangster and Skirrow show what Blake was up against*

**CORCI  
BOOTS**



**CORCI  
BOOTS**

**DESMOND SKIRROW  
I'M TRYING TO  
GIVE IT UP**



Unfortunately, in trying to gain a new audience, you run the risk of alienating the old. And even now, that attitude is detectable in older and long-established Blake aficionados. So you lose the core audience, and do not win a new one: this accounts, in simple economic terms, for the demise of Sexton Blake.

However, this frisson is what makes the series so appealing for me: the uneasy attitude of Blake to the new world around him, and the way in which his sometimes 'square' appearance (physically and intellectually) can wrong-foot opponents. Contrast Blake with Desmond Skirrow's ex-spy turned ad-man John Brock (Michael Caine in the minds-eye), Jimmy Sangster's dolly-bird air-hostess spy Katy Touchfeather, and particularly Adam Diment's adventurer Phillip McAlpine, and you can see the problem. The latter is a dope-smoking proto-hippy who will copulate with anything female, and has no scruples... photographs of the author looking like David Hemmings on the back of his books only reinforce how old and tired Blake must have seemed to an audience determined to be hip, young and trendy. When youth is worshipped, then a detective in his seventies is a positive fossil.

Ironically, did Blake have to change? If you consider the work of John Creasey, you can wonder: the Baron and Inspector West books increased in sales during the sixties, and many of the older titles in the former series came back into print (spurred on, no doubt, by the success of the ITC television series). Reading them, it's almost impossible to tell in which decade the books originated. By keeping to older values, Creasey reaped the rewards in terms of readership.

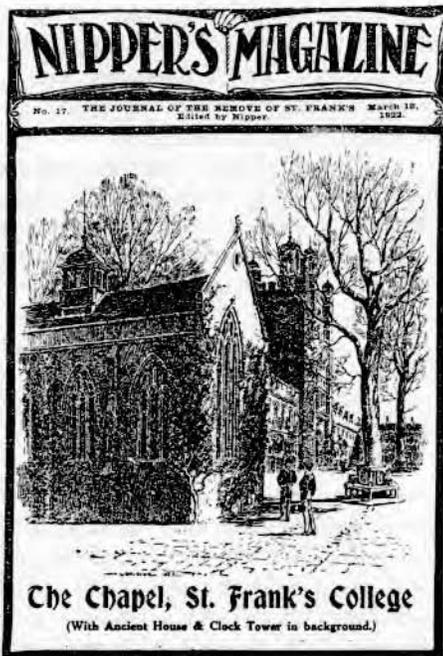
However, change Blake did: and the increased spy and horror/sci-fi strands were mirrored by other Press Editorial work at the time. Baker – as himself and W.A. Ballinger – wrote TV tie-ins for the *Dangerman* series, and the Peter Saxon pen-name served on novels that were also quintessential sixties horror movies, bringing the Gothic tradition into a swinging twentieth century world: *Scream And Scream Again* (originally *The Disorientated Man*) and *Corruption*. The latter was a novelisation, but the former was an original by pulp writer Steve Francis (creator of Hank Janson), and had a kinetic multi-strand approach that was mirrored exactly by the scriptwriter when filmed. These two strands, combined with the use of them within the context of Blake, showed the way for Baker...

When the 5<sup>th</sup> series ended, the Peter Saxon name was already being used for the six book series featuring the Guardians, a team of occult investigators and detectives. These were reprinted many times, as was the spy series featuring Richard Quintain. A rather colourless character, who moved from early crime busting days (*The Girl In The Asses Milk*) through occult capers (*Drums Of The Dark Gods*), to the spy stories that gathered worldwide sales (*The Guardians* – somewhat confusingly – and *The Dead And The Damned*). The fact that these are directly descended from the latter-day Blakes can be seen from a piece of slack sub-editing in the last named book, which sees Quintain referred to at one point as Blake!

To conclude, although Blake had maintained series success by keeping up with the times, the sixties were unique: to attempt to keep up with prevailing trends only alienated older readers while seeming sad and false to possible converts. It was the first time in the century where there was a sharp delineation between old and new. The premises that fuelled the stories in the 5<sup>th</sup> series were strong: the success of subsequent Press Editorial

books is proof enough. The problem was that – at this point in time – anything with the weight of history that Blake held was almost bound to fail unless presented purely in a kitsch historical sense. Blake may have survived if he suddenly became period-bound, as Holmes or Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu stories (popularly filmed during this time). But Blake as the new Bond? It was, unfortunately, never going to work...

\*\*\*\*\*



**A REMINDER THAT THE C.D.  
NEEDS MORE NELSON LEE ARTICLES**

\*\*\*\*\*

## ON TARGET by Steve Holland

If you were asked to name a detective who had offices in London, a young sidekick who referred to his boss as "guv'nor", a good relationship with various Inspectors at Scotland Yard and a housekeeper full of amusing malapropisms, would you immediately think of Sexton Blake?

But what if the offices were in Gray's Inn Road, the young'un was called Buttons, the Inspector of choice was named Brewer and the housekeeper was Mrs. Turle?

Our detective is, of course, Maxton Hunton, the world-famous crime solver whose adventures were told in *Crime Intrigue Detection (C.I.D.) Magazine*, a fourpenny paperback series published by Target Publications of 18a Queen Square, Bath. Obviously modelled on the *Sexton Blake Library*, Maxton Hunter's adventures were told by a motley group of authors, most of them obscure second-stringers at best, although one name stands out sharply in contrast amongst *C.I.D.*'s contributors – Gwyn Evans.

My own collection of Maxton Hunter's adventures numbers a measly two titles (the checklist you will find below was compiled with the help of crime collector supreme Bob Adey), one a full-length yarn running to 95 pages of delirious international intrigue. Entitled *The Murdered Envoy*, the case actually takes place mostly aboard a liner heading for America where a financier, Beresford, is to sign a deal with the US Government. But nefarious hands are at work trying to kill the financier to destabilise the western world. Hunter and Buttons are both in disguise; so is the killer and by page 12 Beresford is dead... but it turns out he was a Scotland Yard man in disguise too, and Beresford is disguised amongst the passengers. Hunter tries to stay two steps ahead of the organisation known as the Picks, only to find that they have thrown all their not inconsiderable resources into the death of the financier: they don't think twice about sinking the liner (only narrowly averted), blowing up a train, blowing up the offices of a Philadelphia newspaper or gunning down the real financier in the corridors of the White House.

