

Vol. 55

The Story Paper

No. 652

# COLLECTORS

December 2001

# Digest



- BOB WHITER -

CHARLES HAMILTON

"DIX TO HAZEL GARDNER"

ME



27-6-61

My LAST VISIT TO CHARLES HAMILTON

C.H. Chapman's drawing of his last visit to Charles Hamilton only a few months before the author passed away

# HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS GUEST!



The Famous Five were busy with Christmas decorations when a plump figure appeared suddenly at the open door of Wharton Lodge. "I—I say, you fellows," said Bunter hastily, "I've looked in to say something rather important to Wharton!"

# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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W.H. GANDER

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## ENLARGED CHRISTMAS NUMBER

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Once again we are celebrating Christmas and New Year in the pages of the C.D., and I send my warmest greetings for the festive season to you all.

This year Christmas Eve also marks the fact that Frank Richards died forty years ago. Many of us will remember our sadness when we heard the news of his passing, but, forty years on, we can rejoice that he is still remembered and that his writing continues to give pleasure to so many readers. This issue of the C.D. contains several articles which celebrate his life and work. Two of these (Eric Fayne's account of attending Frank Richards' funeral, and Charles Skilton's article about how he came to publish the Bunter books) have been reprinted from earlier issues of our magazine: we are very pleased also to include an item which Frank's niece Una Hamilton Wright has written

specially for us to mark this anniversary, and an article by Andrew Pitt who, of course, republished my book *Frank Richards: The Chap Behind the Chums* last year – almost forty years on from Frank's passing.

During the Christmas season we often think of absent friends and it is good to have Eric Fayne's name once again on an article in the C.D. You will see that I have also included an article by the late Bill Lofts, another stalwart of our hobby who will be long remembered.

As always as the year ends I would like to thank all our enthusiastic contributors and wonderfully loyal readers. Appreciation is also due to all the staff at Quacks, our printers, who have been helping to produce the magazine for so many decades.

In our last issue I mentioned that the Museum Press would be bringing out a collection of letters from Frank Richards to a Magnet enthusiast with whom he corresponded for many years. This book, which reproduces these interesting letters in facsimile, will be available from mid-December. Copies should be ordered direct from The Museum Press, 30 Tonbridge Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME16 8RT. Cheques should please be made payable to The Museum Press and the cost, including postage, is £10.00.

The C.D. Annual, which is as bright and beautiful as ever, is now ready and there is still time to order a copy if you have not already done so. The cost, including postage and packing, is £12.50 for U.K. readers and £13.50 for those living overseas (cheques payable please to me).

It is my hope that this issue of the C.D. will add to your enjoyment of the festive season, and once again I send you the age-old but ever-sincere wish that you will all have A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY, PEACEFUL AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR.

MARY CADOGAN

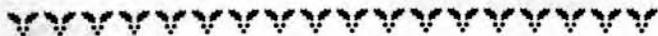


### SPECIAL NOTE

I am delighted to draw your attention to the announcement from Peter McCall on page 8. His Index to the first 500 *Collectors' Digests* is a *tour de force* which will be really helpful to collectors and enthusiasts. It is a splendid Index which must have given its indefatigable compiler hundreds of hours of work.



# Frank Richards – 40 Years On



## THE FUNERAL OF FRANK RICHARDS

"Wharton Lodge glistened white under a mantle of snow. It was a snowy Christmastide. Wells, the butler, stood at the open doorway of the Lodge, looking out into the bright, cold, keen December morning. Wells looked plump and comfortable and cheerful."

That, of course, is an extract from one of Frank Richards' Christmas stories in the Magnet. It seemed a strange irony of fate that, at Christmas time, the last word should have been written in the book of this great man's life-story. For Frank Richards always wrote so wonderfully about Christmas. His best loved stories told of ancestral halls, log fires, holly, mistletoe, wind whining in the wide chimneys, jollity and happiness at Yuletide—with the snow flakes falling softly outside, covering the countryside. Nobody ever doubted that Frank Richards loved Christmas. And it was at Christmas that he died.

The weather on the day of his funeral was something which might have come out of one of his stories. It was hard, bitter—with stinging white roads—snow and ice everywhere. The funeral cars were due to leave Kingsgate at 2.30, to reach the crematorium at Charing at 4 o'clock—a journey of some 30 miles. Whether they would ever make the journey I did not know. That day, all day, I felt strangely that I was playing a minor part in one of his stories.

It was dry, but freezing hard. Frost and snow hung on the gaunt branches of the trees. The footpaths were slippery, the roads were like an ice-rink. Friends told me that I was mad to set out—that I should never get there—and, if I got there, I should never get home again that night. But somehow I knew that I must get there—to be with him at the finish.

The discomforts of that long journey, through the fairy-land that was Kent on a snowy day in mid-winter, were never very much in my mind as the different trains jogged along, carrying me slowly but surely on my way. I thought and thought—of the old Christmas stories.

I thought of the time when Jimmy Silver was snow-bound on the rail journey to the Priory—I thought of the Famous Five in a train crash in the snow when they were on their way to Scotland. I'm sure I heard Tom Merry say "Keep smiling."

Eric Jayne

## “...LEAVING ONLY HIS GRIN BEHIND...”

by Una Hamilton Wright

1961 had been a dreadfully worrying year for me and its Christmas brought no alleviation. My dear Uncle finally took his leave on Christmas Eve, dealing a body blow to my Mother and me.

It was the year when my husband Brian's firm thought fit to send him up to Birmingham to take charge of a large works employing more than a thousand people. Though welcoming his promotion I was intensely worried about how my mother would take it. At 80 she did not feel up to moving to the Midlands to be near us; her near blindness made it very difficult for her to cope with new places. She had friends in London who helped her very much. She thought I would be too busy with the children to be able to fill their place.

Secondly, our elder daughter, Felicity, had to have an operation on her neck and he could not move house until she had completely recovered.

And then there was the worry about Uncle and the fact that he was showing signs of going down-hill. Living in London was far enough away from Kent, but Birmingham, with the M1 just being completed as far as Coventry, seemed as far away as the Continent. By a sad coincidence we moved on the anniversary of my grandmother's death – November 9<sup>th</sup>, a day that always saddened my Uncle. I wrote to him straight away with photographs of the house and the children to let him know that we had arrived safely.

His reply, dated 12<sup>th</sup> November, which proved to be his last letter to me, was in a more sombre mood than usual. On re-reading it now one can almost detect that he felt that he would never see me again. It contained youthful reminiscences and also wise advice such as people give when they are about to depart: “I have heard that Sutton Coldfield is a very pleasant and healthy quarter. I think I passed through it once on a bike! but that was about twenty-years before you were born, consule Planco! It is odd to remember now that when I went to see Dick at Coventry it was only an easy day's ride from London, and I thought nothing of trips of fifty miles in any direction therefrom. Since then the Arab has bidden a final fare-well to his steed!

“When you can find time, my dear, it would be wise to make an effort to keep up your music. *Fugaces labuntur anni*: and music lasts longer than books. Just recently I have made a long-playing record, which I expect will be ravishing the public next year... Now that I cannot read, I sit and listen to the Messiah or Bach's Brandenburg Concerto over and over again. But the fact that I did not learn to play any instrument while there was yet time, causes me to curse considerably. Verbsap!”

He concluded his letter on a more cheerful note by quoting the first verse of the school song, *Floreat Greyfriars*, which he had written for the record.

My family and I had seen Uncle for the last time on August 20<sup>th</sup> when we visited him for the day (we were staying at Bexhill). He seemed somewhat frail compared with the previous year. Mother was staying with us for Christmas, only four months later, when



Charles Hamilton  
(Frank Richards)

the telephone rang. Miss Hood, Uncle's housekeeper, wanted to speak to her. And so the news came out that poor Uncle had died that day, his Christmas presents unopened. And thus began the worst Christmas I have ever experienced. I had no idea that the end had been so imminent, neither had Mother. We struggled to keep the Christmas spirit alive for the sake of the children. Brian was very helpful. Mother stayed with us until the Funeral which had been arranged for New Year's Day.

We travelled to Kingsgate in the morning by train via Victoria. Victoria to me had always seemed the gateway to happiness, to eight-week summer holidays spent with Uncle at Kingsgate, and now to be taking the same journey with no Uncle to greet us was almost more than I could bear. The house that he had so much made his own was deathly still. We were to stay the night and Miss Hood showed us to our rooms: she usually slept in the best bedroom; this she made over to my Mother. She slept in Uncle's study and I slept in the little back bedroom with the damp patch on the walls. The other front bedroom where we had had the Green Room in the days of amateur theatricals Uncle had made his own bedroom, perhaps sentimentally recalling the pleasures of long ago. Miss Hood ruled that it was not to be occupied.

The funeral car came at 2.30pm and Mother, Miss Hood and I climbed in, accompanied by Mr. Franks, Uncle's solicitor and a henchman. It was a long, freezing journey to Charing with patterns by Jack Frost on all the hedges. People say after funerals "still, life must go on", but that was not the feeling at Uncle's Funeral: it seemed that all life had come to an end. At least Uncle was being cremated and not buried – he preferred cremations to burials, he thought them more hygienic. Eric Fayne joined us at the Chapel, making 6 mourners in all. At supper that night Miss Hood explained that she had found Uncle collapsed in the Dining Room (the room he called the 'Tank'). She called the doctor who came quickly but there was no resuscitating. Early in the morning Uncle slipped away before the Christmas festivities had begun. His study, which to me was the 'Happy Room', was not to know his presence again.

Perhaps it is appropriate that Uncle died at Christmas, which was a theme which appeared frequently in his letters as well as in his tales. To his friend George Foster, writing on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1958, he wrote: "Isn't it odd how Christmas always seems to brace one, and give a vague feeling of a good time to come? In those celebrated lines of Dryden, old John tells us that we know very well that as age advances, the future cannot be so good as the past, yet while we would not re-live the past, we still look to the future with hope. That is all very true, no doubt; and it is very illogical: but what a jolly good thing it is that it is so! I am not at all sure that I would like my eight-three years over again: with all their mistakes and blunders and bumbles: yet somehow it does seem that the coming years are going to be well worth living, and that good luck is just round the corner of the New Year. Of all our institutions, I think Christmas is the one that does us most good." Only three years before he died he was telling correspondents that he cheerfully hoped to live to be a hundred.

A year later on December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1959, he wrote to George Foster, "In a few days now I shall have had eighty-three Christmases. I didn't recall the first two or three: but of all that I recall, I wouldn't have missed one. It is quite curious how the old feeling comes back every time, as if life were taking on an extra polish. I verily believe that I shall feel just the same at Christmas 1976, when – I hope! – I shall have scored 100 not out. Vedremo!"



*The inscription on CH's resting place at Charing Crematorium*

Perhaps a quotation from a *Daily Sketch* interview on 18<sup>th</sup> December, 1958, with Herbert Kretzmer, indicates the way his mind worked: "Life is a comedy, and death is its worst joke." Three years later, when writing to George Foster on 27 October, 1961, he bowed himself out with "now I shall be able to say with Horace 'non omnis moriar!'. Records last longer than the makers thereof, especially when the latter have counted eighty-five birthdays! 'Vox Richardi' will still, like the voice of the turtle, be heard in the land! Somewhat like the Cheshire Cat in Wonderland, who vanished leaving only his grin behind!" And that is exactly what has happened: Uncle's humour remains to entertain yet another generation.



*Collectors' Digest Index*, Nos. 1-500, listed by title, author and subject. 150 pages approx. A4, card cover. £16.50 including postage.

*Bang 'em Up Young*, a facsimile edition of my MA Dissertation on Greyfriars. A5, card cover, 173 pages, including index. £12.50. All items: Overseas postage extra. Finally Christmas Greetings to all! PETER McCALL, 47 The Terrace, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 1BP. Telephone: 0118-978-3699, or e-mail: [henry.quelch@westlodge.cdr-i.net](mailto:henry.quelch@westlodge.cdr-i.net).



**LOOKING FOR** American Pulp magazines. Has anybody got any of these magazines from the 1930s or 1940s, some titles were *Weird Tales*, *Astounding Stories*, *Dime Detective*, etc, etc, etc. BEN BLIGH, 55 Arundel avenue, Hazel Grove, Stockport, Cheshire, SK7 5LD. Tel: 0161-483-7627.



## THE BEGINNING OF THE BUNTER BOOKS

by Charles Skilton

*(First published in Collectors' Digest for February 1958)*

Do you ever speculate on the extraordinary chain of events sometimes set up by the quite small happenings of life? Think back and see if it is not so in your case. Or, to take a celebrated example, consider how the assassination of an Archduke in an out-of-the-way spot in 1914 set in motion the deaths of millions of men and most of the troubles to which the world has been subject ever since.

I was working one evening in the office of the hospital where I was employed in 1945 when a tap came at the window. A nurse from the Hebrides wanted someone to talk to; we became friends, and, although I did not marry her, it was through a visit to Stornaway to see her that I met my future wife. (In the meantime I had left

the hospital and was running my small publishing business full-time.) On our honeymoon in Oban the following year I picked up in the hotel lounge a copy of "Picture-Post", a magazine which I came across only very occasionally in dentists' waiting-rooms and at the hairdressers. In that particular issue was an article about Frank Richards and it at once struck me that a series of books about Bunter and Greyfriars would be a very safe bet for a publishers only comparatively recently established.

Reckoning that Mr. Richards would be flooded with fan-mail I waited for a few weeks before approaching him (I would not be so green now as to let the grass grow). Probably I was very diffident too about the reception I, an unknown publisher, would get

# BILLY BUNTER OF GREYFRIARS SCHOOL



FRANK RICHARDS

from a very well known writer. In that respect, at least, I need not have worried, for later, in his Autobiography, Frank Richards disclosed that he "regarded a publisher as of infinitely more importance than the whole of the Baronetage." I have noticed, too, in the years that have passed since, that Frank Richards has always been willing to discuss business arrangements with anyone who does not mess about, however unknown they may be - and at that time there must have been no publishers more unknown than myself! One does not have to be Monster, Million and Co. Ltd.. to get a friendly reply from Frank Richards.

Within a month everything had been settled, the Amalgamated Press who at one time were cavilling at the idea of *Bunter* being published else-where, having withdrawn their objection. I see from my files that the contract was signed on October 4th, 1946 and on December 4th I had the manuscript in my hands, had chuckled with laughter over it and knew that I had a winner of a book in *Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School*.

I suppose someone else would eventually have had the idea if I hadn't, but the now familiar series of yellow spines would probably not have been brought out in the same way: just possibly, not at all. Certainly, without the tap on the window, it is very unlikely that I should have had the great pleasure of knowing the Perfect Author. I have written more about him in an article which I hope will appear in "Everybody's" to mark the Jubilee of the *Magnet* - unless I yet collect a piece of paper probably unknown to Mr. Richards: the rejection slip!



## FRANK RICHARDS -

**For classic humour and the expression of the English spirit**

**by Andrew Pitt**

Now republished in paperback is Mary Cadogan's Frank Richards: The Chap behind the Chums. It has a new introduction by Jeffrey Richards, Professor of Cultural History at Lancaster University and a new foreword by Una Hamilton Wright.

I am probably telling a familiar story. Thirty-five years ago I bought an Armada paperback *Billy Bunter* and the *Phantom of the Towers*, an abridgement of the Mauleverer Towers Christmas series in which Billy outrageously takes a long distance taxi ride (without the means to pay), dodges the taxi driver in the snow covered landscape and then falls down an old well and finds a secret passage into the Towers, plays ghost and so the story goes on. That book was the start of a thirty-five year addiction.

I now read Frank Richards because the stories are classic humour. And I could put a full stop there. Any intellectual analysis is unnecessary. Go to any Waterstones and look at the *Humor* section and if you have my taste it is depressing.