Is it as good as a Blake? Hardly, but it's too much fun to be all bad. If anyone out there has any more of Maxton Hunter's adventures (or any other CID or Target titles come to that) I'd love to see them... although a Hunteriana page of SPCD would be pushing it.

The bare bones of the (incomplete) listing below can be clothed a little. The story of Target Publications begins with another firm entirely who launched a small-tabloid (9" x 11½") eight-page comic printed black on pale green paper called *The Midget* in June 1931. The paper, edited by 'Monty Midge', had a midget price as well, only a halfpenny – the first halfpenny comic to be seen since the days of the Great War. The artist kept himself sensibly anonymous, but it was Jack L. Long, who was in reality the Editor. And, as Provincial Comics of Palace Yard, Bath, also the publisher.

*The Midget* only last 13 weeks as a half-size comic before being relaunched as *Merry Midget* in September 1931. By then, Long had been contacted by a number of artists who took over the artistic side of the comics, now enlarged to normal comic size (11½" x 16") – as was the price, to a penny – and printed black on blue paper. The first issue introduced two artists who were to become Provincial's most regular: Bert Hill and H. Louis Diamond.

The Provincial Comics – the new retitled *Merry Midget* and its companion title, *Sparkler* – didn't last long. After twenty weeks they disappeared, but a year later a new

outfit, Target Publications, sprang up in their place. They too seemed to be linked with A.B.C. Press Ltd., who had printed the Provincial titles, although they had their office at 18a Queen Square (later moving to Locksbrook Road, Lower Weston).

It was from Queen Square that the *C.I.D. Magazine* – 4d. for 96 pages – was launched in February 1933, later joined by a tuppenny companion, the *Target Library*, some six or so weeks later. Another six weeks later, the *C.I.D. Magazine* was itself relaunched from number one, but both series appear to have folded in July. In August, Target launched two penny comics, *Rattler and Dazzler*. These were edited by Henry Louis Diamond, a Bath artist whose brother acted as art agent for the comics to supplement his wages as a house decorator. It was a tight little operation, with the editor providing much of the artwork and reputedly writing some of the text stories too.

The Target comics line expanded over the next few years to include *Chuckler, Target* and *Rocket* comics; they produced a 4-page give-away *Ovaltiney's Own* which added value to their cheaply produced product; 12 pages per title was a persuasive selling point to uncritical children who were used to only eight pages. It obviously worked, because towards the end of the decade, Target began to expand yet again, launching *Sunshine*, combining four of their other papers (all in 1938) but adding a *piece de resistance* in February 1939 entitled *the Bouncer Comic* – 16 pages for a penny.

It was too much for the Amalgamated Press. They offered to buy out the titles and offered Diamond an editorial position, which he accepted. They promptly folded all the papers in April 1939... leaving Diamond out in the cold.

The connection between Target and the earlier Provincial titles is easily spotted. The cover art and illustrations for the *C.I.D. Magazine* and *Target Library* were drawn by the very same Jack Long who edited and drew *The Midget*.

Of the writers for the two series a few are recognisable. Marg. Douglas is presumably the same Margaret Douglas who was writing contemporary titles in the *People's Friend Library* and Gramol. Walter Forder was a journalist and editor who lived in Dorset and had an interest in the occult which may have inspired his two novels. Could Fred Bennett be the Amalgamated Press artist? It's not such a push of the imagination when you spot Gwyn Evans' name amongst the contributors.

To my mind, the most interesting contributor is William J. Elliott. I have no doubts that Elliott knew Gwyn Evans and was part of his circle of bohemian friends. He is best (but hardly widely) known for his novels published by Gerald Swan, but he was a

Crime, Intrigue, Detection Magazine. No. 4.

## The Murdered Envoy.



Illustrated by J. F. Long.

By MARG: DOUGLAS.

far more prolific writer than that. Elliott certainly deserves an article to himself, but it is worth noting here that his character Royston Frere was later revived in a series of hardback novels published by Swan.

I have my fingers crossed that someone may be able to turn up some more details on these two interesting series or the Target comics (it would certainly be interesting to compile some information about the text stories in the latter; I suspect that the same authors were involved... including Elliott and Evans).

### TARGET PUBLICATIONS

Dates are in (parenthesis); please note that I'm a little uncertain of the dates of the early Target Library titles which may have started earlier; series characters are given after the title in [brackets]; NF = non-fiction.

#### C.I.D. [Crime Intrigue Detection] Magazine

1 (11 Feb 1933) Douglas Marg **The Black Rook**

2 (18 Feb 1933) Elliott, W.J. **The Curse of the Hand** [Royston Frere]

(also contains "Hermit of Davoid Castle" by Alock Harvey [Maxton Hunter])



**TERROR**  
IS THE  
**KEY-WORD**  
OF

W. J. ELLIOTT'S

**"CURSE of the HAND"**

ASK FOR IT FROM  
YOUR NEWSAGENT. **FOURPENCE.**

---

SINISTER SIGNS,  
NERVE WRACKING NOISES,  
CREEPING SHADOWS  
GO TO MAKE UP



WALTER FORDER'S  
FINE YARN

**"THE AVENGER"**

ON SALE SHORTLY. **FOURPENCE**

- 3 (25 Feb 1933) Dare, Gordon **The Shadow** [Maxton Hunter]  
(also contains "The River Rats" by Marg. Douglas)
- 4 (4 Mar 1933) Douglas, Marg **The Murdered Envoy** [Maxton Hunter]
- 5 (11 Mar 1933) Elliott, W.J. **The Secret of the Sinister Square** [Royston Frere]  
(also contains "Boarding House Murders" by M.A. Bradshaw)
- 6 (18 Mar 1933) Forder, Walter **The Avenger** [Maxton Hunter]  
(also contains "The Office Mystery" (Anonymous) [Maxton Hunter] and "Criminals and Their Crimes" (NF) by A.J. Duncan)
- 7 (25 Mar 1933) Harvey, Alick **Long Arm**
- 8 (1 Apr 1933) Douglas, Marg. **Mephisto the Menace**
- 9 (8 Apr 1933) Harvey, Alick **The Dragons Tongue**  
(also contains "The Foxley Murders" by M.A. Bradshaw)
- 10 (15 Apr 1933) Elliott, W.J. **The Knifer** [Royston Frere]  
(also contains "Yellow Peril" by Desmond Darwin)
- 11 (22 Apr 1933) Douglas, Marg. **The Blue Circle**
- 12 (29 Apr 1933) Forder, Walter **Mystery Mansion**  
(also contains "Criminals and Their Crimes" (NF) by A.J. Duncan; "The Man Who Was Dead" (Anonymous) [Marcus Merlin]; "The Red Arrow" (Anonymous) [Marcus Merlin])

#### **C.I.D. [Crime Intrigue Detection] Library [New Series]**

- 1 (6 May 1933) Elliott, W.J. **The Missing Queen** [Royston Frere]
- 2 (13 May 1933) Chestbury, C.H. **The Yellow Circle**  
(also contains "The Screaming Message")
- 3 (20 May 1933) Anonymous **The Missing Clue**  
(also contains "Rex Roamer" (Anonymous))
- 4 (27 May 1933) Douglas, Marg. **Murder Yacht**
- 5 (3 Jun 1933) Darwin, Desmond **Red Scorpion**
- 6 (10 Jun 1933) Douglas, Marg. **Death Diamonds**
- 7 (17 Jun 1933) Anonymous **The Towers Crime**
- 8 (24 Jun 1933) Bennett, Fred **The Mersey Murders**
- 9 (1 Jul 1933) Anonymous **The Black Angel**

#### **Target Library**

- 1 (1 Apr 1933) Darwin, Desmond **The Undertaker**
- 2 (1 Apr 1933) Douglas, Marg. **Curse of the Scarab**
- 3 (8 Apr 1933) Darwin, Desmond **The Voice**  
(also contains "Criminals and Their Crimes" (NF))
- 4 (8 Apr 1933) Bradshaw, M.A. **The Tablet of Death**
- 5 (15 Apr 1933) Harvey, Alick **The Phantom**
- 6 (22 Apr 1933) Darwin, Desmond **The Missing Formula**  
(also contains "The Mystery of the Professor" (Anonymous))
- 7 (29 Apr 1933) Anonymous **Gaunt House**  
(also contains "The Death Pearl" (Anonymous))

- 8 (6 May 1933) Elliott, William J. **Against the Law** [Royston Frere]  
 9 (13 May 1933) Campbell, C.H. **The Czar**  
 10 (20 May 1933) Evans, Gwyn **Doubleloon Dan**  
 11 (27 May 1933) Barnes, Lee **The Ragged Mask**  
 12 (3 Jun 1933) Douglas, Marg. **The Trilstone Mystery**  
 (also contains "Odds Against" (Anonymous))  
 13 (10 Jun 1933) Douglas, David **Vampire of the Veldt**  
 14 (17 Jun 1933) (Anonymous?) **The Blue Dwarf**  
 15 (24 Jun 1933) Darwin, Demond **The Rockville Case**  
 16 (1 Jul 1933) Anonymous **The Gold Locket** [Maxton Hunter]  
 (also contains "Death Watch Clue" (Anonymous))  
 17  
 18  
 19  
 20 (29 Jul 1933) Darwin, Desmond **The Thousand Voices**

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## A LA BONNE HEURE!

by Bob Whiter

Although I generally kept a volume of Magnets in my kit bag during my army service, obviously, by the time leave came round, I needed to "recharge the batteries", as it were. Therefore, one of my first undertakings on arriving home was to change volumes and select another one to read whilst on leave.

After Hitler's hordes had overrun the continent, Britain received a fair amount of refugees. My family became quite friendly with an elderly French lady and her daughter, and they quite frequently would be found at the old homestead. Actually, they were quite a help to my mother. With most of the family either in the forces or on war work, it was quite a large house for my mother to maintain. My father, although a good man in lots of ways, had been brought up in the strict Victorian tradition. Ergo, apart from gardening, he did very little about the house.

So when I found time, I'd spend a quiet hour in an armchair enjoying a volume of *Magnets* or *Gems*, or sometimes even the *Holiday Annual*. A sudden chuckle would burst forth from yours truly on reading a humorous incident, whereupon the old French lady would clap her hands and exclaim, "A la bonne heure!"

Recently, while eagerly thinking about the arrival of the *Collector's Digest Annual*, I got to thinking that soon there would be plenty of people sitting back in their armchairs reading their copies while emitting soft chuckles of enjoyment. But I doubt if there will be any elderly French ladies, either real or phantom, at their elbows wating to clap their hands and exclaim, "A la bonne heure!"

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## William And His Literary Contemporaries

by Mary Cadogan

(Based on a talk given at the 1997 William day at Grantham)

Two years ago I spoke about William's celebrated literary predecessors - Tom Sawyer and Little Lord Fauntleroy - and last year I delved into affinities between Mr Brown and his literary antecedent, created by Jane Austen - Mr Bennet from *Pride and Prejudice*.

I thought it would now be interesting to look at one or two of William's literary contemporaries, and to see how he might have related to them, drawing, of course, on clues provided by Richmal Crompton's narratives and authorial comments.

There isn't time to go into all of William's fictional contemporaries because the 1920s and '30s were golden decades for writers of popular fiction, and a fairly wide range of juvenile heroes and anti-heroes then appeared. However, I shall concentrate on four of these, all of whom were - and still remain - cult figures, and, in second-hand book-dealing terms today, very collectable.

By the way, I am deliberately omitting W.E. Johns' Biggles: it is very possible that William would have responded positively to his stirring exploits, but because Biggles is adult I've excluded him in order to concentrate on juvenile contemporary characters.

Chronologically the first of these is Billy Bunter, the famous greedy Fat Owl of the Greyfriars Remove. He was created by Charles Hamilton (Frank Richards) even before William came on to the scene, originally appearing in the boys' weekly *The Magnet* in 1908. William George Bunter (note that he and the youngest member of the Brown family share the same Christian name) is in many ways the opposite of our hero: Bunter is chronically lazy, seeking always, in winter, to frown in front of the fire and, in summer, to snooze away the days in the shade of some leafy tree, whereas, of course, Richmal's William loves to be active whenever possible, and cannot be accused of physical laziness. Nevertheless Billy



Bunter - from an original drawing by C H Chapman

Bunter and William Brown have one area of laziness in common - and that is in their school-work. Neither responds with enthusiasm to their long-suffering

teachers: in Bunter's case this is partly because he is naturally rather stupid, though he can be cunning when it suits him, and well able to look after his own interests. William is by no means thick - but studying basically bores him. Bunter's teacher, the impressively erudite Mr Quelch, is constantly and comically shown as making no progress with 'the most obtuse member of his form.' Similarly, apart from very rare occasions when William is briefly infatuated or inspired, he remains remarkably untouched by the learning which his teachers endeavour to impart. With his determined philistinism, William would probably empathise with Bunter in the following episode. (Substitute for 'cake', perhaps, a bag of gooseberry-eyes, William's favourite sweets!)