But there has been an intellectual analysis of Frank Richards. George Orwell began it when he wrote his famous essay, published in March 1940 to which 'Frank Richards' wrote a reply. Orwell got a lot wrong but also got a lot right. Let me rewrite the most quoted piece from Orwell's essay, leaving out some of Orwell's slightly unfair inventions.

It is 1910 or 1940-it is all the same. You are at Greyfriars, a rosy-cheeked boy of 14 sitting down to tea in your study on the Remove passage after an exciting game of football which was won by the odd goal in the last minute of the game. There is a cosy fire in the study and outside the wind is whistling round the old ivy-clad grey stones. Over in Europe the comic foreigners are jabbering and gesticulating but the grim grey battleships of the British Fleet are steaming up the Channel. The Pound is still worth a Pound which is just as well as Mauly has been tipped another fiver and we are all settling down to a tremendous tea. After tea we shall sit round the study fire having a good laugh at the antics of Billy Bunter and discussing the team for next week's match against Rookwood. Everything is safe and solid and will be the same forever and ever.



That piece is meant to be satirical but I find it a delicious summary of Greyfriars and my reaction is different from Orwell's: my reaction is, please transport me to that world as soon as possible: by reading Frank Richards, that is exactly what I am doing. I cannot resist adding that we were rather pleased later in 1940 that we had those grim grey battleships.

Orwell did understand that this literature was important. The historian Robert Roberts considered that Frank Richards during the first quarter of the twentieth century had more influence on the mind and outlook of young working class England than any other single person. Jeffrey Richards says in his new introduction that it is a bold claim but he believes that to be right. He places Frank Richards in what he calls 'an almost apostolic succession' from Thomas Hughes. The stories he notes enshrine a Code: team spirit, fair play, duty, self-sacrifice, truth and justice. It is often called the Public School Code. I would claim that with Frank Richards it became the Schoolboy Code because Frank Richards gave it to every schoolboy. As Mary Cadogan says, the fees to Greyfriars were 2d a week. That is the importance of Frank Richards.

The Code is epitomised in Newbolt's poem *Vitai Lampada*. That's the one with 'There's a breathless hush in the Close tonight...' The point is made in the second verse when the boy has grown up and become a subaltern. Things have gone awry, Newbolt says, 'The gatling's jammed, the colonel's dead... England's far, and Honour's a name... but the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks, "Play up, play up and play the game"'. My view is that this is unsatisfactory. How are the 'ranks' to understand the message? They have not

had the privilege of playing cricket in the Close. But if they have read their Magnet then they will hear the voice of the schoolboy and much better that it is the voice of the schoolboy within themselves, that is, of self-discipline rather than the voice of authority.

And the 'apostolic succession'? I like the bit in Tom Brown's Schooldays where Tom Brown is travelling to Rugby for the first time on top of a stagecoach very early in the morning and he is very cold - so cold that he has lost touch with his feet. It is symbolically the beginning of a quality which Thomas Hughes describes as 'so dear to every Englishman, of standing out against something and not giving in.' Do they make Englishmen like that anymore? They did then. There is almost a Churchillian quality about it. Of course, the Magnet generations fought and won two world wars. I was reminded recently that if it could be said that Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton..... all I will say is that we Hamiltonians have never been modest about the Great Man's achievements!

I left in the Orwell paraphrase the piece about the 'comic foreigners' because I think it is a fair comment on the stories though I note Frank Richards in his defence cleverly offered Mussolini as an example. But the real humour, the deep humour, is the picture of the English character. We laugh at Billy Bunter. Why? Because I am sorry to say that there is a little bit of Billy in all of us. Hopefully there is also a good measure of Bob Cherry and a bit of all the others not forgetting Johnny Bull (Frank Richards picked his names with care) or to give him his proper name of course, John Bull.

So these stories represent something of ourselves and in laughing at them we are laughing at ourselves, the best kind of humour. It is said of Dickens that some scenes we never forget: Oliver Twist asking for more, or Pip in the churchyard on the marshes. I will also not forget Billy showing Gussy round Bunter Court telling him that his pater gave a cool £50,000 for it, after earlier telling him that the lands were granted to the Bunters by William the Conqueror; or very late that snowy night seventy years ago now when Harry Wharton and Billy had stopped under the wall of Hogben Grange with the Courtfield Cracksman at large; or the juniors on the raft in the Pacific with Billy wandering in his mind but kept alive with a little bit of corned beef.

I placed myself back thirty-five years ago. 1910 or 1940-it does not matter said Orwell. I have looked at Tom Brown deep into the 19th Century before the railways. I have just remembered a fictional event seventy years ago. What have these things to do with me in the 21st Century? I said that we were rather pleased about those grim grey battleships - I was not even born. Here is an extract from another essay by George Orwell published later in 1940:

What can the England of 1940 have in common with the England of 1840? But then, what have you in common with the child of five whose photograph your mother keeps on the mantelpiece? Nothing, except that you happen to be the same person.

And above all, it is your civilisation, it is you. However much you hate it or laugh at it, you will never be happy away from it for any length of time. The suet puddings and the red pillar-boxes have entered into your soul. Good or evil, it is yours, you belong to it, and this side of the grave you will never get away from the marks that it has given you.

There is something special about the stories of Frank Richards, so special that they become part of our lives. A character in a Noel Coward play says 'Extraordinary how potent cheap music is'. So is some popular fiction. It has been said that Tom Brown's Schooldays was not a true picture of Arnold's Rugby but such is the power of popular fiction that Rugby became like its portrait and other schools copied it. Frank Richards said that to him Greyfriars seemed real; boys wrote to the editor of the Magnet asking about the characters as though they were real people. Somehow Frank Richards has captured part of the English character, the English landscape and English attitudes. He had a schoolboy's view of the world- simple, naive and innocent it may be- but it has its merits.

There were surveys of children's literature written in the second half of the 20th Century, which do not even mention Frank Richards. Well the full history of the 20th Century is about to be written and it is essential that Charles Hamilton-'Frank Richards', he liked that name- be given his place because without him the history will be false. Mary Cadogan's book is back in print.



## 1932 – by Reg Hardinge

It was the year in which *The Peanut Vendor*, *Oh Mama Inez*, *Guilty* and *You're Driving Me Crazy* were among the top musical numbers around. The Oscar-winning film of the year was *Grand Hotel* from the novel by Vicki Baum, starring Greta Garbo and John Barrymore. It was also the very last *full* year in which the *Union Jack* was published, the flag being flown at half-mast on February 18<sup>th</sup> 1933 when the final issue No. 1531 appeared.

As its programme unfolded the weekly fare was as attractive as ever. The Confederation series by Robert Murray was back by popular demand. Rex Hardinge was now writing the gripping African stories featuring Sir Richard ("Spot's") Loseley and Lobango. The further adventures of Roxanne Harfield, this time with Wu Ling, were being penned by G.H. Teed, who was also producing more cases involving George Marsden Plummer, Vali Mata-Vali, and Muriel Marl. Gwyn Evans introduced *The League of Onion Men*, while Derek 'Splash' Page was as entertaining as ever.

A high watermark in the achievements of the *Union Jack* were the *Proud Tram* stories. Gilbert and Eileen Hale figure in most of Gilbert Chester's offerings. Edwy Searles Brooks continued with the exciting Rupert Waldo saga, and the capers of Eustace Cavendish. More thrills emanated from the tales about Monsieur Zenith by Anthony

## The "U.J." Portrait Gallery



No. 1—Zenith the Albino

Skene. A great Christmas special contribution was a story entitled *The Crimson Smile* by Donald Stuart.

There were some excellent serials too, such as *The Lives Between* by Phyllis Lewis, and *The Gyth Chalice Mystery* by Margery Allingham. In *The Next Move* four different authors, Anthony Skene, Gwyn Evans, G.H. Teed and Robert Murray, each in turn spun out the story in successive episodes. Most of the eye-catching covers were created by the inimitable Eric Parker, whilst other outstanding artists were Cecil Glossop, Ernest Ling and Kenneth Brookes. An innovation was the *U.J.* portrait gallery, number one, which is reproduced here.

In November 1932 writer Rex Hardinge set out on an expedition to cross Africa from West to East, starting at Dakar, in Senegal on the West Coast, and ending in Tanganyika in the East.

The purpose was to secure sound – pictures of native life, like war dances, Ju-Ju feasts, etc. Much of this material would find its way into his stories later. In fact the very last tale published in the *Union Jack*, *The Land of Lost Men*, featuring Losely, Lobango and Detective Inspector Courtts of the yard, was by Rex Hardinge.

So on February 25<sup>th</sup> 1933, the familiar red, white and blue colours of the *Union Jack*, made way for the yellow cover of its replacement, *Detective Weekly*, carrying the story *Sexton Blake's Secret* by Lewis Jackson. Issue no. 379 *The Secret of the Loch* by Stanley Hooper on May 25<sup>h</sup> 1940 signalled the demise of *Detective Weekly* –

“Requiescat in Pace”.



**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.



## CHILDHOOD VISITS TO THE PHOTOGRAPHER by Mary Cadogan

Some time ago Donald Campbell sent me a copy of an article which appeared in a long-ago issue of a journal called *The Amateur Photographer*.

Donald felt that this recorded a charming anecdote and I think *C.D.* readers will agree with him. The article, entitled 'Photographing Babies', was by L.T. Meade, a Victorian lady who achieved great success as a writer of girls' stories. As well as producing many full-length novels she contributed numerous articles to magazines (such as the *Girl's Realm*) and was the editor of *Atlanta*, one of the very first magazines for girls. She also co-wrote, with Robert Eustace, a series of notable detective stories for *The Harmsworth Magazine* in the late 1890s.

L.T. Meade's article from the 1884 *Amateur Photographer* follows this short contribution from me, and I am sure that it will strike a responsive note in *C.D.* readers (many of whom have, in childhood, been on the receiving end of such visits to photographers and have, as permanent mementos, photos of themselves in awkward "Sunday best" and 'cissy' garments – or, worse still, in so-called tasteful nude baby studies!)

L.T. Meade's article stirred, for me, vivid memories of being taken with my brother to be professionally photographed. According to my mother's inscription on the back of the resulting picture, I was then 2 years and 7 months old and my brother, Mac, was 4 years and 3 months, and it was "Xmas 1930".

We were both suitably scrubbed and smartened for this great evening. Mac's hair was sleeked down and his socks were firmly pulled up. I was put into my very best dress, of which I was extremely proud. I recall that it was made of unusually soft, patterned corduroy velvet and it had (what to me then seemed absolutely sumptuous) generous fur trimmings at the neck and sleeves.

My mother proudly presented us, thus grandly attired, at the photographer's studio, somewhere in Ealing where we then lived. I remember being in a room unlike any that I had ever seen before. There was no furniture in it, but one of the walls (actually, I now suppose, a back-cloth) was painted to represent an idyllic woodland setting.

My brother and I were told to sit down in front of this and the photographer laid a collection of small toys on the floor. He then began to pose us for the picture – but, before his aesthetic sense could be satisfied, he had quite a psychological struggle with his two young but determined subjects.

I remember that my brother protested against holding any of the various toys which the photographer felt were suitable for him. I wanted desperately to play with a small cannon that was just in front of me, because in spite of my then fair, fluffy and feminine appearance I was, even at 2 years and 7 months, an embryonic tomboy.

Eventually I was forced to hold a doll in what seemed to me an impossibly unreal pose. The photographer insisted that I held it tucked under my necklace – and, young though I was, I thought he was 'a silly idiot' for suggesting this. (As an adult, however, I have to admit that it *did* help to make a charming picture!)

It was only a year or two ago that my brother reminded me of the difficulties that *he* caused the photographer. Mac, after refusing to handle the toys suggested for him, insisted on going to the lavatory. He returned to the studio clutching the cardboard inside



of a toilet roll, and persisted in holding this while being photographed! (For decades, looking at the picture, I had thought he was holding a wooden building-brick.)

So – one can see that a child-photographer's life was far from being a bed of roses! The result of Mac's and my visit to the photographer is reproduced here...



**PHOTOGRAPHING BABIES**  
**A Sketch from Personal Experience**  
**by L.T. Meade**

*Author of "Scamp and I, "Water Gipsies," etc.*

I am the happy possessor of two of the most beautiful babies in the world. I state this fact calmly and without any sense of exaggeration. I am even willing to run the gauntlet of others mothers in the matter – and making due allowance for a little, not unnatural jealousy, am sure that they must pronounce my geese to be swans.

My babies are larger limbed, broader built, rosier cheeked than any other babies I happen to know; their eyes are bright, and their ways gracious. For they are such perfectly healthy specimens of the human race, that it is impossible for them not to feel kindly towards the new and strange world on which their small feet are essaying to take some steps.

My babies feel like royal personages for whom all the glory and beauty is expressly made. They give commands regally and exact, and indeed enforce, implicit obedience.

I look at these rare specimens of the human race with a certain wonder and even awe. I cannot imagine how they came to be mine, and why I was specially signalled out by Providence to possess such treasures.

Being the happy mother of these cherubs, I of course desired to have them immortalised. I thought Millais the right person to do this, but not being rich enough to bribe him with gold or fortunate enough to bring them before his notice – when of course he would instantly have asked permission to make a picture of them for the Christmas number of the *Graphic* – I was forced to resort to photography. Who should be deemed worthy of making Johnnie, aged three, and Mary, under one year, immortal? I went round to all the photographers' shops within reach: I peered in at their windows and examined anxiously the various specimens of art on view in these places. Photographs of fat babies, of thin babies, of handsome babies, of ugly babies, of babies in every stage of growth, and every stage of clothing, were to be seen. I examined these likenesses with a keen appreciation of both their merits and faults, and finally I selected a photographer who lived within a convenient distance of my home, to have the honour of making pictures of my children.

On a certain afternoon in the spring of this year, I went – accompanied by my nurse and two babies – to this man. The photographs of smiling and pleasant-looking children were scattered about, and I thought with a feeling of satisfaction of the valuable addition I was bringing to their exhibition. It even occurred to me, in the vanity of my mother's pride, that the photographer might be glad to take likenesses of such perfect specimens of the human race for no other reward than the satisfaction of adding them to his collection.

I quickly, however, discovered that this shop was conducted on strictly business principles, and that neither romance nor sentiment would be allowed to interfere with them. For an instant, I found myself with my babies in a large, luxuriously appointed saloon, where I paid the necessary fee, and received the necessary instructions. In another moment we were in the studio, and I was handing a folded paper to the artist who was to immortalise my treasures.

I will not attempt to deny that I took a dislike to this person on the spot. I saw with a quick glance that he failed to see any charms in my Johnnie's manly limbs, and that my baby might coo her sweetest, and look her loveliest, in vain for him.

Not a scrap of the artist's soul had this man, and what knowledge he may have possessed of the technical part of his profession could scarcely atone for a very unpleasant manner.

Soon the little group was formed, and the apparatus, through which the sun was to do his wonderful work, placed opposite my pretty pair.

At this moment I was guilty of an enormous crime. I ventured to expostulate; the group formed by the artist of the studio was extremely ungraceful. My boy was required to stand bolt upright and rigidly straight, while baby was perched on a couple of hassocks on a table, her nurse behind holding savagely on to her dress. Of course, the nurse was supposed to be out of sight, but the poor baby looked as if she was going to be strangled, and all idea of making herself agreeable deserted her on the spot. Her small face flushed, her eyes grew round and staring; in another instant she would have howled in the extremity of her tribulation.

"Would it not be possible to put the children into a more graceful position?" I said, mildly.

Instantly the photographer turned the vials of his wrath upon me. "Are you to photograph, or am I?" he said. "If you will be good enough to take likenesses of your children yourself, perhaps you will place them as you please; if not, perhaps I may be allowed to know the best position."

The man's manner was even more rude than his words, and reflecting bitterly on the unpleasant fact that I had paid my money in advance, and, therefore, could only injure myself by leaving the studio, I was obliged to submit, not only to an indignity, but to a bad picture, badly done.