*There was no escape for Bunter. He was booked for a whole hour of English literature: a subject in which the Owl of the Remove took no interest whatever. 'Gray's Elegy' was the order of the day... really it was an excellent poem: and there were fellows, even in the Lower Fourth, who could appreciate its beauties. But William George Bunter was not one of those fellows. Bunter would have given the Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Gray for a cake, and*

*thrown in those of William Shakespeare as a makeweight and considered that he had got the best of the bargain.*

Now - to the fair sex; to Evadne Price's Jane Turpin, in fact. Like William she first appeared in magazine short stories (illustrated throughout by Thomas Henry) before her adventures began to be collected into hard-back books such as *Just Jane* (1928), *Meet Jane*, *Enter Jane*, *Jane the Fourth* and so on. The books, with their slightly zany pictures by Frank Grey, have a format that strikes strong echoes of the William books. Indeed Jane appears in many ways to be a skirted version of William - although Evadne Price claimed never to have heard of Richmal's celebrated character until some time after Jane was created.

Like William, Jane is a middle-class child who wreaks havoc on the genteelly



WITH A YELL JANE SPRANG UPON THE TOTALLY UNPREPARED PUG

Illustration by Frank R Grey (from *Meet Jane*)

respectable folk around her, often with the best of motives: like William she lives in a typical between-the-wars English village which is populated by a remarkable range of colourful stereotypes; like William she is devoted to her mongrel dog (Popeye) and is contemptuous of her flirtatious elder sister. Another affinity she has with William is that she is a natural and undisputed leader of the gang - although, as she is the female leader of a group of boys, we can imagine how indignant William would have been about her 'bossiness'! Like William, Jane believes what adults tell her and thus innocently exposes their humbug and hypocrisy by getting involved in and drastically disrupting their love-affairs, amateur theatricals, public meetings, parties, dances, fetes and jumble-sales. Like William, during the war she tangles with some particularly obnoxious city refugee children...

Jane is actually more outrageous and more consciously aggressive than William. She rampages through the village, and in one of her exploits actually ends up stark-naked on a drainpipe in full public view. Logically William should have admired her general robustness. By no stretch of the imagination could Jane be dismissed as a 'soppy' or silly girl. But he would surely have seen her as a rival and, despite his declared aversion for the softer side of femininity, he generally preferred the quietly adoring, dependent types like Joan to more lively and knowing girls. Even these, of course, could be manipulative - though never quite so effectively as Violet Elizabeth Bott. The stories show that, after meeting her, William turned against the golden-ringed type he had previously rather liked (such as the little girl to whom he liberally handed out much of Mr Moss's sweet stock in *Just William*, chapter 10).

After getting to know Violet Elizabeth, the girls for whom William would play the role of chivalrous knight were almost always docile, dark-haired and dark-eyed. Violet Elizabeth had put him off blondes for life - and Jane not only had golden curls, blue eyes and a pink and white skin

but (bitterly against her will) was often got up by the adults in her life to look charming in white organdie and satin: her mother's frequent admonition whenever Jane looked the worse for wear after some satisfying outdoor adventure was 'JANE! Go upstairs and tell Nana to curl your hair and get your fairy-frock out!' Incidentally one does wonder whether Evadne Price was, perhaps only half-consciously, inspired by Violet Elizabeth (who first appeared in 1925) to create in Jane (1928) her look-alike.

Although William would probably never have admitted Jane to his charmed circle, he might well have been attracted to another contemporary juvenile character whose adventures he could have relished. Can you guess who this is? It is another of literature's small male heroes - someone created just after William - in 1920 - who remains very much alive and kicking today, 77 years on.

Like William, he comes from a respectable, middle-class family: like William he lives in a village in the heart of England's green and pleasant and apparently changeless fictional countryside. Like William, every time he leaves his house he becomes engulfed in some adventure which lifts his (and the readers') spirits. Like William, he is often an innocent abroad with a knack of overcoming 'baddies' and adverse circumstances. Like William, he was created by a woman...

From all these clues everyone must by now have guessed this character's identity. I should add that, also like William, he is the leader of a group of young males but, unlike William's, his gang consists of a dog (Algy), a badger (Bill), an elephant (Edward Trunk) and other animals. I am, of course, referring to Rupert Bear, created by Mary Tourtel.

Rupert's exploits in the company of the various animal characters who inhabit his village of Nutwood are legion and wonderful. Nominally a bear, he is in essence, despite his furry exterior, a small boy who - like most juvenile heroes - spends only

the first and last moments of every episode in his parental home and, once outside this, becomes a knight-adventurer, an environmental protectionist, a putter-down of every kind of villain from petty crooks to evil dabblers in black magic. Like William too he is a protector of the weak, from

also have approved of Rupert's ability to make the most of the woods and meadows around his village home - and, even more, perhaps - Rupert's capacity to get whisked away to exotic or outlandish places across land, sea, sky and space. William's wildly imaginative uprushes of fantasy find echoes in Rupert's

amazing range of magical flights. The hero of Nutwood has only to look at an umbrella, a pogo-stick, a balloon - or even a laundry basket - to find himself connected to it and becoming airborne.

Yes, I really think William would have considered Rupert Bear far more satisfying than some of his human friends and associates.

I have deliberately left to the last the literary contemporary of William to whom

Richmal Crompton gives some prominence. She provides several textual clues in the William saga about her own - and of course William's - attitude towards that besmocked personification of childish charm, A.A. Milne's celebrated Christopher Robin who, created only a few years after William (in 1924) also shows no signs of fading from the literary scene. Like the William stories, the Christopher Robin books and poems appeal to both children and adults and it seems that, in their varying ways, Milne and Richmal both had great insights into childhood. Their authorial approach, however, is



Rupert Bear in a Mary Tourtel illustration

wounded or neglected nature-sprites to little girls, small animals and even insects. With superbly confident literary and artistic licence, everything mingles and merges successfully in the wonderful world of Rupert. We slip happily from very down to earth bread-and-honey-cottage-teas to trips to remote and beautiful ice-palaces, sinister ogres' castles or exciting magical caverns. Rupert rubs his furry shoulders with animals, humans, animated toys, fairies, gnomes, giants and sorcerers.