After this small experience I took a dislike to photography as a whole – I pronounced it a mistake, and a libel on true art.

In vain I sighed for the money which might induce some great artist to depict the charms of my darlings.

One day, however, walking down B. street, I was struck by some photographs which differed completely in style and artistic merit from any which had previously attracted me. They were soft in tone – and many of them were executed in a warm shade of red. I noticed that all the photographs were of children, and that the attitude of the children were natural, unstudied, and childlike.

I stopped to examine these pictures with a beating heart, and returned home with renewed hope.

The next day I took my little boy to B. street. An elderly gentleman came forward to meet me. I addressed him timidly, for I had not forgotten the rebuff I had met with before.

"I like your photographs – can you make a picture of my little boy? Is the light sufficiently good this afternoon?"

The photographer replied politely, but in a careless tone.

"The light will do very well – the child can be photographed immediately."

"But I want a picture in your very best style," I ventured to add.

The artist was making a note as I spoke – he now raised his eyes and encountered the smiling gaze of my pretty little lad.

The boy had a mass of curling, golden hair, and his eyes were as blue as the sky. The artist saw the blue in the eyes and the gleam of gold on the baby head. In a moment his manner changed.

"I beg your pardon – No, I could not do justice to your child this afternoon – bring him tomorrow – at eleven o'clock tomorrow morning. Oh! and pardon me – pardon me, but he must not be dressed so – that white embroidery round his dress – you must take it off – white lines! they are terrible, terrible. You will forgive me, Madam, for making these observations."

"Certainly," I said, "I want your best work – I am only too anxious to do anything you suggest."

"Ah! You shall have a lovely picture – it shall not be merely a photograph – it shall be a picture. That child – he has possibilities in him – grand possibilities. He is dimpled; he is round, he is fair. No hard lines in the little one. Don't you give them to him. Dress him properly – dress him properly."

"How shall I dress him?" I asked.

"Put on his oldest suit of clothes – can't be too old; have no white lines; if you like lace round his throat, dip it in coffee, and his hair – wash his hair tonight; washing will make it lighter and not so shining. The shine on the hair brings out dark shadows and takes away from the extreme fairness."

I went home in great delight; I followed the artist's directions implicitly, and the next day I took both my children to his studio.

I cannot say enough for his kindness, for his artistic taste, and for the pains he took.

The results proved worthy of his best expectations.

In due course of time he sent me home not mere photographs, but pictures. Now, as I write, I see two smiling faces gleaming at me from out of these sweet sun-pictures – the eyes smile; the limbs are full of life. I feel satisfied, and know that my second attempt at having my babies photographed is a success.



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## STOP PRESS NEWS by our Special Correspondent (see last paragraph of this article)

This is a report of a special Christmas dinner recently held at "Clerics", which was organized to help rekindle the fading interest in the sporting spirit of our schools. Amongst those who attended, it was good to meet Mr. Herbert Vernon-Smith, the noted millionaire financier, and his friend of many years standing, Captain Tom Redwing, R.N., D.S.C. The Captain, now in retirement from the Royal Navy, takes care of Mr. Vernon-Smith's mercantile investments. Both men, of course, are former pupils of the celebrated Kentish school, Greyfriars, and it was nostalgically satisfying to see them sporting the blue-and-white striped ties of their *alma mater*.

Mr. Vernon-Smith has always been a keen supporter of all forms of sport. Whilst a pupil of Greyfriars, both as a junior and a senior, he was always a member of the football and cricket elevens. In cricket, not only was he an exceptional batsman but also a very good change bowler. Colonel Harry Wharton, D.S.O., M.C., the famous soldier who also attended Greyfriars and was "Smithy's" captain on numerous occasions, was heard to remark that he'd sooner leave himself out of the team than leave out the old 'bouncer'!

Mr. Herbert Vernon-Smith was also the sports editor of the junior school's amateur magazine, the *Greyfriars Herald*. It was noticed that the millionaire's jacket was bereft of any medals or decorations. When the invitations were sent out, the potential diners, in view of the morrow being Remembrance Day, were advised that it would be a nice touch if they wore their medals. During the Second World War Mr. Vernon-Smith had volunteered for the Commandos and had taken part in several epic raids for which he had been decorated, one citation reading "For Conspicuous Gallantry". Captain Vernon-Smith, as he had been then, was utterly fearless to the point of being foolhardy, and in numerous instances had to be forcibly restrained from charging the enemy single-handed. His reserve in not wearing his medals refutes the oft-quoted opinion of many that "Smithy loves the lime-light".

As well as several 'old boys' of Greyfriars sitting at the tables, it was nice to see some other 'old boys' from the rival schools (albeit friendly rivals) with whom the Greyfriars 'men' had regular sporting fixtures. Thus the red-and-white, and purple-and-green ties of St. Jim's and Rookwood were to be seen dotted about: there were even a couple of black-and-white cravats, denoting that



Frank Courtney and his friend Rupert De Courcy (The Caterpillar) were determined that Highcliff School would be represented.

We understand that a fund has been set up to supply sports equipment to certain needy seats of learning and, as mentioned before, to help rekindle the interest in sport. Without disclosing the amount, it was stated that with his usual generosity Mr. Vernon-Smith had started the ball rolling with a substantial donation. It also came to light that the financier, on hearing that his old school-master, Mr. Henry Quelch, M.A., had fallen on hard times, anonymously set him back on his feet, paying all the master's bills, arrears in rent, and even hiring a private detective to track down the confidence-trickster who had defrauded Mr. Quelch of his life's savings. When caught, the miscreant, whose name was Carberry, unfortunately turned out to be a former member of the Greyfriars sixth-form who had been expelled for pub-haunting!

It is good to know that Mr. Quelch now resides in a comfortable, rent-free house and is devoid of all financial worries. It is hoped that he will now be able to finish his *magnum opus* – "The History of Greyfriars".

After lengthy questioning the financier finally admitted to being his old teacher's benefactor, saying with a laugh "At the school, in and out of the class-room, I was the bane of his life – I thought I owed him this little service".

For some reason not disclosed, cameras were not allowed at the dinner – the accompanying drawing being the work of another 'old boy' of Greyfriars – Harold Skinner. It is said to relate that Mr. Skinner, being in trouble with the police, had to use an alias when submitting this picture. (B.W.)



## BOOKS WITHOUT WORDS by Tony Cook

Having read Elizabeth Cooksey's article regarding the books of Miss Read in No. 650 of *CD* I wondered how many people realised that part of the appeal of the books was due to the illustrator J.S. Goodall?

Goodall's illustrations for the Miss Read books were only the tip of the iceberg for he was not only quite prolific as an illustrator of other people's books but produced many of his own, the majority of which are made up entirely of beautiful and very busy watercolour pictures, devoid of any narrative.

First of all who was this man. John Strickland Goodall was born in 1908, the son of a famous heart specialist, in Heacham, Norfolk. He was a pupil at Harrow school. Upon leaving school he studied art privately under Sir Arthur Cope R.A. and E. Watson Nicol. During the war he served with The Royal Norfolk Regiment (1939-46), afterwards travelling the world extensively gaining experience and subject matter for his watercolour painting. He worked in black and white, watercolour and silhouette.



J.S. Goodall. 'Who are you' from *Trumpets over Merriford* by Reginald Arkell (Michael Joseph. 1955).

Besides illustrating more than thirty Miss Read books he illustrated many books including some by E. Nesbit, L.W. Meynell, Geoffrey Trease and R. Arkell, Arkell's "Trumpets Over Merryford" perhaps being one of his best. Later he decided to produce his own books which he did, producing a profusion of books that were without words. In these wordless picture books he evolved an effective method of telling stories by means of half pages placed between each double-page spread. While his book illustrations, with few exceptions, were in black and white the Miss Read dust jackets were in colour) the rest of his books were in full colour.

Goodall was perhaps at his best with his children's books. He produced a number of Paddy Pork books, a re-telling of Puss-in-Boots in his own style and such delights as "The Surprise Picnic" and "Field-Mouse House". These books are excellent for the pre-reading child. He then went on to a series of books which constitute a social history in pictures. To mention but two or three – "An Edwardian Christmas", "An Edwardian Holiday" and "An Edwardian Season". They are not necessarily aimed at children although with the accuracy with which he portrayed the era they can certainly be termed as educational. He then turned to another series of books which traced the history of a high street, castle and country house from medieval times to the present day. As I have already intimated, it is difficult to suggest that these books are for the benefit of children. To those interested in Goodall's artistic value and the sheer joy of his inventiveness with his half-page technique, the books are certainly for the collector.

Apart from his books Goodall did some artwork for the *Radio Times* and at Christmas time it is amazing how many Goodall prints find their way through the letter box.

I mentioned at the beginning of this article that Goodall also completed some silhouette work. He produced a book entitled "Escapade" which is described as 'A charming pastiche of eighteenth century silhouettes' using the half-pages he used in many of his other books. John Strickland Goodall's books, in fine condition, are becoming a rarity but I commend any book collector to them. They are unique and a fine example of a 20<sup>th</sup> century artist who could communicate without words while telling a story acceptable to all ages.



## YESTERDAY'S HEROES

*In the latest article in the series, BRIAN DOYLE, tells of a light-hearted book and hero (or perhaps 'ero). For Alf Higgins (or 'Iggins) is a likeable Cockney from Hackney ('Ackney?) in London's East End, who 'appens (sorry, Happens) to be serving in the muddy Trenches of France in World War One. A very ordinary little man with a big moustache, he comes from a very ordinary and humble background and might perhaps be described as 'a hero from zero'. But one day he makes a very unusual and very magical discovery that makes him quite extraordinary and turns his life upside-down. W.A. Darlington wrote about him originally in the once-popular best-seller 'Alf's Button', first published in 1919.*

"It is to be all made of fantasy, all made of passing, and all made of wishes..." As *You Like It* (Shakespeare), Act 5, Scene 2.

Everyone's heard of Aladdin's Lamp and its magic powers and its ever-obliging genie. But what became of the famous Lamp? Did it disappear, was it lost forever, did it sink to the bottom of the ocean, was it destroyed, spirited away, broken up, burned, thrown away – maybe wished away?

'The lamps are going out all over Europe...' said the British Foreign Secretary in a famous speech on the coming of the Great War in 1914. Was Aladdin's Lamp one of them?

The answer is that Aladdin's Lamp was lost for many centuries. Some sought it but never found it. Some said it had never existed. Some even said that it was just something from a fairy-tale, from a story-book, an 'Arabian Night's' tale. A Wish that never was and one that never came true, a Wish that was never granted...

But it *had* existed and, though the story of 'Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp' had been immortal, the Lamp, apparently, hadn't been and, during the early part of the Great War, the rising price of metal caused an extensive search to be made for old metal and brass utensils and ornaments, with the result that the famous old Lamp was disinterred and sold with a job lot of used brass to a maker of brass buttons for soldier's uniforms and tunics.

And so... one day there is issued to Private Alfred Higgins, serving with the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Middlesex Fusiliers, on active service in France, a new tunic to replace a damaged one. As Alf, a cheerful down-to-earth Cockney, polishes a button on his new uniform, there is a puff of smoke – and he is confronted by a terrifying-looking djinn, or genie, the Spirit of the Lamp, or the Slave of the Button – who is ready and able to grant his new master's every wish, whim or desire.

Alf is so amazed and taken aback by the gaudy apparition that he staggers back (and who can blame him?) uttering a classic Cockney phrase: "Well, strike me pink!" The genie, ever eager to oblige, does just that – and so the many confusions and complications begin. Wishes are never simple, it turns out – even simple ones...

Alf tells his best friend, Private Bill Grant, of his astonishing discovery and then, summoning the genie, asks him his name. 'Abdulzirilajeb, master', is the reply. 'That's bit of a mouthful' says Alf, 'I think I'll call you Eustace'.

And the rest of the story tells of the surprising, hilarious, and sometimes troublesome and worrying adventures Alf and Bill have when 'wishing on the button'. As the early Kodak Cameras advertisements promised around the turn of the century: 'You press the button and we'll do the rest!' But granted wishes rarely turn out as expected. 'If a man could have half his wishes, he would double his troubles,' as American Benjamin Franklin once said. Maybe he had a magic button too. At one point, Alf and Bill find themselves in an Eastern harem full of gorgeous and not over-dressed girls! No problem there, you may think – but you don't know the half of it...

*Alf's Button* was W.A. Darlington's first book. But exactly who was he, this creator of magic and wishes and laughter?

William Aubrey Darlington was born in Taunton, Somerset, in 1890, and educated at Shrewsbury and St. John's College, Cambridge University. His father was a master at Rugby, and later became headmaster of Queen's College, Taunton. After working briefly as a schoolmaster himself, Darlington was commissioned into the 7<sup>th</sup> Northumberland Fusiliers, and was soon serving on active service at the Front in the First World War.

It was while recuperating back in England from wounds received in the Trenches that he began writing *Alf's Button*. Feeling bored and deciding to take up writing again (he had already had a few short pieces appear in *Punch*), he thought up the idea of a 'modernised fairy tale'. What would a soldier's reaction be if a genie suddenly appeared offering to grant his wishes? Darlington had once heard a drayman in the Finchley Road

express surprise by saying 'Strike me pink!' (Darlington had led a rather sheltered life before entering the Army and this had obviously been a key moment in his life) and decided to put those classic words in Alf Higgins' mouth at the beginning of the story.

Darlington originally wrote the story as a series of 'sketches' and sent it to *Punch*, which promptly rejected it! But the popular *Passing Show* weekly magazine accepted it as a series and it appeared in 1917. Then Herbert Jenkins (the publisher of P.G. Wodehouse's works of many years) agreed to publish it on condition that Darlington expanded it to a novel at twice the length (i.e. from 30,000 to 60,000 words). He duly did this mainly by extending the adventures of Alf and Bill from the French Front in the Trenches and 'dug-outs' to England when they returned to 'Blighty' on leave.

So 'Alf's Button' was published in book-form in 1919 and received good reviews, though it didn't yet attain 'best-sellerdom', though the first silent film version, which came the following year helped sales enormously and it sold 186,000 copies in its first three years- very good in those days.

That first film was made in 1920 and directed by the famous British pioneer Cecil Hepworth (who subsequently ranked it, together with *Comin' Through the Rye*, as his most successful picture). It was shot at Walton-on-Thames Studios, in Surrey, and starred the popular London stage comedy performer Leslie Henson as Alf, with John McAndrew as Bill, James Carew as Eustace the genie, Gerald Ames, Jean Cadell, and (in a role specially-created for the film) the then well-known Alma Taylor as Liz, Alf's girl-friend (and later wife).

Spurred on by this film's success, Darlington decided to write a play (or 'extravaganza' as he preferred to call it) based upon *Alf's Button* and, after a trial run in Portsmouth, it opened at the Princes Theatre (now the Shaftesbury), London, on Christmas Eve, 1924, with popular comedy actor Tubby Edlin as Alf, George F. Ide as Eustace, and Hazel Jones as Liz. It proved a successful Christmas and New Year attraction, though it didn't have a long run.

Darlington continued Alf's magical adventures in another novel, *Alf's Carpet*, in 1928, in which our hero comes by a 'wishing carpet', which transports him to unlikely places. But troubles and complications ensue (as usual) and Alf at one point says gloomily (and for the first time): 'I'm fed up with all this bloomin' magic...'

Not missing a trick, Darlington at once wrote another play, *Carpet Slippers* (suggested by the book), in which a meek widower is whisked by a pair of magic carpet slippers (made from a portion of the 'wishing carpet' (wouldn't you know?) to the wilderness of Sinai, where he ends up entangled with (surprise, surprise) the ladies of a harem (Darlington seemed to have something of an obsession with harems!). This was produced at the Embassy Theatre, Swiss Cottage, in London, in 1929.