William would have admired Rupert's courage under duress: he refuses to give up even when incarcerated by foulest fiends in darkest dungeons. William would

vastly different. Milne said '... the truth about a child is also that, fresh from its bath, newly powdered and curled, it is a lovely thing, God wot'. This, of course, is not quite how we think of William and not, I feel sure, how Richmal sees the essence of boyhood.

There are several side-swipes at Christopher Robin in the William books. When, for example, Milne shows his small boy saying,

*"Every morning my new brace is,  
Thank you, God, for my nice braces."*

Richmal shows Ginger expostulating to William in disgust,

*"I had a pair of braces from my aunt ... Braces!"*

When Christopher Robin, Pooh and Piglet race their sticks along in the stream under a bridge (playing Poohsticks, they call this) Richmal has William and Ginger doing the same thing but fighting vigorously over whose stick is the winner!

When Christopher Robin gets (or pretends to have) his famous 'Sneazles and Weazles' he has every adult within call dancing attendance upon him. When William, after vigorously practising his churchyard cough in the privacy of his bedroom, tries on the same trick to get out of going to school, the adults in his world are notoriously unsympathetic.

Most of all, of course, the differences between William and Christopher Robin are shown in Richmal's wonderful story of Anthony Martin (from William the Pirate):

*And in the village they met Anthony Martin. They did not know that he was Anthony Martin, of course. They saw a little boy of*

*about six, picturesquely attired, wearing a complacent expression, and hair that was just too long. He was a stranger to the locality.*

*"Who are you?" said William.*

*"Don't you know?" said the little boy with a self-conscious smile. "I'm Anthony Martin."*



Christopher Robin and Pooh, drawn by E.H. Shepard

*William's face remained blank. The little boy seemed disappointed by their reception of the information. "Don't you know Anthony Martin?" he said.*

*"No. Never heard of him," said Ginger.*

*A shade of contempt came into the little boy's face.*

*"Good heavens!" he said, "whatever sort of books do you read?"*

*"Pirates an' Red Indian stories," said William.*

*The boy looked pained and disgusted.*

*"Good heavens!" he said again. "I*

shouldn't have thought there was anyone - haven't you read any of the Anthony Martin books?"

"No," said William, unimpressed. "Did you write 'em? I've written books myself."

"No, my mother writes them, but they're about me. Poems and stories. All about me. Nearly half a million copies have been sold, and they've been translated into fourteen different languages. I've had my photograph in literally hundreds of papers. Good papers, I mean. Not rubbish. They're literary stories and poems, you know. Really cultured people buy them for their children."

We all know what happens - how Anthony Martin, whom the whole world outside of William's gang adores, turns out to be a spoiled, bullying pretentious brat - and how William adroitly and satisfyingly gets the better of him. This is indeed a joyous episode, not least for Richmal's portrayals of Anthony Martin's mother (who writes all those appealing stories and poems about him). Richmal shows her dreaming up poems in the style of Milne's celebrated Vespers (from *When We Were Very Young*) but substituting for the famous and repeated line 'Christopher Robin is saying his prayers', the following variations:

*'Anthony Martin is doing his sums'*

and

*'Anthony Martin is cleaning his teeth'*

and - best of all perhaps -

*'Anthony Martin is milking a cow'*

It would, of course, be almost impossible to imagine William transposed into the true Christopher Robin mode. Just fancy this (with apologies to A.A. Milne, whom I truly much admire):

*Little boy kneels at the foot of the bed  
Droops on his little hands little gold head  
Hush! Hush! Whisper who dares  
Dear little William is saying his  
prayers.....*

(This feature was first published in *Just William Society Magazine* number 4)

Nevertheless, despite their many differences and the fact that William, one imagines, could never have felt any possible affinity with Christopher Robin, there are a few similarities between them.

Like William, Christopher Robin goes fishing and newtng, and keeps beetles in match-boxes: Milne's hero also shares some of William's flights of fancy. For example, Christopher Robin says,

*'Here I go up in my swing*

*Ever so high*

*I am king of the fields, and the king of the town*

*I am king of the earth, and the king of the sky'.*

Compare this with William's wonderful vision of himself when sitting on a hilltop (in chapter one of *William the Pirate*) as king of everything he can see: then as ruler of all England: then 'finding the confines of England too cramping for him, he became ruler of the whole world'.

There are even occasional affinities in the style of the two authors. Milne ends *The House at Pooh Corner* by writing,

*'So they [Christopher Robin and Pooh] went off together. But wherever they go, and whatever happens to them on the way, in that enchanted place on the top of the forest, a little boy and a bear will always be playing'.*

Surely there are resonances here of one of my very favourite quotations from Richmal, writing about William and *his* special friend:

*"What'll we do this morning?" said Ginger. It was sunny. It was holiday time. They had each other and a dog. Boyhood could not wish for more. The whole world lay before them...*

# FORUM

## From BRIAN DOYLE:

Towards the end of my article on E.W. Hornung's gentleman-cracksman, A.J. Raffles, in the *SPCD* (April 1997), I mentioned that actor Nigel Havers had read some of the stories on BBC Radio in 1995, and commented: '...and what a good Raffles *he* would make on TV!' Someone, somewhere must have been listening, because it was recently announced that Havers will indeed star as Raffles in a new BBC TV series to be screened later in 2001. It is said that this is to be a 'radically reinterpreted version', which sounds ominous. But it will be interesting to see – and it's good that television is doing the good old stories again. The last TV Raffles, of course, was the 13-part series of one-hour episodes back in 1977, with Anthony Valentine as the smooth, upper-crust thief – and that was superb.

## From MARK TAHA:

Following my Christmas tradition, I read the Annual on Christmas Day and now I'm sending you my comments on it. So here goes!

Page 6. Who exactly was that BBC vandal who killed the Billy Bunter series? I've more than once tried to visualise one of the *Magnet* classics as a Sunday serial.

Page 7. I enjoyed Roger Jenkins' article – but surely Herr Schneider's first name was Otto, not Friedrich. And how on earth could he have returned to the Fatherland after the war had started?

Selby/Ratcliff/Manders – all too believable. Bootles and Lathom also pretty convincing – University men becoming professional boxers and then Public schoolmasters just isn't, although there have been cases of boxers being teachers. I wonder, what if Lascelles and Dalton had met in the ring? Linton didn't really make much impression until the end, in the Silverson series, when he came across as pretty Quelch-like to me.

Page 17. Always unconvincing – surely a pub-haunter locked out would have simply spent the night at the inn and sneaked back early? Or put up there in the first place?

Page 70. Please tell Margery that she's one of the best substitute writers I've ever come across and infinitely better than most of the *Magnet* ones!

Page 103. It's often been surmised that Bunter was derived from the Fat Boy in Pickwick, in *CD* at least once, I believe. Of the other characters mentioned, might Flip, Skip and Joe Frayne have been derived from the Artful Dodger? The description of Mr. Bumble puts me in mind of one Paul Pontifex Prout! Uriah Heep and Loder could have certain things in common, too. Scrooge, obviously Fisher T. Fish. Daniel Peggotty, John Redwing? Micawber, a bit of Prout, a bit of Bunter. Squeers, I remember a St. Jim's substitute story in which Cardew arranged for a waxwork of Ratty to be exhibited at a travelling waxworks as Wackford Squeers. Any comment would be superfluous! And might one imagine Vernon-Smith, Cardew, or Hitlon growing up to be like David Copperfield's friend Steerforth?

## From Ben Bligh:

Regarding the enquiry made by Jim Lake about the old western serial *The Devil Horse* here is the information he requires, taken from the book *To Be Continued – A Complete guide to Sound Movie Serials* by Ken Weiss and Ed Goodgold. Pub. by Star Tree Press, Stratford, Conn. USA. 1981.

### The Devil Horse

12 Episodes  
Mascot, 1932

Directed by  
Otto Brower

#### CAST

Norton Roberts	Harry Carey
Canfield	Noah Beery
The Wild Boy	Frankie Darro
The Devil Horse	Apache
The Wild Boy at 'Five Years	Carli Russell

A fiery wild steed is spotted by Canfield and his group of unscrupulous villains who decide that such a magnificent animal would be

of great value. Canfield will stop at nothing—including murder—to gain possession of the beast, called the Devil Horse. The Devil Horse is the leader of a herd of wild horses and is protected by a young Wild Boy, who has been reared by the herd since he wandered among them at the age of five.

Canfield kills a forest ranger who stands in the way of his efforts. But the ranger's brother, Norton Roberts, vows revenge, and, in the course of tracking down the murderer, crosses paths with the Devil Horse and Wild Boy, enlisting their aid in the hunt. At last justice catches up with Canfield! The Devil Horse tramples him to death and finds its way back to the wilderness to run with the herd again.



Harry Carey and Frankie Darro try to help the wounded Devil Horse.

(Editor's Note: Mr. Brian Baker also wrote to say that *The Devil Horse* starred Harry Carey and was made by Mascot in 1932 in 12 chapters. He says "if you scout around some of the film fairs you can get it on video".)

## From HARRY BLOWERS:

Looking through last year's CDs Tony Glyn's discourse on *The Scout* reminded me of the time that one of the Northern Club's members, the late Jack Alison, spoke to me enthusiastically of his collection of *The Scout*, and said that he appeared in it, in print. I

wasn't at the time particularly interested, never having read that paper. However, knowing Jack Alison, the nom-de-plume *Jack Blunt* was not beyond him or Heckmondwike as focal point. I don't know why Heckmondwike because he himself was a Leeds loiner.

**From IAN ANSTRUTHER:** On page 61 of Mary Cadogan's superb book on Frank Richards (paperback edition, 2000) which is in chapter III, readers are reminded of the hair-raising punishment inflicted on poor Bunter by Mr. Quelch – no less than thirty strokes. ("Bunter's Brainstorm" *Magnet*, no. 996, 1927). Several kind correspondents of the *OBBC* will recollect that I am interested in F.W. Farrar and his *Eric or Little by Little*. Hence, on reading about poor Bunter, my thoughts turned to an occasion in Farrar's time when he was a master at Harrow when such a number of strokes had actually been inflicted. This was in 1853 when a Monitor gave a Fifth Former, the Hon. Raldoph Stewart, thirty-one strikes for disputing the decision of an umpire at football (see page 258 of Tyerman's *History of Harrow School*, OUP 2000). Stewart complained and the Monitor was demoted. Bunter and Quelch, I think, just continued to love and hate each other to the endless delight of the rest of the Remove. Did Bunter or anyone else ever receive so many strokes again? I'm sure some readers will know.

**From ARTHUR F.G. EDWARDS:**

In his article in *CD 648, Christmas at the Theatre*, Brian Doyle mentioned George Robey. Robey was best known for his 'light entertainment' performances on stage, and his rendering of *If you were the only Girl in the World...*, with his leading lady (?Violet Lorraine?) was remembered long after it was first sung during WW1. However, he was in a film made in the early 1930s, I think called *Sunshine Susie*. I hope Brian can confirm, or correct that memory of nearly seventy years ago.

What is beyond doubt is that Robey appeared in Shakespeare. In 1936 *Henry IV Part 1* was a set book for the U. of L. School Certificate and perhaps to cash in on this, it was performed in a London theatre, with George Robey playing Falstaff. We were taken to see a matinee performance but, before we went, we were advised that there would be a deviation from Shakespeare's script. Shakespeare required Falstaff to carry off the dead body of Hotspur, armour and all. This was too great a task for Robey so he would drag the body off the stage. Obviously a voice can change with age so, in 1948, Robey may have been hoarse, but that is not my recollection of him. The true nature of his voice can be established. Surely in the BBC archives there must be a record of the *If you were the only Girl in the World* duet. Although it would have been made well before my time, I for one would dearly like to hear it again. My memories of Lesley Henson also pre-date WW11, they are of his farces performed at the Gaiety Theatre, in which he was supported by Fred Emney and Richard Hearn. To see Fred Emney dance the Lancers solo defies description. I would say that in 1939 Henson's voice was distinctive rather than hoarse but my everlasting memory of him was his comic performance as a German waiter on a gramophone record. One of the gems I remember was the waiter relating an incident to customer saying '...Irish stew' 'Yes Irish stew for manslaughter'. Perhaps then, as now, I had a peculiar sense of humour. I wonder if there is a copy of that record in existence. I

did promise myself that, in the most unlikely event that I was on *Desert Island Discs* that record would be high on my list.