A silent film version of *Alf's Carpet* that same year, made at Elstree Studios, was a complete disaster. For some obscure reason, two Dutch comedians, Pat and Patachon (known in Britain - though only to about a dozen people - as Long and Short) and who didn't speak a word of English, played Alf and Bill. Just as well it was a silent picture - Dutch comedians speaking not a word of English playing Cockneys...!

Yet another film, this time of *Alf's Button* and based largely on the play, came along in 1930; most of it was silent, but some sound was added later. Tubby Edlin (who had played Alf very successfully in the West End production of 1924 - and whom Darlington had once described as his 'ideal Alf') repeated his portrayal on-screen, with the rather

grandly-named Humberstone Wright as Eustace, Alf Goddard as Bill Grant, and Polly Ward as girl-friend Liz. Incidental 'credits' somewhat bizarrely included Anton Dolin and Anna Ludmilla (as, appropriately, 'dancers'), Nervo and Knox (of the 'Crazy Gang') and 'The Gotham Quartette' (whether as musicians, singers, actors or jugglers was not made clear). It may also be noted that Merle Oberon made her screen debut in this film in a 'bit' part; she was working as a 'café hostess' in London at the time and her professional name was Estelle Thompson (though her real name was Queenie O'Brien).

Just to complete the details of the 'Alf' films, the final one was 'Alf's Button Afloat' in 1938, which starred the famous 'Crazy Gang' of blessed memory, and comprised Flanagan and Allen, Naughton and Gold, and Nervo and Knox, plus the incomparable Alastair Sim as the genie. This apparently turned out to be 'The Crazy Gang's supreme achievement', according to leading film writer Leslie Halliwell, and the early appearance of Sim as 'the lugubrious and incompetent genie' also won praise from the critics (but then Sim never ever gave a bad performance in his entire career, that I can recall!). Directed by old comedy hand Marcel Varnel, the Gang played a bunch of unruly Marines, was set largely on a Royal Navy ship and the plot took in Naval sabotage and a robbery at the Bank of England. I believe that Bud Flanagan played Alf and I recall (from seeing the picture as a child) that for some reason 'Alf's first wish 'Strike me pink!' mysteriously became 'Stripe me pink!'...

I may as well complete the 'media' versions of *Alf's Button* by saying that the familiar story became a West End musical in 1933, being produced at the old Kingsway Theatre, in London (two performances a day as the Christmas – New Year attraction 1933-34). The music was by Temple Abady (later to write musical scores for several British films of the 1940s and 1950s) and the lyrics were by Grenville Robbins. Bill Tasker (who subsequently became a popular comedian) played Alf.

Another musical version of *Alf's Button* (with music and lyrics by Hubert Gregg and others) was adapted as a radio play by Philip Wade (who also played famous scarecrow 'Worzel Gummidge' in BBC Radio Children's Hour for a time) and John Jowett, and broadcast in 1944. Jerry Verno (of the BBC's popular *Taxi!* series) was Alf, and Norman Shelley was the genie; in a minor role as a policeman was John Slater.

Alf Higgins' positively final appearance came in Darlington's novel *Alf's New Button*, published (as usual, after all those years) by Herbert Jenkins in 1940, and this rounded the whole saga off. Alf has bought a neat little villa called 'Blighty' in Highbury, after his adventures with the magic carpet had set him on the road to prosperity, and is now running a fruit and vegetable shop in Islington, with his old friend, Bill Grant, living (rent-free) in a room above it. Eustace reappears and supplies a new button which will grant Alf one wish per week for six weeks – and then that's the end of it. Alf is now married to Liz and they have a grown-up daughter, Annie. It's World War Two, the black-out is on, Annie is mad about films and film-stars, and, of course, the usual chaos occurs...

The story ends with Liz Higgins saying 'I wish we 'adn't got no button' as she holds the offending fastening – and, cor blimey, she 'adn't! 'Oh, Alf, what 'ave I done?' she asks plaintively. 'I ought to 'ave taken the button to Mr. Churchill. 'E'd 'ave known what was best to do wiv it.' Undoubtedly.

*Alf's Button* was reissued, by the way, in Collins' *Black-Out Thrillers* in 1940, as well. So people were still reading about Alf and his magic button more than twenty years

after the original book had first appeared. And over those 21 years, the publishers claimed that over a quarter of a million copies had been sold.

*Alf's Button* was, incidentally, familiar to Charles Hamilton and his family. It was, indeed, something of a Hamiltonian joke. Una Hamilton Wright said, in an article in *Story Paper Collectors' Digest* No. 576, in December, 1994: 'My mother used to call her brother (my Uncle Charles) 'Eustace', after the genie in *Alf's button*, who satisfied his master's demands on a similar grand scale.' (This was because Charles Hamilton was always sending generous gift-parcels containing little toys, trinkets and other presents to little Una, his niece.)

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W.A. Darlington was well known and much-respected, by the way, for his other job, his 'main' job, apart from being quite famous as the creator of Alf and his Button. He became drama critic of the *Daily Telegraph* in 1920 and held this influential post until 1968; and, as well as being one of London's most distinguished theatre critics for nearly fifty years, he was also London drama critic for the *New York Times* from 1939, another job he held for many years.

He wrote many other books, biographies and play-adaptations, and his other novels included: *Wishes Limited* (1922) (in which a young would-be novelist finds a fairy's (and an extremely pretty and attractive one she is too!) attempts to grant his wishes unfortunately restricted by Trade Union rules); *Egbert* (1924) (a barrister is turned into a rhinoceros by a wizard he has offended); and *Mr. Cronk's Cases* (1933) (about a mild, middle-aged lawyer's clerk who comes into money and sets himself up as a private detective, with some success). This last book originally appeared in six episodes in *The Strand Magazine* in 1932-33, illustrated by Treyer Evans (who later illustrated books by Enid Blyton and Angela Brazil, as well as contributing to *Little Folks*, *Scout*, *Girls' Realm* and *Punch*).

As readers may gather, Darlington's other comic novels are set in 'the middle-classes' rather than the working-class, Cockney milieu of Alf Higgins. It was a world that Darlington knew well, of course, having been born, brought up and lived in all his life. In fact, the only Cockneys he ever met were those in the Trenches of the Great War, and even then he presumably only knew them as an officer knew the 'other ranks'.

His depictions of Cockney and working-class life, characters and language are not, perhaps, as authentic as they might be, and often tend to grate today. Much of the 'Alf' saga seems almost to be in 'dialect'. His floors, whether the be those of war Trenches, houses, streets and even harems, are littered ankle-deep in dropped 'H's', missing 'G's', and 'global-stops'.

The stories are also strewn with all those idiomatic sayings, ejaculations and expostulations beloved of writers who strive to depict the so-called 'working-classes' of the time, but who are not really personally familiar with it. Words and phrases such as: 'Lumme', 'Arf a mo!', 'Op it!', 'Gorblimey!', 'Blowed if I am!', 'Oo sez?', 'Blinkin' well', 'My Gawd!' and 'Ow abaht it, Guv?'.

All this is surely the semi-fictional and indeed vocally semi-functional world of the London working-class sphere. I grew up and lived in the working-class area of South-East London (Woolwich, Plumstead, Abbey Wood) and I rarely, if ever, heard these expressions – even when bombs fell during the Blitz! Most, as I recall, came from popular BBC radio shows of the times, such as 'Wot a geezer!', 'Flippin' 'eck', 'Well, I'll

go to the foot of our stairs', 'Give 'im the old one-two!' and, of course, a dozen or three from 'I.T.M.A.' ...!

I acquired my own first copy of *Alf's Button* during the last war as a 12-year-old schoolboy. I gave a friend named Terry French, who lived in the next street, a half-dozen *Hotspurs* and *Wizards* for a paper-back edition with a somewhat garish coloured picture on the front-cover – a picture of a well-stocked harem surmounted by a glittering button. 'Harem love!' and 'Uproarious fun!' ran the somewhat misleading captions in large letters (letters much bigger than those showing the author's name!). I took it home, together with my armful of 'swapped' comics and boys' papers and duly read it. I quite enjoyed it, though I thought it was a bit too farcical and unbelievable – and the relentless Cockney dialect got me down. Over the years I've always retained a soft spot for it, though, and read all Darlington's other novels, which, indeed, I still possess. But one important aspect of that first book has always puzzled me.

If a soldier serving in the muddy, bloody hell of the First World War Trenches was suddenly able to have all his wishes magically granted, just like that, why on earth didn't he wish for the war to end peacefully and at once, for all the sick and injured to be cured forthwith, for all the fighting and shelling to stop and, indeed, for everyone in the whole, wide world to be happy and healthy and successful and contented, and to love and be loved, and – well, *you know.....?*

But, as in all such 'wish fulfilment' stories, all the lucky wisher ever wants is money and jewels, and wealth and big palaces and attractive lovers and to be on sunny beaches by the blue sea far away – and then everything invariably becomes troubled and chaotic, with worries galore and usually unhappiness and frustration for all concerned. Sensible, intelligent, thoughtful and nice people *never* seem to have their wishes magically granted – people like you and me – and mores the pity.....

Even before Darlington's books there had been many stories and novels – not to mention tales and picture-strips in children's comics and in old boys' and girls' papers – featuring the subject. F. Anstey's novel *The Brass Bottle*, published in 1900, bore an uncanny resemblance to Alf and his button or rather vice versa (to name Anstey's most famous story!). Did W. Darlington perhaps remember it when he dreamed up *his* novel? In that story, a young architect's life is thrown into chaos when a bad-tempered genie emerges from an old brass bottle and grants *his* wishes, with the usual unpredictable results.

I once took along a copy of the book to Frankie Howard when he was appearing at a London theatre in the mid-1950s and whom I knew anyway. I knew he had a yen to do some 'straight' acting and pointed out that the story, turned into a film, might be 'right up his street'. After I had outlined the story, he gave me one of his lugubrious stares and said: 'Ooooooo, yes, I rather like the idea of having all my wishes granted, dear boy!' I backed away rather swiftly, knowing Frankie of old, and left him to read the book. He contacted me a few days later and said he loved the idea, would I help with the screenplay, and that he would be in touch soon. That was the last I heard and when I ran into him some time later at the film studios and reminded him of the idea, he said he'd been very busy, but that 'he'd get around to it one day'. But he never did, even though I made the necessary wish myself...

There was a play of *The Brass Bottle*, in which the genie was played by one Holman Clark, who was later to produce the London stage version of *Alf's Button*! Now there's a

funny thing, as the late and great Max Miller might have said... There was also a Hollywood film version in 1964, modernised, and with Burl Ives as the genie. And, in more recent years, we mustn't forget that enjoyable TV series, *I Dream of Jeannie*, in which the blonde and delectable Barbara Eden was a genie of a very different kind.

W.A. Darlington never really fulfilled his comic potential, preferring to stick with his theatre criticism. 'P.G. Wodehouse and W.A. Darlington are our foremost humorists', wrote Alec Waugh in *John O'London's Weekly* in 1922. Another leading critic referred to 'the immortal *Alf's Button*'.

Darlington once said that he really considered *Alf's Button* to be, in essence, a morality play. He wrote an autobiography *I Do What I Like* in 1947, was a cricket enthusiast (he played regularly for J.C. Squire's well-known team of authors and playwrights, *The Invalids* in the 1920s and 1930s) and also wrote about it from time-to-time. He lived for many years in Seaford, Sussex, and died in 1979, at the age of 89.

Someone said at the time: 'Despite the millions of words, and good ones too, that he wrote about the theatre and its plays and players over fifty years as a leading drama critic, it is perhaps ironic that he will probably be best remembered for creating a Cockney soldier and his magic button in *Alf's Button*.'

And why not? As Alf Higgins says somewhere: 'This magic ain't 'arf bad when you get used to it- if you ever do.....!'



## BIGGLES FLIES THE NET

by Alan Pratt

As I know that some hobbyists view today's computer technology with what might, euphemistically, be termed mistrust, I offer the following "disclaimer" at the outset: "be it known that I, the author of this article, am not a technical whizz-kid. My knowledge of information technology is so small as to be laughable. I am, however, able to follow a few simple repetitive steps which is all that is needed to "surf" the internet. Be aware also that: i) I understand the arguments about youngsters being glued to screens rather than books, ii) agree that Laurel and Hardy's films should never have been colour tinted, and, iii) know that nothing can truly replace the pleasure of curling up with an old favourite (book, that is!)" With that out of the way, I would hope to demonstrate that the internet (net, web, call it what you will) can actually complement the Hobby rather than detract from it in any way.

Those readers who have not used it will be unaware that there is a feature called "search". One simply types in, say, "Billy Bunter" or "Greyfriars School" and things called search-engines (don't ask me how they work) scour the world for references to the Fat Owl and co. A couple of clicks on the "mouse" (that's an attachment to your computer) and there they are up on screen.

When I started to use the internet recently, I was fascinated to discover a "site" (they're all called "sites" or "pages") in Australia dedicated to the Hobby with piles of stuff about Greyfriars: articles, reviews, lots of pictures, reproductions of book covers and a "guest-book" where the thousands of people who visit the site can register their comments. This can be viewed on screen and is a real eye-opener in that one soon realises that there are ardent fans of Hamiltonia throughout Europe and even in India.

A "search" for Nelson Lee will bring up a complete catalogue of the paper's run and listings of all other Brooks material - on screen in mere seconds - and there are many, many references to Sexton Blake. For Biggles fans - and there are a vast number it would seem - there are a number of sites including an excellent International Home Page with lists, articles, reviews of individual titles, photographs of aircraft and lots, lots more. And again, there is a fascinating guest-book full of reminiscences about books, collections and favourite stories. One of the best of the other Biggles sites is based in Sweden where, by a click of the mouse, one can read what it has to say in either English or Swedish. Great stuff.

This might be an appropriate point at which to make a comment about buying and selling on the net. It is true that when one searches for an author or the name of a book or paper, some sites that are found will be offering related items for sale. There are various opinions as to whether or not this is a good thing (my own simplistic view being that nothing can replace the excitement of finding a much-wanted item on the shelves of a dusty second-hand book shop!) but no-one should believe that web sites are, generally, after your money. Many of them, notably those that are Hobby related are disinterested in the commercial aspects of collecting and restrict their "notice boards" to swapping, in other words, they invite visitors to advertise books for exchange only, usually by means of e-mail correspondence, a feature that is available, free of charge, to internet users. One American site that I entered recently was a mine of information relating to old comic strips and was wittily informative in replying to questions submitted by users. Its "guru" was, however, less than enamoured with one query relating to the value of a particular item and replied to the



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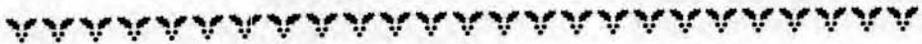
**BAYPORT TIMES**

The Hardy Boys Webzine - Founded 1997.  
Contains news, letters, reviews, articles & more about the Hardy Boys. All the latest collectible discoveries & other Hardy Boys news.

effect that he (or she) was only interested in appreciating the comics for what they were and not what they were worth, a sentiment with which I am sure many readers will concur.

I read with considerable amusement an essay by a South African gentleman who was fascinated as a youngster by the exploits of Rockfist Rogan in *The Champion* and another, by an Australian politician, recalling many happy hours spent combing the bookshops of Sydney for old copies of *The Magnet* and *The Gem*. A pilot with a Middle Eastern airline reflected on how his learning to fly came about directly as a consequence of reading Johns and, for western fans, such as myself, a visit to *The Official Hopalong Cassidy Site* is a must. Here you even have Hoppy talking to you through the computer (an old message obviously as "the man from Bar20" is, sadly, no longer with us) and in the extensive *Cowboy Pal* site you can listen to Gene Autry singing or extracts from old radio shows. So, assuming that if I can do it anyone can (a feeling voiced by many when I passed my driving test), does it cost a lot of money to have the Hobbyist's world at your fingertips in this way? The simple answer is no. Obviously it is advisable to shop around, but, provided one has a reasonably up to date computer and a telephone line, it is possible to have unlimited access to the net from 6 p.m. each weekday evening until 8 a.m. the following morning and all day at weekends for less than £2.50 a week and that includes call charges.