**STEVEN HOLLAND WRITES:**

I am trying to compile bibliographical information ... and have just started a huge indexing project to try and rescue as much as I can before it becomes lost in the mists of time. I'm trying to track down indexes, partial indexes, stray lists of individual issues – information big and small – on any of the old storypapers, pocket libraries or annuals. It surprises me that none of Bill Lofts' and Derek Adley's old lists have turned up – I'm sure some must still exist. In most cases it is going to be the only information drawn from payment records and therefore the best available. I would hate to see this kind of thing disappear forever (although I imagine a lot of it already has) – even the researchers (Derek, Bill, Denis and now Colin Morgan) are slipping away. I vividly remember my last meeting with Bill (in a noisy coffee room in a department store along Oxford Street) when he expressed his real concern that all he had learned over the years was going to disappear. Four months later he was gone. I'm sure the combined readership of *SPCD* can do something to make sure that his prediction doesn't come true.

Something else I'm trying to discover, Mary. Do you know if any of your readers are big Andrew Murray Sexton Blake fans? I'm trying to locate the origins of some of his stories that were reprinted with Nelson Lee substituted. I've got the outline of the plots of the reprints, so it may be possible that a Murray expert would be able to identify the original stories.

Regarding the November *SPCD*, J.R. Hammond asks about Bip Pares, and whilst I can't tell you anything about the artist himself, I can confirm that he was very prolific, working at least between 1930 and 1950. Some of the publishers he worked for were Methuen, Hodder & Stoughton, English Universities Press, Rich & Cowan, Longmans, and Pan Books. He also wrote a book entitled *Himalayan Honeymoon*, published by Hodder & Stoughton in 1940.

To Ernest Holman: I can't trace the title *Who Shall be Captain?* in any of my lists. Well, that's not quite true as there was "Football in Coketown; or, Who Shall be Captain?" by Edwin Harcourt Burrage published in 1893 – but I'm sure that isn't the book Mr. Holman is after!

While I think about it, Mr. Holman had a letter last month about the Hamilton "Exit Bunter" story in *Yaroo!*. It strikes me that if this was the partially written story in Hamilton's typewriter at the time he learned the paper was folding, it could not have been the next *Magnet* due. If *The Magnet* had a six week lead time, it was more likely to be issue 1688 or 1689. The manuscripts for 1684-1687 were already in the *Magnet* office and recorded in the stock books; the first two at least had been subbed (the title of 1685 was editorially altered).

I must admit, what I'd be interested in learning is the name of the person who wrote the latter half of *Just Like Bunter* and wrote the last four books from Cassell in 1964-65.

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## IN MEMORY OF "J.E.M."

Towards the end of last year I received the very sad news of the sudden and unexpected passing of James Miller, who as "J.E.M." was a regular and deeply appreciated contributor to the C.D. over many years.

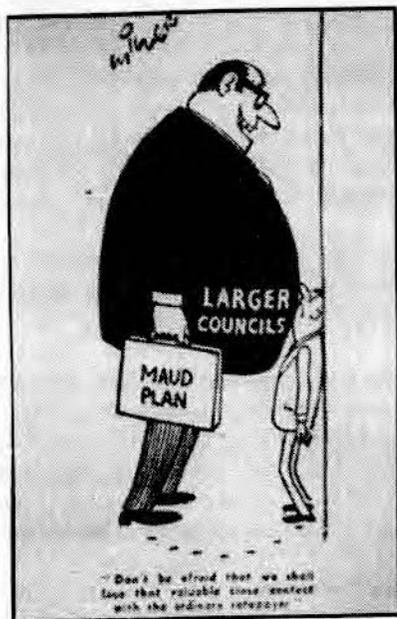
I never met Mr. Miller but his letters and occasional telephone calls were great sources of inspiration to me. A dedicated Blake fan, he wrote about that saga in most of his C.D. contributions. However, he often sent me helpful comments about other aspects of the hobby and the C.D.

James was by profession a cartoonist. He worked on the Brighton *Argus* for 40 years and his humorous work was extremely popular with readers. For his cartoon strip called *Peter Pilot* the words were written by his wife, Joan, who taught at Varndean School. James and Joan were married for 58 years: they have a son who has pursued an academic career, and two grandchildren. James was born in York and attended a grammar school there before going to an Art School.

James had a strong sense of social justice and his drawings, though humorous, were not malicious. It is estimated that he produced some 40,000 drawings for *The Argus*. He will be much missed by his many admirers.

Our sincere condolences go to his family.

M.C.



**SATIRE:** A 1970 piece



**SUBTLE:** Mild nature

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*The Schoolboy's Own Library 1925-1940. An Index.* Compiled and published by Norman Wright.

This excellently produced 40-page booklet is a wonderfully comprehensive index of this most famous and popular of the monthly "libraries". It is divided into sections: first we have the complete numerical listing (which also shows the sources or origin of all the stories). Then there is a complete listing of the SOL stories in alphabetical order. Separate lists for Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood and St. Frank's are provided: so too are all SOL issues by Charles Hamilton under his various pen-names (excepting, of course, the Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood stories covered in the other lists). There is even a short listing of Non-Brooks and Hamilton SOLs.

# The Schoolboys Own Library

1925 - 1940  
An Index



Compiled by  
Norman Wright

Norman acknowledges important previously published lists and articles which he has consulted, notably those by Roger Jenkins and John F. Shaw, Bob Blythe, and Bill Lofts and Derek Adley. He is also indebted to Bill Bradford who has frequently sifted through "his complete set of SOLs" to answer queries from Norman.

It is great to have this Index, which enables one quickly to identify elusive stories which have for years been "the ones that got away"! Copies can be ordered from Norman Wright, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, Herts, WD19 4JL. The cost, including post and packing is £5.00 for U.K., £5.25 for elsewhere in Europe, £6.00 for U.S.A. and Canada,

and £6.25 for the Rest of the World. I would advise you to order without delay as this booklet is a limited number edition.

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## News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

### NORTHERN CLUB

Twelve people gathered in our central Leeds location for the Christmas party. Tea in the studies offered familiar fare, the table groaning with good things. We were delighted to have Richard Burgon with us on vacation from Cambridge university. Richard had managed to procure some beverages such as "Gosling's Special Brew", "D'Arcy's Dandelion and Burdock" and "Tuck Shop Lemonade"! The Christmas party is a convivial occasion, with very little in the way of programme so we had the opportunity to talk and laugh. Geoffrey brought a "Stately Homes of Greyfriars" quiz with pictures and descriptions of the homes of Greyfriars' boys. Paula Johnson was the winner. Geoffrey then read a piece from *The Magnet* involving Coker's topper being knocked off his head with a missile in the form of an orange from the hands of Vernon-Smith.