Despite initial reservations, I am encouraged and heartened by what I have found in my "surf-time": Hobbyists should take comfort from the fact that, far from "killing" interest in the old books and papers, the internet is actively helping to keep it alive in a way that, some 10 years ago, could never have been thought possible.



## A J RAFFLES, THE CRICKETER

by

Derek Hinrich

His adoring friend and partner in crime, Harry "Bunny" Manders, exhibits dog-like adulation and hero-worship of Raffles in his accounts of their exploits. The ability of the Amateur Cracksman at his chosen occupation is amply demonstrated, but his cricketing skills are more often asserted than described. So how good a cricketer was A J Raffles?

He was Captain of Cricket at his Public School (unspecified but, probably, not unlike Uppingham). He later, I seem to remember, got his Blue at Oxford. He was certainly a member of MCC, of I Zingari, and, presumably, of Middlesex; He toured Australia and played in at least two Test Matches in England and, of course, for the Gentlemen against the Players. He also played for his school's Old Boys, and in country house matches (though he said, "Nothing riles me more than being asked about for my cricket as though I were a pro. myself"). It would be reasonable to expect him, too, to have turned out for one of the prominent local clubs for which the other Middlesex amateurs played - Southgate, Highgate, Wembley Park, for instance.

We are told that he excelled equally as fielder, batsman, and bowler. No specific fielding position is mentioned, that I recall, so it may be taken that he was a good general-purpose man, adept either in some of the close catching positions, or in the deep.

We know rather more about his batting and bowling.

Although professing a complete disregard for any match in which he was not himself playing, Raffles plainly took practice and the honing of his personal skills very seriously indeed (although he affected to tell Bunny that he was disenchanted with cricket and only played at that time for the cover it gave his other activities). I remember how impressed I was as a schoolboy to learn how he ensured that the ground bowlers gave of their best in the nets by placing sovereigns on the top of each stump as a prize for whoever knocked one over, and gave a pair to the man who put two down with one ball. That smacks of the true corinthian spirit (especially when he had to burgle for his bread and cheese!). He was "a dangerous bat" - presumably an aggressive one in the traditional manner of public school players of his time: that is, he was predominantly an off-side player, excelling in driving in an arc between coverpoint and straight hit, and in cutting, and not afraid to loft the ball. He would probably bat anywhere between four and seven in a first class match, depending on the strength of the side.

The prevailing orthodox fielding strategy of the day was the off-theory, with the bowlers' attack directed on or just outside the off-stump, with a cordon of anything up to eight men on that side of the wicket. On good wickets this became a policy of containment and an attacking batsman might attempt to respond with new-fangled strokes such as the hook or the pull, but Raffles would have been brought up to be mainly adept at the classical off-side strokes, still the most attractive in the batsman's armoury.

We learn he was a good enough batsman to score an early season century against Yorkshire on a plumb Lord's wicket (probably in one of those matches Yorkshire used to play against the MCC in early May when it was still a shade too chilly for home fixtures in Leeds or Bradford). He was justifiably pleased with his achievement, too, for Yorkshire were ever a force to be reckoned with in those days (but, as a Surrey man, I wonder how he would have fared against Lohmann, Tom Richardson, and Lockwood!). On another occasion we learn that he had been recalled to the England side, after some years, for a Test Match with Australia and had stemmed a collapse with an innings of 62 not out in a total of something over two hundred for seven at close of play.

This Test Match, by the way, presents the serious enquirer with a problem. Manders tells us (in "A Bad Night" in *A Thief in the Night*) that it was the second of the series and played at Manchester on the third Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of July of the year (not specified). First class cricket matches before the 1914 War did indeed begin on Mondays and Thursdays, with a complete disregard that Wednesdays (early closing day) and Saturdays were those most likely to produce the best crowds but when play was also likely to be the shortest. The days of the week Manders mentioned could, at their earliest, only be the 21st-23rd July. The only Test Matches actually played on these days in Raffles's time were those at Lord's in 1884 and 1890 and the only others which took place near those days were the Lord's matches in 1886 (July 19th-21st) and 1888 (July 16th and 17th). At that time the Manchester Test Match was in any case either the first or the third of a three-match series (and in 1890 it was in fact completely rained off). It was not until 1896 that the Manchester Test became the second of the series (played on July 16th-18th). Raffles's name does not appear in that England XI and by then both of his careers had come to an abrupt conclusion (if that as a burglar only temporarily), since Manders speaks of his long imprisonment following his arrest on *The Uhlán*. Since he did not meet Raffles again, in his "Maturin" disguise, he tells us, until May 1897 and some allowance for "his long imprisonment" must be made (say then that with time off for good behaviour,

Manders was sent down in 1895 and was out in '97 on "ticket of leave") then Raffles's last Test in England must have been at the latest in 1893 but his name does not appear in the England XIs that year either. So the date of Raffles's return to test cricket is all very puzzling: in fact a problem in dating as acute as any presented in Dr Watson's reminiscences. It is almost as if the match might never have taken place.

We are on surer ground in dealing with Raffles's bowling which is clearly his greatest strength as a cricketer. Manders gives us a glowing appreciation in "Gentleman and Players" in *The Amateur Cracksman*: "Then the bell rang, and I climbed to the top of the pavilion to watch Raffles bowl. No subtleties are lost up there; and if ever a bowler was full of them, it was A. J. Raffles on this day, as, indeed, all the cricket world remembers. One had not to be a cricketer oneself to appreciate his perfect command of pitch and break, his beautifully easy action, which never varied with the varying pace, his great ball on the leg-stump - his dropping head-ball - in a word, the infinite ingenuity of that versatile attack. It was not that Raffles took many wickets for a few runs; he was too fine a bowler to mind being hit; and time was short, and the wicket was good. What I admired, and what I remember, was the combination of resource and cunning, of patience and precision, of head-work and handiwork, which made every over an artistic whole."

This is a splendid description of a slow bowler at work. It does not, however, tell us whether Raffles bowled off-breaks or leg-breaks but it is clear he was, at any rate that day, a master of flight and spin and variation of pace, with probably just enough break on the ball to beguile a hesitantly probing bat: wickets in Raffles's day were uncovered and had not yet reached that adamant perfection which could break slow bowlers' hearts (and as Wilfred Rhodes said, "If a batsman thinks the ball's spinning, it's spinning"). In those days many slow bowlers had command of both off and leg breaks with one or other type, but usually the leg-break, used as a surprise. Some, as has been alleged of Walter Mead, might perhaps have occasionally bowled the googly, but this was generally by accident. B. J. T. Bosanquet had not yet worked out the science of it. On the whole though, to me, Raffles sounds like principally a leg-break bowler. Raffles said later that he had felt like bowling that day and was well pleased with the three wickets for 41 he had taken on a plumb wicket out of the four the Players lost after apparently dismissing the Gentlemen fairly cheaply. Raffles had failed to score and his bowling performance was no doubt a response to his frustration with the bat.

"Bunny" Manders tells us that Raffles was the finest slow bowler of the decade. Manders's hero-worship was absolute, but nevertheless elsewhere he says that Raffles was the finest *amateur* slow bowler of his time. This is an important qualification as in fact there was a general dearth of good amateur slow bowlers in the middle 'eighties and 'nineties. David Frith points this out in his study of the history of slow bowling, *The Slow Men* (George Allen & Unwin, 1984), and mentions only W. G. Grace, A.G. Steel, and E.A. Nepean (all leg-break bowlers), omitting Raffles entirely. So, fine though this performance was, Manders's opinion of his friend's abilities should perhaps be viewed with some circumspection.

As Manders was Raffles's fag at school, he must have been younger than his friend. As Manders was apparently born in 1865, Raffles would have been some five years older. Perhaps it should also be pointed out *a propos* of Raffles's Test career that in the years when he was active in first-class cricket (say, with allowance for time at Oxford, between 1879 and 1895), England XIs for Test Matches in England were not chosen by a single

committee under the auspices of the MCC (this did not happen until 1899: the first Test Match in England was played in 1880), but by the committee of the club on whose ground the particular match was to be played. There were thus occasionally some eccentric choices. Other counties might refuse to release their professionals if the Test coincided with an important match in their own calendar, and amateurs, too, might decline for similar reasons or because they preferred to fulfill other, social, engagements.

At the same time, until 1903-04 when the MCC first organised a touring party, tours to Australia were private enterprise affairs, many of those in the 'eighties being organised as commercial ventures by professionals like Alfred Shaw and Arthur Shrewsbury, the great Nottinghamshire players. On one occasion two teams toured Australia simultaneously and pooled their resources to play the solitary Test that Australian summer. It was thus in one of these parties that Raffles toured Australia and took both his first steps in crime and, presumably, in representing his country.



## COLLECTOR'S WORLD by Ted Baldock

'Tis pleasant through the loophole of retreat  
To peep at such a world.

Following months of thought and careful planning, much heart-searching and probably some misgivings, at the termination of many conferences and prolonged correspondence with prospective contributors – at last the great day has dawned.

A red letter day by any standards, January 18<sup>th</sup> 1879 may be regarded as a milestone in the annals of boys' journals. A day to be remembered by all concerned in the project, because then from the office of *Leisure Hour* at No. 56 Paternoster Row was issued Volume I, Number 1, of the *Boy's Own Paper*.

This was an entirely new concept in boys' literature, launched in an attempt to stem the flood of 'Blood and Thunder' reading then so prevalent, and to try to raise the general tone and atmosphere to a fresher, more wholesome level. History was to record a marked degree of success. The Religious Tract Society had a winner on its hand from the first issue.

All projects, especially those in publishing, are in a sense 'shots in the dark'. This particular 'shot', discharged in the uncertain dusk of the eighteen-seventies, was to blaze forth into a very brilliant career indeed.

Examining a copy of the first number long years after its demise in 1967 following a long and distinguished run, it appears to be not terribly exciting. One must transport the mind and imagination back to that momentous day in 1879, and bear in mind that then here was something quite new, even revolutionary, in boys' literature. It had yet to grow and assert itself in its true context in relation to other literature.

The major event in the first number was the beginning, in serial form of *From Powder Monkey to Admiral*, by that great writer of sea tales, W.H.G. Kingston. This must have helped considerably in getting the magazine off to a great start.

# THE BOYS' OWN PAPER

No. 1.—Vol. I.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 18, 1879.

Price One Penny.  
(ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.)

## MY FIRST FOOTBALL MATCH.

By an Old Boy.



to-morrow."

It was a proud moment in my existence when Wright, captain of our football club, came up to me in school one Friday and said, "Adams, your name is down to play in the match against Craven

I could have knighted him on the spot. To be one of the picked "fifteen," whose glory it was to fight the battles of their school in the Great Close, had been the leading ambition of my life—I suppose I ought to be ashamed to confess it—ever since, as a little chap of ten, I entered Parkhurst six years ago. Not a winter Saturday but had seen me either looking on at some big match, or oftener still scrimmaging about with a score or so of other juniors in a scratch game. But for a long time, do what I would, I always

seemed as far as ever from the coveted goal, and was half despairing of ever rising to win my "first fifteen cap." Latterly, however, I had noticed Wright and a few others of our best players more than once lounging about in the Little Close where we juniors used to play, evidently taking observations with an eye to business. Under the awful gaze of these heroes, need I say I exerted myself as I had never done before? What cared I for hacks or bruises, so only that I could distinguish myself in their eyes? And never was music sweeter



"Down!"

In common with the practice of today, advertising played no small a part in the general presentation. It is interesting to note that, around 1897, tennis, already a popular game, was played with a so-called 'bat', rather than the now conventional racquet. The 'Double Treble' seam cricket ball was pronounced as being the most perfect match ball ever made – a splendid recommendation. And 'Jack Knives', (no boys should be without one) could be purchased from one shilling to a super model at four shillings plus two pennies for postage.

It would appear that the editor had an eye to a wider market rather than confining his activities to boys – and old boys. If one may judge by some advertisements, for instance, Samuel Moore, a wholesale silk merchant asserts that no lady's wardrobe is complete without a black silk dress, which happily he is able to supply at a very competitive price. The 'Christian Aid' tells us that – 'Ladies may entrust Mr. Moore with their orders and be fairly dealt with', which must have been a comforting thought for the ladies.

Interesting must have been the comments of Grigson Minor and his friends – had they been recorded – at these feminine encroachments upon a strictly male preserve. But doubtless, having plunged into Kingston's great sea tale and the other delights contained in the first issue, they were moved to compromise and accept with the usual grace of fourth-form 'em'.

It was the commencement of a glorious innings which was to survive two world wars and witness, unhappily, the decline of a great empire. It was destined to become an institution. Who in its early days could have foreseen the introduction of the impressive folding coloured plates, which were to become a feature some twenty years later. Regimental badges, public school crests, Flags of Empire, Decorations and Medals, and glorious action paintings by Stanley L. Wood and other talented artists, all of whom were happy to be associated with the magazine.

Among those giving sterling service were John Lea and Lillian Gard, who both contributed well-constructed verse over many years. Lillian Gard was a somewhat shadowy figure about whom little can be traced her work invariably struck an impeccable note. She was one of that rare few who possessed a true 'human' touch. Her work always seemed relevant to the everyday activities and problems likely to be encountered by the average boy.

The *Boy's Own Paper* swiftly became a worthy rival to that other doyen of boys' magazines, the *Captain*, and was destined to outlive that excellent journal by almost forty-five years. Yet, as with all things mortal – *sic transit Gloria mundi* – it ran its course. Tastes change, whether for the better is debatable. It is sufficient to say that the *Boy's Own Paper* was a giant in its time, and casts yet a considerable and nostalgic shadow to those fortunate enough to remember its hey-day.

Those among us who are fortunate enough to possess any of those massive annual volumes – which appeared regularly in time for Christmas – are in possession of treasures indeed.

Attics and lofts are considered to be the traditional recesses in which to place temporarily unwanted articles. "Put it up in the attic, it may be useful later". Very familiar phrases. Events take their course, life moves on, changes occur and, more often than otherwise, 'later' never comes. Sometimes the articles in question, as the years elapse, lose their original significance and assume a newer, greater role, eventually evolving into that we choose to term as 'treasures'.

It is a possibility that somewhere, in a loft or attic, long overlooked and forgotten lie – in strict volume and issue numbers – piles of *Chums* and *Boy's Own Paper*, wrapped by some caring hand long ago, and thus preserved from the ravages of dust and time. Within those possibly rather faded covers, alive and as vigorous as the day they were penned, will be the serials and complete short stories containing the throng of sterling characters one remembers and expected in these journals.

The timeless school adventures and activities further afield; the spirit engendered in the jolliest way imaginable. There the papers may have lain year after year, gathering to themselves age and dignity, assuming with the passing of time a curiosity value, as examples of a way of life, thought and a form of literature which now appear quite alien to many.

Did for instance, John Gunby Hadath or George Manville Fenn realise that assessments of their works which were contemporarily in progress would continue to be formulated the best part of a century later?

One may visualise them writing – in Manville Fenn's case probably using a steel nibbed pen – their imperishable tales of adventure, seeking to entertain and, to a degree to instruct the readers of their day. Their books were eagerly awaited, read and absorbed by generations of boys who have long since marched on. Yet still the faded pages of the stories remain as fresh and invigorating as on the day they were written, waiting to open fresh doors and new vistas of joy to later generations of youth.

It is a tribute to these authors that it is not only to the young that their works appeal. Once read, they remain impinged upon the memory and are returned to repeatedly by those who made their initial acquaintance in youth.

Hadath, a Peterhouse – Cambridge 'man', possessed a true understanding of boys in all their varying moods. Being a school-master by profession he was able in his writing to capture the true essence of the public school mentality as it existed in the early days of the century.

Records have it that his hand-writing was almost indecipherable and that his wife had the unenviable task of preparing his manuscripts for the publisher.

Manville Fenn was, by contrast, largely self-educated, being thrown very much into the world at an early age. He too eventually became a teacher, and later a tutor. The harsher realities of life with which he became conversant taught him a great deal which, in many ways is reflected in his books. Yet always he retained a delightful and infectious sense of humour.

Dismissing the commercial aspect of the buying and selling of old papers, it is important that they should be cherished – and preserved. May the attics and secret storage places justify themselves in this laudable pursuit. It seems, when casting an inexperienced eye over the current young people's literary scene, that the old and proven journals and the material they contain are already unique and likely to become even more rarified. In so many ways – *temperi parendum* – we must yield to the times but in certain long-loved fields we can retain our old loyalties and, although becoming 'back-numbers' ourselves, remain forever 'young fellows'.



T'was the night before Christmas, when all through the house,  
 Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;  
 The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,  
 In the hope that Saint Nicholas soon would be there.

(C.C. Moore. *A Visit from Saint Nicholas.*)

"Another week, six days in fact, then farewell to class books, to Henry, to Virgil and Gosling (wonderful pair) and, best of all farewell for the whole Christmas vacation to William George Bunter." Thus did Bob Cherry welcome the coming festive season.

December had been – as was always hoped – splendidly seasonal. Sharp frosts had followed bitter east winds, and snow, in small flakes as yet, was beginning to fall upon Greyfriars and the old quadrangle.

"I say, you fellows." It was a fat squeak at the doorway of study No. One. "About the 'Hols' you know. I have turned down a number of pressing invitations, one from D'Arcy, my friend at St. Jim's, and Mauly is rather eager to have me at Mauleverer Towers, but I would much prefer to spend Christmas with you fellows – my pals."

The 'Pals' looked anything but enthusiastic at this spot of information. Little explanation is needed to clarify the identity of those unfortunate special friends.

Much argument followed, many threats and the fearful consequences promised should Bunter manage to work the oracle and become attached to Harry Wharton and Co. at Wharton Lodge. All of which were quite ignored by the Owl. From time immemorial – or so it seemed – Bunter was going to be 'on hand' when the fellows left Greyfriars for the holidays.

It was dark when the local train eventually rumbled into the little station at Wharton Magna in a cloud of steam and smoke. It was a wild night of high wind and driving snow, and for good measure no conveyance was available and the Greyfriars fellows had to make the best of the situation and proceeded to plunge their way to Wharton Lodge.

That residence was almost cut off from the village by deep snow drifts, a snow plough being a luxury not available at Wharton Magna.

Colonel Wharton and Harry's Aunt Amy were awaiting them in the warmly lit hall with its great open fireplace which was sporting a magnificent fire of logs. A perfect contrast to the inhospitable conditions outside.

Wells the butler was on hand, as smooth and benign as always – and as portly as ever. He may be observed casting upon Billy Bunter an eye expressing anything but approval – or welcome. Wells had experienced some rather unfortunate incidents with the fat Owl on various previous occasions.



*This week's seasonable yarn, dealing with the Yuletide Adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. – the cheery chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.*

However, it was Christmas – a time for forgiveness forgetting old scores, a time of good will to all men- even William George Bunter. John, the footman, and the staff below stairs had been told to sink their real feelings and ‘Play up’.

Colonel Wharton, if not exactly effusive, at least was at pains to tolerate the Owl in the best traditions of Yuletide.

So the Wharton Lodge party was assembled. Aunt Amy, surveying the cheery faces round the fireside, felt a warm glow of contentment and satisfaction at seeing everybody laughing and enjoying themselves.

Below stairs John was remarking to the maid “That there Bunter, I don’t know where he puts it all”, ‘it’ presumably being a reference to the amount of ‘tuck’ Bunter had managed to negotiate... “He certainly keeps me busy” remarked the cook. “For a young gentleman he has an awfully large appetite”. To which remark John replied, “The Colonel thinks he is a young glutton and would dearly like to have him on the barrack square and instil a little discipline”. Wells then from the recesses of his pantry added “I fully agree with the Colonel”.

Now gathered round the great fireplace after a truly great dinner, all the chums are feeling on the best of terms with themselves and – almost – all the world. They are preparing to spend a pleasant evening yarning and recounting the adventures of the previous term.

A traditional Christmas picture. The fireside, the Colonel and Aunt Amy surrounded by their young friends, peace and accord reigning. And in the background, Wells bearing a large tray of refreshing beverages – the latter much to Billy Bunter’s satisfaction, while outside the wind is whistling and moaning round the chimneys of the old Lodge much as it has done from the days of the first Charles – and considerably earlier.

The park is snowbound and cold. The leafless trees, their branches heavy with frozen snow, creak dismally and the white fields beyond go far to enhance the cosiness within, both the physical comforts of the Lodge and also the hearts of its occupants – even that of William George Bunter.

One wonders why this picture of ‘oneness’ and accord cannot become the practice and norm throughout the year. Does it have to be confined to the festive season?

For a few days we forget and forgive old slights and petty differences. Then – as it were – we regroup and prepare to take up the old regime once more.

Our long time favourites, Harry Wharton and Co., have appeared able over the years to sustain a jolly companionship, even with Billy Bunter. The latter is surely no mean achievement and must prove that good-will towards all is not an impossibility.

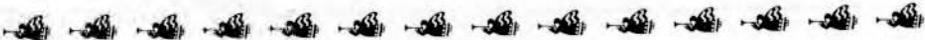


MEMORIES  
by  
Johnny Burslem

Think of the joy you could get for twopence!  
Entertainment, adventure, all going cheap  
Mind you.... The value of money was different,  
The price today knocks one all of a heap.  
Give me the "Thirties" when pleasures were easy,  
The small things that quickened the heart.  
By standards today, you pay through the nose  
If one wants a thrill. Just where do you start?  
I love a good story, no matter the plot  
"SMITHS" stores have books bulging from racks  
but none can be seen with a 'school story' theme  
except "POTTER" and 'wallop' – stopped tracks  
Sorry world! It does not mean a thing  
I fly for Frank Richards!... I'm GONE...  
Warm sun... under tree... world of my youth  
Let this nasty sick world carry on.  
So... dear 'Readers' be thankful you knew  
Those days when the "MAGNET" reigned high  
All for two pennies you left 'mortal coil'  
To float 'Up and away' in the sky.



"I'll mention that skating is just where I live," said Fisher T. Fish. "I'll be sure pleased to show you guys a thing or two." "Go it!" said Bob Cherry. Fisher T. Fish went it. He slid, he slipped, he gyatted on one leg, and he yelled: "Aw! Give a guy a hand, wake snakes! Yecrooh!"





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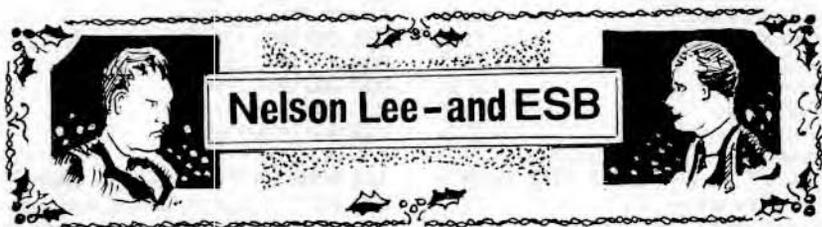
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## New Year Resolutions by Mark Caldicott

Can New Year resolutions last? Are they just rash promises we cannot hope to keep? Well, 1929 was once a new year and the boys of St Frank's made their resolutions. ("The New Year Heroes", *Nelson Lee Library*, OS 239, 03-Jan-29)

It was really all Dorrie's fault. In addition to being an indefatigable explorer and adventure Lord Dorriemore is also a practical joker. Jimmy Little is among the St Frank's party invited to Cliff Castle where Dorrie is holding his New Year festivities.

The party spends New Year's Eve in sporting activities with Fatty Little, despite his enormous weight and size, showing an astonishing agility when skating on the frozen lake. This gives him a bit of an appetite and Dorrie, the most generous of hosts, has laid on a seemingly endless supply of food for his guests. Fatty takes full advantage of this. Lord Dorriemore takes him to one side to give him a bit of advice. "One of the days you'll overdo it, you know - you'll eat so much that you'll have frightful pains inside your tummy."

"But I'm alright as I am, sir," said Jimmy Little. "I'm healthy enough and I'm active, and nobody can accuse me of being a glutton."

"I wouldn't dream of making such an accusation," said Lord Dorriemore. "It ain't your fault old son. It's a disease, and it'll grow on you frightfully. In the end you'll grow so big that you won't be able to carry your own bally weight!"

Fatty is in no way put off his food by this warning, so Dorrie lays on his own particular treat for Fatty - a pre dinner "snack". According to Nipper this consisted of about twenty-eight pounds of rich pastry and no-one is really surprised when Fatty begins to complain of tummy pains. Dorrie is full of gloom about the prospects of a return to health and Fatty astonishes everyone by refusing to eat dinner.

New Year's Day sees Fatty partaking of a frugal breakfast. "I say, you chaps," he declares, "I've come to a decision." The decision is to make a New Year resolution to eat normally, that is to eat only the food the school provides and no more than his study pals when there are study teas. His chums treat his declaration with disbelief but promise to back him in his resolve. Lord Dorriemore does not reveal, of course, that he has played a trick on Little by introducing some harmless but pain-inducing substance into Fatty's pre dinner snack.

Shortly afterwards Handforth is engaging in his usual form of unwarranted violence, punching Walter Church on the nose. Church falls awkwardly, cracks his head on a stone, and is rendered unconscious. Nelson Lee is critical of Handforth's free use of his fists and this, together with a stable-door remorse over the injury to his chum makes Handforth decide to follow Fatty Little's example with a New Year's resolution not to 'use his fists unless he has been hit first.

Before the day is out, two more resolutions are added to the list. The untidy Duke of Somerton declares he will from that day dress smartly and wear a clean collar. At the other end of the scale, the impeccably dressed Sir Montie Tregellis-West resolves to 'study economy', by which he means to cease any unnecessary spending.

Of course, the New Year heroes have set themselves a demanding task. Back at St Frank's for the new term we find each of the four severely tried. Fatty tortures himself by looking in at the tuck shop window, and secretly hopes he will be encouraged by others to eat. Sir Montie decides to eschew expensive taxis and go by 'bus to Victoria, as a result of which he misses the train, arrives late and walks from Bellton station to St Frank's carrying his heavy luggage. Handforth is tormented not only by his own study mates, who decide it is time Handforth faced up to some home-truths, but also by cheeky second-formers. The Duke of Somerton, in his natty suiting, is just thoroughly uncomfortable.

All manage to fight off temptation and remain true to their resolutions, but increasingly they are regretting their rash promises. Fatty weakens first, visiting the village tuck-shop just as Mr Binks is placing a dish of cakes in the middle of the window. Buying a large bag of pastries and cakes, Fatty is just on the point of blowing his resolution when he sees Pitt coming along the lane. He throws the bag over the hedge until Pitt has gone, but when he goes to retrieve it he is just in time to hear a scampering sound as three "grimy village urchins" rush away with armfuls of food, leaving Fatty with an empty bag.

It is in fact Handforth who does the other three a favour by cracking first. Fortunately, the circumstances are such that none of the other fellows blames Handforth for this. Fullwood and Co. take unfair advantage of Handforth. The turnabout comes suddenly:

"Oh, don't talk to the chap. Fully," said Bell. "I don't see why we should waste our time on this - this funk."

"This which?" demanded Handforth.

"Funk!" said Bell. "You're afraid of a Second Form fag! I heard one of them cheeking you this mornin', and you simply looked at him!"

Handforth clenched his fists.

"You know I resolved —"

"Oh, we know all about that!" chuckled Fullwood. "Rather a neat excuse, by gad! You funk most of us, an' you hide yourself behind this bally resolution business. It's only a dodge to keep out of trouble, you - you miserable coward!"

"Say - say that again!" panted Handforth, with a gulp.

"I called you a miserable coward," said Fullwood obligingly. "Til go further, an' call you a contemptible cur—"

"By George!" shouted Handforth thickly. "That's done it!"

Crash!



**SOME NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS.**

1. Handforth refrains from using his fists.
2. Fatty Little avoids the allurements of the tuck-shop.
3. The Duke of Somerton pays more attention to his attire.
4. Sir Montie pays less for his.

Fullwood is floored with one of Handforth's famous punches to the nose and that is the end of that. The other New Year heroes take Handforth's action as a signal that their own resolutions can be abandoned without loss of face, and life returns to normal.

This story reveals something of the nature of Brooks' writing. His is not a style which deals in the development of rounded psychology. His stories depend on strong plotting and plenty of action. What is dispensed with in the process is the three-dimensional character. We love the characters of St Frank's and would not want them to change. But since they tend to be portrayed with only one personality characteristic, the New Year resolutions needed to be a negation of this characteristic which, if sustained, would have emptied the characters of the four "heroes". Thus the only outcome of this story could be a return to status quo.

Illustrating the point I am making is the fact that, when Fullwood reformed (a similar process to making a New Year resolution) and when no longer portrayed as a cad and a bounder, he became almost invisible - his dominant characteristic had been removed and there was nothing left of his character.

Be careful, therefore, when you make your own New Year resolutions for 2002. Think twice about making resolutions aimed at making you a different kind of person. Maybe people like you as you are and don't want you to change.



## APOCRYPHAL OR TRUE?

by Bill Lofts

(Editor's Note: I still have one or two of the late Bill Lofts's articles as yet unpublished. It is good to be able to use these from time to time to remind us of this great stalwart of our hobby.)

I suppose that by now I must have heard hundreds of anecdotes surrounding the many personalities connected with the old editors, authors and artists of days gone by. Most stories are perfectly true, told to me first-hand by the persons actually concerned. Others, told second-hand and passed on from one person to another, are more than likely to be a bit distorted from what actually happened, like the old children's game of 'Passing the Message' where by the time a message has been passed from the first person to the last, it has often become different in its meaning.

In our Editor's excellent history of Tiger Tim, in the a C.D. Annual, mention is made of a story in Brian Doyle's book of the creation of this character through a misunderstanding of J. Louis Smythe, the clever illustrator. Briefly this was that when instructed to draw for a story a Tiger (an old expression for a page-boy) he instead drew a comical looking animal tiger. The editor concerned was so amused that he kept this in mind, and it was probably used later in a group of comic animals for the start of the Tiger Tim strip.

Actually the original source of the story was in a Christmas anthology article by J.H. Bott, former top editor at the Amalgamated Press, and also the right-hand man of Harold J.Garrish, Director of all the comic publications. I have no doubt he got the story from Garrish, but it became distorted at the end. Louis Smythe, according to old artists who knew him, was a small, happy-go-lucky man, always full of fun. When in a Fleet Street

tavern, and fully refreshed, he used to sing comic songs. Being half Irish he had the traditional impish fun of those from the Emerald Isle.

#### MRS. HIPPO'S KINDERGARTEN.



"Hooray! Mrs. Hippo has left the schoolroom! Now is our time to peep into that treacle-jar," cried Tiger Tim, jumping up on to a chair to reach the goodies. You may be sure the other pupils didn't mind - in fact, Willy Giraffe's mouth watered at the thought of so much happiness. And as for little Peter Pelican, he eyed the jar with rapture in his gaze.

Tiger Tim's first appearance in strip format (*Daily Mirror*, 16 April 1904)

Probably he *did* draw a comical tiger in the incident related, but its later use was unlikely. As Mary rightly points out in her article, records show that Tiger Tim's original appearance was as far back as 1904 in the *Daily Mirror*. I think that he also appeared in a Southend local paper. In any case, I feel that J.S. Baker, the then artist, was influenced by comic animals which had appeared in American magazines in the 1890s. (It is also interesting to note that J.S. Baker's grandson also drew some strips of Tiger Tim in the *Rainbow* at a later stage.)