We concluded with the traditional toasts: the members past who formed our club and then to all the other Old Boys' Book Clubs and indeed, to all other book clubs which appear to have been formed in recent years. Finally, a toast to ourselves and the future of our club.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

The first meeting of 2001 in January saw our club officers in a busy mood. Darrell, our Treasurer was trying to collect all this year's subscriptions, with some success. Our Chairman, Joan led us through a lively discussion about the new details regarding the C.D. and last month's enjoyable Christmas party.

We all were eagerly looking forward to seeing the new club programme as soon as it was printed.

Finally, Geoffrey, our Secretary read from *Magnet* 996 "Bunter's Brainstorm."

PAUL GALVIN

At our February meeting Keith Atkinson presented an excellent paper on the life of Richard Jeffreys and his creation, Bevis. Keith admitted that he had read this story a number of times – a sure testimony to the quality of the writing. The author and his cousin, James Cox ran away from their homes in their teenage years, ending up in France but returned home. Going to Liverpool, they intended going to New York, but they did not succeed as they ran out of money. Richard Jeffreys died in 1887 in Worthing, aged 41.

Paula Johnson brought to our attention, the Women of Greyfriars and read several entertaining excerpts. Visitors and "one offs" were ignored, but we had an insight into Marjorie Hazeldene, to some degree Mrs Locke and, more so, Miss Locke and her suffragette movement – and the boys; reaction. We thought about the domestic staff – the maids, especially Mary, Mrs. Kebble and her busy duties and, of course, Mrs. Mible.

Miss Bullivant was an occasional visitor too. We did appreciate the unmentioned staff – those who cleaned up the studies after “shippings” and “rags” the endless floods and soot and flour being the results of various “japes”. In real life, Greyfriars would have been nothing but a heap of rubble by the time the boys had finished with it, had it not been for the women involved in the school.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

### CAMBRIDGE CLUB

For our Christmas meeting we gathered at the Cherry Hinton home of Adrian Perkins. It was a time for the enjoyable Club tradition for the attending members to provide brief presentations, so we had a fascinating selection of items.

Firstly, Roy Whiskin had brought along eleven very different Christmas issues of publications dating from 1898 through to 1969, and then Howard Corn related a seasonal 1950s farming tale he had most cleverly concocted. In the first of his presentations Keith Hodgkinson produced some wonderful illustrated books, and then Tony Cowley presented several video extracts from Walt Disney animated films. Paul Wilkins recited some seasonal anecdotes, whilst Keith closed proceedings with a Laurel and Hardy film *Laughing Gravy*.

We gathered at the Linton home of Roy Whiskin for our February meeting.

Once our short business meeting was over we listened as Roy told us about the proliferation of children's books produced by Amalgamated Press, D.C. Thomson/John Leng, together with several much smaller publishers, since they were first introduced in the early nineteenth century. Roy chronologically mapped the vast number of titles published. Publications aimed specially at children were fairly rare before WW1, during the inter-war period they really flourished, mostly associated with a weekly title. Sales wise it seems to have mattered if that associated title was a coloured comic or a B & W comic, and it would appear that originally DCT's were all called Books rather than Annuals and were all undated. Besides the Books associated with the story paper there were also some associated-character publications.

Later, the meeting became an information exchange as we discussed many items associated with comic nostalgia.

ADRIAN PERKINS

### LONDON CLUB

The December meeting at Bill Bradford's Ealing Home was, as always, extremely well attended.

When official business had been transacted, the programme of Christmassy items began. Roger Jenkins read from the *Magnet* Hilton Hall series of 1934-5. The subdued moaning of the December wind outside provided a fitting backdrop to an entertaining sequence involving nocturnal excursions around an ancestral pile finally resulting in the Fat Owl of the Remove squashing a Christmas pudding in Price's face.

Brian Doyle gave an atmospheric reading of Dylan Thomas's *A Child's Christmas in Wales*. Bill gave us two 'Memory Lane' dips into records of long ago Club meetings, Roger Coombes provided an audio-taped Quiz entitled *Watching the Detectives* in which theme tunes had to be identified. Chris and Suzanne Harper presented extracts chosen by Duncan who could not be present, from Gwyn Evan's *The Mistletoe Mystery* from *Union Jack* 1365. Mary Cadogan read a short pastiche by Les Rowley called *Christmas at*

*Hawkscliffe* which reminded us of Les's great expertise in writing about the Greyfriars characters.

The Christmassy tea was, as always at Bill's meetings, sumptuous, luscious and much appreciated by all.

At the January meeting, at Chris and Suzanne's Loughton home, after the A.G.M., and election of officers, Andy Boat spoke eruditely and entertainingly about *Sexton Blake and the Swinging Sixties*. His talk stimulated lively discussion which was sympathetic with both the traditional and 'modernist' Blake approaches.

Roger gave us one of his excellent Hamiltonian word puzzles, Bill Bradford provided another Memory Lane reading and Mary Cadogan read excerpts from another Les Rowley story 'The Final Chapter', which centred on Mr. Quelch's celebrated *History of Greyfriars*.

Derek Hinrich marked 'A Landmark in the History of Sexton Blake' with a vivid evocation of William Murray Graydon's 1906 Blake story *Five Years After*, which was turned into a play and later formed the basis of the first Sexton Blake film.

The February meeting took place at Mark Taha's Ealing flat and our host presented the first item on the programme, a talk on Lionel Bart's musicals, with audio extracts. Ray Hopkins gave a light-hearted reading about Bunter and Tubb of the Third from Magnet 1602. Alan Pratt then taxed the little grey cells with a varied detective quiz, Bill read another *Memory Lane* piece and Norman Wright read from the 1946 *Picture Post* article 'Do You Remember Billy Bunter?' He then read from a vintage C.D. article how, resulting from the *Picture Post* item, the publisher Charles Skilton, contacted Charles Hamilton and commissioned the popular yellow jacket Bunter books. VIC PRATT

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We are sad to report the death of **MRS. JANET CHURCHILL**, which occurred last year.

Janet was from the Exeter district and was the widow of the late **CHARLES CHURCHILL**, who predeceased her a few years ago. His name will of course be familiar to readers of *Collectors' Digest*. Charles was a great fan of *Nelson Lee* and was very knowledgeable on that subject. He wrote numerous articles over the years, in both the monthly magazine and the Annual. Charles had many friends in the hobby. **Janet Churchill**, a very gentle and friendly lady, will be sadly missed by everyone who knew her. (Betty and Johnny Hopton)

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

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