As a boy, I loved Rookwood School from reading about it in the *Schoolboys' Own Library*. I didn't know then that Owen Conquest was the same writer as Frank Richards and Martin Clifford. I always imagined him to be a much younger author than the other two, so the drawings by G.W. Wakefield of Rookwood boys who were younger than those of Greyfriars and St. Jim's made him, for me, the ideal artist. I can assure Mr. Hawkey, who wrote the so accurate article in the C.D. Annual about Rookwood illustrations, that the story of C.H. Chapman being 'pushed out' of the job was absolutely true. It was related to me by Chapman himself when he was still most indignant about it, although it had happened some fifty years earlier; I was glad that Wakefield got the job because I feel that, if Chapman had, the Rookwood boys would have had a Greyfriars flavour.

In any case, C.H. Chapman had enough work on the Greyfriars saga without taking on more commissions. In fact he was so overloaded with it that in 1926 the editors brought in Leonard Shields to help him.

Apart from enchanting so many readers of the Rookwood saga, with his pictures, it must also be remembered that G.W. Wakefield entertained millions more with his Laurel and Hardy strips in the comic *Film Fun*, which were drawn later on by his son, Terry Wakefield, who inherited his father's engaging and exuberant style.

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# Rainbow

TIGER TIM'S OWN PICTURE PAPER



EVERY WEDNESDAY LOOK AT THE FUNNY BRUIN BOY SNOWMEN! No. 1,882 January 7th, 1956.



1. Swoo-osh! Splish! The Bruin Boys are having a grand snow-fight and Jumbo is being beaten. You see there is more of him to aim at! Then suddenly he exclaims: "Stop throwing! Here is Tim with his pedal sledge."

2. Yes, Tiger Tim has been inventing again and the boys gather around excitedly. "Does it really work, Tim?" asks Joey and Tim laughs. "Of COURSE it does," he replies. "Watch carefully and you'll see it go."

From Tiger Tim's appearance in the last ever *Rainbow* (January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1956)

## Bumper Christmas Number!

# The BOYS' FRIEND I<sup>st</sup>



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## GOLDEN TREASURE BOOKS

by

**John Hammond**

When my brother and I were children during the war years we possessed a collection of treasure books which filled a shelf in a toy cupboard. The shelf included, I remember, several volumes of *Dixon Hawke's Case Book* (thrilling detective stories), the short stories of Edgar Allan Poe, *King Solomon's Mines*, *The Coral Island*, the Sherlock Holmes stories by Arthur Conan Doyle, and Kipling's *Just So Stories* and *The Jungle Book*. Nestling among these prized and well thumbed volumes was a thick, chunky book called *The Children's Golden Treasure Book* for 1937. The front cover had an attractive coloured painting of a castle surrounded by knights in armour, beneath which was the caption "Packed with Delightful Surprises".

These *Golden Treasure Books* were published throughout the 1930s by the well known firm of Odhams. They were well produced, printed on good quality paper with delightful illustrations.

The contents were of a uniformly high standard. The 1937 volume, for example (which I still have) includes pieces by Susan Coolidge, Charles Dickens, Edward Lear, Robert Louis Stevenson, Walter de la Mare, Louisa Alcott, and John Masefield. It also includes extracts from *Don Quixote*, *Aesop's Fables*, and Grimm's *Fairy Tales*.

The books in this series were clearly designed to appeal to the curiosities of a child and to arouse his or her sense of wonder. There are articles on 'Finger Dolls', 'Riddles to Guess', 'Shadow Pictures', 'Keeping Pets', 'Puzzles for a Rainy Day', 'Model Theatres', and 'How Everyday Things Work'. There are also practical hints on photography, stamp collecting, charades, paper modelling, gardening and swimming. For older children looking for meatier fare there are mystery stories, plays, poems, tales of travel and exploration, and numerous crosswords and conundrums- There are also a number of longer stories on themes of detection, science fiction and adventure.

The title page of the 1937 volume states "A delightful collection of children's stories and verse by authors old and new here lies open before you. Games, puzzles, riddles and jokes rub shoulders with practical articles on things to make and do. There is something interesting in these pages for every child and for every day. Truly a treasure of a book for any girl or boy."

The publishing firm of Odhams (now, alas, defunct) rendered a service to children in producing this excellent series. The combination of well written articles and stories, superb coloured plates, attractive drawings and clear photographs, meant that each volume in the series was a book to be read and cherished. So if you should come across a Golden Treasure Book from the 1930s at a car boot sale or a flea market, do buy it. You will find it a fascinating treasure house and a book to return to again and again.



## **Mr E B G McPherson**

### **Obituary**

**by**

**Betty and Johnny Hopton**

We are extremely sad to report the death of Mr EBG McPherson of Wells, Somerset, which occurred on the 9th of August 2001, at his home. He was a kind and gentle man and was affectionately known to all his friends as " Mac ".

The funeral took place at St Thomas' Church on the 22nd of August at 2pm. His wife Muriel predeceased him a few years ago. Mac was well known to all in the hobby for his expertise and enthusiasm for the Nelson Lee Library and the writings of Edwy Searles Brooks. Over the years he contributed many articles to the Collectors' Digest and the CD Annual. Mac was a regular member at the OBBC meetings at Weston Super Mare and would never miss a meeting without a very good reason. He was always accompanied by his little Jack Russell dog, named Snoopy. They were inseparable and we never saw Mac without his beloved Snoopy, who seemed to enjoy the meetings, just as much as his master did.

Mac had been unwell for quite some time but whenever we spoke to him, he was always optimistic and cheerful and looked forward to resuming his hobby and attending the next meeting. He will be sadly missed by all his numerous friends, in the hobby and especially by all of us at the Weston Super Mare meetings. Mac is survived by his children, grandchildren and great grand children, to whom we all extend our sincere condolences.



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**THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME**  
**The History of the Picture Strip in D C Thomson's 'Big Five'**  
**Part 4 - The Hotspur 1953-1958**  
**by Ray Moore**

The first and most obvious thing to happen to the picture strip content of the 'Hotspur' in 1953 was that it became a whole lot less so, when the publication of a regular weekly cover strip was suspended with the final instalment of 'Dirk the King's Dog Boy' in No 851 (28/2/53). A signal perhaps that the paper's commitment to the picture strip, until recently so strong, was now in retreat.

There may have been a number of reasons why, after two years, it was decided to return to the large, single picture covers of old, not least being the realisation that the 'Hotspur' was never going to be able to compete as a sort of pseudo picture paper with the likes of Hulton Press' 'Eagle' or even the AP's 'Lion' without a much more radical change in format. A change that Thomsons, for the time being at least, were simply not prepared to make and certainly not if it meant alienating what it had left of the loyal readership it still had as a story paper.

Aesthetically of course it could be argued that returning to the single picture cover had decided advantages in its own right. An example being that it may have been more arresting to the eye of a young lad with a few pennies to spend, when displayed on the newsagents counter, than the cramped, uniformly rectangular panels that Thomsons used in their picture strips. The single picture cover also allowing the editor the freedom to advertise an exciting incident from a different story every week, something which a picture strip that ran for three months or more singularly failed to do. After all, if you did not get a young lad's attention with a motor-racing cover one week you might just get it with a football or western one the next. Whatever the actual whys and wherefores may have been, suffice it to say, from this point on, the 'Hotspur' never published another cover strip.

Inside the paper the first new picture strip of 1953 was 'The Iron Road to Dixie' (856-865) artist **Jock McCail's** second and last picture strip for the 'Hotspur'. Set in the U.S. in 1860 and owing its origins to a 'Skipper' story from the late 1930's with the same title, it tells the story of how a young railway pioneer, Chet Holt, has to protect his fledgling railroad from destruction at the hands of Mississippi riverboat king Luke Ryder. A riverboat journey down the Mississippi into the Gulf of Mexico bringing us within striking distance of the Florida Everglades and Swamp Creek School the location for the next 'Hotspur' picture strip, a second outing for the roving school inspector 'Great Big Benn' (866-874) again drawn by **Bill Holroyd**.

Like the ancient Greeks the Thomson story paper editors and their readers were always keen on stories that involved a quest of one sort or another, be it for treasure, revenge or whatever. Each instalment usually bringing the hero, or heroes, one step nearer their goal, unless of course it proved to be either particularly popular or unpopular in which case the quest would be expanded or truncated depending upon the circumstances.

Just such a quest tale had been the 'Skipper' story 'Vengeance for the Singing Sword' and now this was revived as a picture serial for 'Hotspur' simply titled 'The Singing Sword'

(875-883). Illustrated by **Ron Embleton** 'The Singing Sword' featured a young Roman warrior named Spartacus who sails the length and breadth of the Mediterranean searching for the nine pirates who not only killed his father but who also each acquired one of the fabulous rubies that had ornamented the hilt of his sword, the weapon of the title, which when swung through the air in a certain manner audibly cleaves the air and sings its 'song of death'.

Like **Jock McCail** before him artist **Robert Macgillivray** drew only two picture strips for the 'Hotspur' and the second of them was 'King of the Coastguards' (884-892) in which the hero of the title, Larry King, works out of the port of Highville, California where he encounters a gang of drug smugglers, the Chinese Black Tong, led by the ruthless Fu Chow.

Most readers of the 'Collectors Digest' will be familiar with the 1936 Magnet Xmas series featuring the sea-going vessel 'The Firefly' but perhaps not so familiar with the floating school of the same name that was the backdrop for most of the action in the last 'Hotspur' outing for 'Great Big Benn' (893-896), as before, drawn by **Bill Holroyd**. The school inspector, enviably, embarking from Newhaven, Florida on an educational cruise of the Caribbean.

The next three 'Hotspur' strips were all drawn by **Ron Smith** but beyond that had little else in common. The first was 'Chopper Grant - the eyes of the Alaska Highway' (897-910) a tale set in Canada during World War II. Like many a Thomson hero before him the title character was a Mountie but, unlike most others, his mode of transport wasn't a horse but a helicopter, his job being to patrol the newly constructed Alaska Highway, the main supply line between the U.S. and its air bases in Alaska.

Once he'd done with Chopper Grant **Ron Smith** then turned his hand to a character that had made his first 'Hotspur' appearance two years before, 'Karga the Clutcher' (911-920). In his original 'Hotspur' series in 1952 this old 'Skipper' character had been a secret agent for the United Nations during the Korean War but here we find him in more parochial mode in Clarion City U.S.A. helping to track down a gang of villains in animal masks.

After Karga tamed the Clarion City menagerie the final **Ron Smith** strip in this sequence was 'The Return of the Falcons' (921-932) the medieval tale, not only of a young nobleman raised from infancy as a young woodcutter's son, but also of a lost birthright restored.

Like Karga, another old 'Skipper' hero who turned up in more than one 'Hotspur' picture serial was the masked western lawman 'Leatherface' and here in the second of his three 'Hotspur' adventures (933-937), all drawn by **Jack Glass**, he was roughly in the same territory as that covered in the earlier picture strip 'The Iron Road to Dixie' as he tries to prevent a railway company from having its line sabotaged by a rival.

Leatherface, having sorted out the problems of the Union Rail Company in Dustpan, Texas, gave way, in turn, to 'Black Lightning' (938-946) drawn by **Ron Smith** and 'Ruler of the Mighty River' (947-954) drawn by **Jack Glass**, both strips having scripts culled from earlier stories in the 'Skipper'.

In the former, Black Lightning is a fleet-footed Zulu warrior employed as a King's Messenger by the British Commissioner in the Ngoma district in Africa while, in the latter, the 'ruler of the mighty river' is Gantry, a renowned frontiersman, with the river in

question, once again, being the Mississippi in the 1860's. Gantry was employed to protect settlers using the river as a staging post on their journey west.

Decidedly frostier climes than those patrolled by Gantry then turned up in 'The Whale Hunters' (955-966) illustrated again by **Ron Smith**, the hunters of the title being a gang of piratical crooks who establish a hideout in a dummy iceberg in order to waylay vessels of the Antarctic whaling fleet and rob them of their precious cargoes of whale oil.



1—A rifle shot rang out from a tower-shaped iceberg, one of the many spread throughout the Antarctic Ocean. The bullet hit Brett Nelson, and he slumped over the conning tower of his midgeet submarine. Brett, a scientist working for the British Whaling Co., had been searching for the mysterious robbers of whale oil from the British factory ship, Panther. The iceberg was a dummy!



2—The tower-shaped iceberg was the hide-out of a gang of modern pirates. They were the men who had raided Panther. The dummy berg bristled with guns, and contained all sorts of amazing equipment. The crooks were out to rob the Antarctic whaling fleets of their whale oil, worth millions of pounds. The white-cloaked marksman who had shot Brett now slid open a panel to reveal another crook.

Although in the 1950's **Bill Holroyd** did a considerable amount of illustrative work for the Thomson boy's story papers the main outlets for his work were still the firm's comic titles 'Dandy', 'Beano' and 'Topper' and his next strip for 'Hotspur' could have sat just as easily within their pages. This was 'Toothy Gynn - the Football Clown' (967-983), a single page strip, in which the buck-toothed hero, along with his animal pal Jimpy the Chimp, puts his talents with a football to good use in his guardian's circus. Maybe David Beckham should have popped along to see Jerry Cottle!

When a plot idea worked well, quite reasonably, the Thomson story paper editors weren't ashamed to use it again and again, sometimes tweaking the various elements to form rather exotic hybrids in the process. Just such a hybrid was **Ron Smith's** 'Hammerhand' (984-1000) in which the eponymous hero was a mixture of Glasgow Harry of 'The Smasher' fame and Karga the Clutcher. Hammerhand was a construction engineer on a railway in Africa who happens to have a special steel gauntlet attached to his damaged right hand. This prosthetic gives him the power to wield 'the world's mightiest punch', a talent which he puts to good use when he finds his native workers being kidnapped and forced to work as slaves in a goldmine by a gang of crooks. Kidnapping then also featuring largely in the last 'Hotspur' round-up' for 'Leatherface' (1001-1014) as the lawman tries to save the son of his friend from the clutches of the Mexican bandit. Black Gomez, before saddling up and riding off into the sunset.

Another versatile artist who, like **Bill Holroyd**, did most of his work for the Thomson comic papers and the 'Dandy' in particular (including over twenty years on 'Korky the Cat') was **Charles Grigg** and it was he who provided the artwork for the first three instalments of the next 'Hotspur' strip 'Hoppy the Hobo' (1015-1021) with the

remainder being drawn by **Bill Holroyd**. This was a comedy western strip in which Hoppy was the resident odd-job man in the town of Red Gulch, Arizona and it proved popular enough to return in a second series (1032-1040) in which Hoppy's mule, Tarzan, is captured by a tribe of Indians who believe him to be their tribal idol come to life. This second series was **Bill Holroyd's** last picture strip work for the paper.

Sandwiched between the two 'Hoppy the Hobo' series came 'The Sea Hawk' (1022-1031) the last 'Hotspur' strip to be drawn by **Jack Glass**. Although set in the same Elizabethan time frame this strip was in no way connected with the **Rafael Sabatini** novel of the same name. Instead it tells of how a young English nobleman, Sir Mark Denbigh, is charged with taking a suit of silver armour as a gift to the King of Italy only to be shipwrecked and captured by the Caliph of Madgar en route. The Caliph only allowing Denbigh his freedom and the return of the armour, piece by piece, in return for him ridding the Mediterranean shipping lanes of a band of pirate chiefs.

Next we come to the only out and out picture strip to feature Red Circle School 'Numb Ned's Dream Chair' (1034-1039) drawn by **Albert Holroyd**. This being an adaptation of a prose series that had appeared in 1950 in which Numb Ned Newton the champion sleepyhead of Red Circle tries to acquire the ultimate easy chair by selling things for local shop owner Mr Binks. The first episode of this strip had been published under the byline 'Here's what you've been waiting for, a Red Circle story told in pictures' but apparently readers weren't as convinced as the editor would have hoped as this Red Circle strip wasn't followed by any others during the 'Hotspur's' story paper lifetime.

After a continuous run of some six years the last regular 'Hotspur' picture strip was a final effort from **Ron Smith** titled 'Invasion Target - Earth' (1041-1056). Set in 1970 it told how British test pilot Link Mason, while test flying the latest supersonic fighter the Sampson PX42, encounters the Nertons, an alien race with plans conquer the Earth.

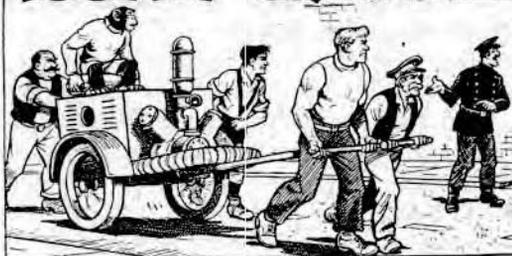
Once 'Invasion Target - Earth' ended in Feb 1957 it would be more than a year before another picture strip appeared in the 'Hotspur' and this was 'The Story of Wild Bill Hickock' (1116) the first in an intermittent series of one-off strips that had originally appeared in the U.S concerned with the Wild West and its heroes and drawn for the most part by **Fred Ray**. The remainder of the strips in the sequence were 'Buffalo Bill - the last of the great frontier scouts' (1118), 'The story of Wyatt Earp - the Fighting Marshall 124), 'The Building of the Union Pacific' (1126), 'The Pony Express'(1128) and 'Custer's Last Stand'(1129), these strips being something of a foretaste of all those true-life western strips that would grace the front cover of the revamped 'Hotspur' picture paper in the 1960's.

And so, finally, we come to the last 'Hotspur' picture strip of all, or at least the last in its original story paper format 'Pep-talk Polonius - the maker of Gladiators' (1150, 1152-1154) in which Polonius has the comically unenviable task of knocking into shape some ropery recruits at his gladiator school in the time of the Emperor Trajan, the scripts for this strip having come from Polonius' original 'Hotspur' text appearance in 1940 as illustrated by **Dudley Watkins** The art for this picture strip version subsequently being provided by **Ted Rawlings** an artist who, in years to come, would become a stalwart of the Thomson boys picture papers.

In the late 1950's the 'Hotspur', like its other Thomson storypaper stablemates, found itself in trouble. What were once its greatest assets, the masters and pupils of Red Circle

# TOOTHY GRYNN

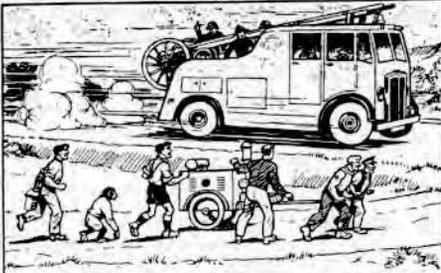
## GRANDFORD FIRE STATION



Toothy Grynn, who did a super football act in a circus, was out on a practice drill with the circus fire-fighting team. As they passed the local fire station, the firemen teased at them. "They wouldn't put out a burning match," they chortled.



Toothy and the others ignored the taunts, and returned to the circus. Later that day, Toothy spotted smoke rising from a farm beside the river and he quickly gave the alarm.



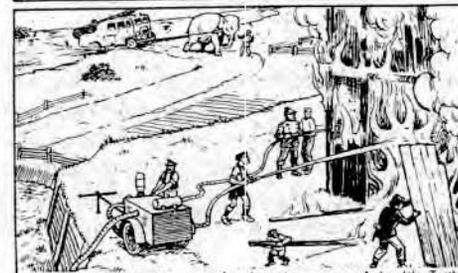
The circus fire-fighting team formed up and made for the farm. On the way, the big fire brigade whizzed past them. "Want a lift?" yelled the firemen.



But Toothy and his pals soon caught up with the fire engine! The wooden bridge over the river had collapsed under the weight of the heavy vehicles, and now the firemen were stuck!



With the bridge out of action, the circus team had to find a way across the river. Toothy raced back to the circus and soon returned with a "bridge" — Jumbo the elephant!



Jumbo didn't take long to carry the circus team across. And, while Toothy and the others tackled the fire in the farm barn, the elephant hauled the big fire engine on to dry land.



The circus team kept the fire under control until the brigade came along and put out the blaze. "We owe you an apology," the firemaster said to Toothy and his pals. "You have a first-class team of fire-fighters!"

School, had had to be abandoned due to a marked diminution of interest in the school story and its sales were on the slide. Something clearly had to be done and Thomsons, forever cautious, decided the best solution all round would be to test the viability of producing their own home-grown stock of picture papers by first converting one of their story paper titles into a comic for boys. This solution being decided upon in the hope that they would gain a whole new band of readers excited by the 'New Hotspur' format but still retain what was still left of those fans of the original storypaper who might still feel willing to buy the 'Hotspur', whatever its content, on name alone.

Now in light of this it may seem strange that, in the last ten months of its life as a boy's story paper the 'Hotspur' didn't print a single picture strip and give its readers some taste of what was to come. But even so there was some method in this apparent 'madness'. While it may have been with a degree of conservative reluctance that Thomson's had been forced to convert one of their story papers into a picture paper they were also aware that the onus was still on them to go further and promote it as something new and different. If the 'Hotspur' had continued to publish picture strips right up to the end then the 'New Hotspur' may have seemed a whole lot less 'new' and a 'Newish Hotspur' wasn't likely to have the required impact.

So it was that No.1 of the 'New Hotspur' appeared on 24th Oct 1959 seamlessly rising from the ashes of the original story paper that had ended its run, after 1197 issues, the previous week, and the gamble paid off, the 'New Hotspur' not only surviving but prospering and living on for another twenty years and 1110 issues in its own right. But that's another story.

Next, we begin to chart the picture strip history of the Thomson boy's story paper that, in its time, would publish more picture strips than all the others put together, 'Adventure'.

*(Illustrations copyright D.C. Thomson)*



**SALE:** Greyfriars Book Club: 4, India Series £45; 5, Tom Merry's Schooldays £20; 9 The Boy From The Underworld £28; 36, The Sixth Form Rebellion £10; 74, A Lesson For Ponsonby £10, All VG with slip cases.

Howard Baker Gems: Complete Run (20 vols). VG with D/Ws. £60.

Schoolgirls Own Library, 1<sup>st</sup> Series. Fine apart from rusted staples (removed): 621, 637, £5.00 each; 2<sup>nd</sup> Series, good/VG copies: 319, 322, 347, 357-8, 360, 363, 366-9, 372-3, 378-82, 384, 392, 399, 401, 403, 405, 407: £1.00 each.

Sexton Blakes, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series. Good: 215, 257, 260, 264, 267-9, 271, 277, 281, 285, 291, 294, 307, 314, 335: £1.00 each.

The Popular (New Series). Vg copies: 463, 469-74, 476, 479, 481-7, 492, 501-2, 516, 519, 523, 529: £1.50 each or £30 the lot.

Nelson Lee Library, 3<sup>rd</sup> New Series, complete run of 25 copies, good: £25.

Postage extra. No reply if sold. REG ANDREWS, 80 Greenwood Avenue, Laverstock, Salisbury, SP1 1PE.

# FORUM

## From JOE ASHLEY:

I enjoyed Bill Bradford's Article "I Remember". I too recall the *Boys' Cinema*. Although I did not often purchase it, I seem to remember seeing a copy of the *Girls' Cinema*, which to my amazement featured Frederick March's *Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. I was surprised that it was considered suitable for young girls. This must have been about 1932. Like Bill I lived in West London, in Hammersmith and we too had six local cinemas. My father had a Radio and Record shop at that time and he supplied records to be played in two of our local cinemas. In exchange he had an advert slide on their screens and also received complimentary tickets of which I, of course, took full advantage.

I too remember getting adults to take me to A Certificate films. We little thought of the risk we were taking. To be sure I always, whenever possible, asked a man and woman together. Looking at Bill's list of *Boys' Cinema*, I was gratified to see that many of his films I have managed to video.

I thought the reproduction in *CD* of the cover featuring *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* was excellent. Reading his article I realize what I have missed in not taking the *Boys' Cinema*. Thank you Bill for stimulating my memory.

## From ERNEST HOLMAN:

Readers of my generation may be interested to know that Stratus Books have republished fifty-six Edgar Wallace stories in paperback at £6.99 each. I have been able to complete a few gaps in my collection.

Many thanks for current issue of *CD* – thank goodness you are able to keep things going.

## From MARK TAHA:

I just found out something that may be of interest. It seems that, in 1909, G.K. Chesterton wrote a short story called "The Modern Scrooge" – and the title character was named Mr. Vernon-Smith. The Bounder and his father first appeared in the *Magnet* in 1910. I wonder... Smithy had a lot in common with "Demon" Scaife from Vachell's "The Hill", published in 1906. Did Hamilton possibly get the idea for the character from Vachell and the name from Chesterton?

## From COLIN PARTIS:

In answer to Betty Hopton's request for the address of the *Sherlock Holmes Magazine*, I telephoned the details to her.

As she suggested in her letter, other readers may be interested to have the address, which neither myself or Derek Hinrich, who also wrote about it in the *C.D.*, gave. It is (for subscriptions dept): SHERLOCK HOLMES, THE DETECTIVE MAGAZINE, SUBSCRIPTIONS DEPARTMENT, PMH PUBLICATIONS, P.O. BOX 100, CHICHESTER, WEST SUSSEX, PO18 8HD. Telephone 01234 576444).

### From HORACE DILLEY:

I was interested in Arthur F.G. Edward's comments in his article "Nelson Lee and ESB" (September issue).

The *Magnet* was my favourite. I quite agree that some of the writings were pretty far fetched. The eating capacity of Billy Bunter may have been terrific but hardly to the extent that was often recorded. The whacks he received and the kicks he endured must have made his bottom perpetually sore. His ventriloquism was a little bit difficult to believe. The *Gem* I agree, was more in keeping with reality but as a result it often lacked flare and imagination and was sometimes rather dull.

The "Nelson Lee" stories often stretched far beyond any semblance of reality. But, having said all that ... we loved the stories and we couldn't get enough of them!

We were young in those days. Our youthful minds loved to fantasize. Our life was before us and perhaps it was that the stories gave us a spirit of adventure. The characters portrayed in these school stories were absolutely superb. The variation of temperaments gave a firm impression that the writers knew human nature. Looking back, I can fit quite a number of the characters in the scholars I then knew. These tales made entertaining and often educational reading and Frank Richards and Edwy Searles Brooks deserve our grateful thanks.

Looking back, how clean the stories were! No sex, no swearing, and by and large the vast majority of the characters showed respect and were very well behaved. So clean were the stories that I cannot ever recall the toilets being mentioned! I wish such fiction was being written today.

Congratulations on your quarterly publications. They are superb.



### ROOKWOOD: A CHRISTMAS PRESENT FOR AN OLD CURMUDGEON

by Ray Hopkins

Mr. Manders, the grim-visaged, unpleasantly-mannered Housemaster of the Modern House, was hardly likely to be the choice of any of the Classics at Rookwood as the receiver of a handsome mantelpiece clock which had cost the End Study's Fistical Four the magnificent sum of two whole pounds. At the time of purchase they had no intention of its ever leaving the Classical House. Nicely wrapped with white string in brown paper, the closest thing they could come up with for Christmas wrapping, they had intended it as a gift to show their appreciation for their own Housemaster, Dicky Dalton, a vastly different man from Manders, whose cheery friendliness helped the juniors to get through the dreadful pressure of learning that was their daily lot at the Hampshire school.

But Mr. Dalton, somewhat embarrassed by the Fistical Four's enthusiasm for him, had dashed cold water on their friendly scheme by saying that it was quite impossible for him to accept presents from his boys but, observing the disappointed looks on their faces, had hastened to assure them that he greatly appreciated their good opinion of him, but unfortunately ... So, Arthur Edward Lovell, whose ideas were never greeted with chirrup of joy by Jimmy Silver, Raby and Newcome, had promptly put it to them that the clock, having cost them what it had and being wrapped so nicely, could not go to waste but

should be presented to Mr. Manders, if only to heap coals of fire on his head for giving the Classics such a hard time whenever he came into contact with them.

Howls of rage from the other three and even louder abuse in return from Lovell made the inmates of the nearby studies throw their eyes heavenwards. Another row in the End Study, hardly the thing on the day before breaking up for Christmas which the four were all spending, as usual, together.

THE ROOKWOOD CHUMS IN JOYFUL MOOD!



# LOVELL GETS THAT CHRISTMAS FEELING!

BY OWEN CONQUEST.

Although following in the Hamilton tag line tradition, the Famous Five and the Terrible Three, among themselves the Fistical Four's rows were noisy but not combative physically. Shouting that it was HIS Christmas present that he was going to give it to WHOMEVER he wanted to, Lovell flung out of the End Study in more high dudgeon than he usually generated after the others shouted that it was their present too and they forbade giving it to an old grouch like Manders. As soon as the door slammed behind Arthur Edward they regarded each other with some dismay. They'd hurt his feelings now and had better call him back and give in to him.

But Lovell had disappeared and the three remaining Fistics ran down the passage alerting a certain somebody that the study was now empty. The whole passage knew of the gift clock. Leaving it in full view on the study table was a huge mistake as the four would discover later. As the villain of the piece observed its vulnerability to attack he softly uttered, "Ah, hah!"

After thirty minutes, having tramped all over inside and outside of the school, the three returned to the End Study baffled as to where Lovell could have hidden himself. But a glorious smell of hot buttered toast wafting beneath the study door told them that the fourth member had, in fact, returned before them, and the sight of a large plate of poached eggs and the broad smile on the angry one's face told them that all was forgiven and they could be chums again.

Over the sumptuous repast Lovell tells them that they are quite right about not giving the miserable Manders a Christmas present. But the other three demur. "If he was ready to let them have their own way, they were determined that he should have his own way. Lovell was not going to have the genial spirit of Christmastide all to himself."

Meanwhile, what of the person who was to be presented with the magnificent mantel clock? Mr. Manders had, in fact, just been presented with another Christmas gift, a token of regard from someone unknown, a person who had disappeared into the shadows as soon as the snowball he had buzzed in Mander's direction had knocked flying the Housemaster's hat. As his own juniors were all in mortal terror of him, or so he thought, the thrower undoubtedly must have been one of those unruly and disrespectful Classical boys. Mr. Manders glanced out of his study window in the direction of Mr. Dalton's House and his eye fell upon a junior approaching with a box beneath his arm. That insubordinate boy Lovell, of course. It must have been Lovell, that disrespectful young rascal. Good heavens! Mr. Manders, letting his imagination run riot, cast Lovell in a role, which would have surprised that cheerful youth, as a nervous supplicant, approaching the eminence to offer an apology for daring to... Mr. Manders almost danced with glee at the thought that he would be able to march the offender back to his own house and make a very enjoyable protest to Mr. Dalton of the unparalleled outrage perpetrated by one of his boys. Mr. Manders grasped a cane in order to get one out in before escorting the young scoundrel back to his own House, and retribution.

Mr. Manders appeared to have guessed correctly. Here indeed was Lovell at his door. Lovell had not only come to apologise; he had also brought a peace offering. The Modern Housemaster lowered his cane. Most awkward! He could hardly cane, not even once, someone holding out a package to him! Manders, in a daze, heard Lovell stammering, "We hoped, sir, that is, my study and I, that you would accept this present, as a mark, sir, of our esteem and good will at Christmastime." Mr. Manders was totally unable to smile his thanks. It had been many years since a smile had found the need to exercise any of his facial muscles, and even more for a tear to tremble on his lower lashes. "Boys, whom he had disliked, had thought kindly of him at Christmas, had clubbed together to buy him a little present as a token that they realised their own faults and his many virtues; really it was a pleasing reflection."

Mr. Manders proceeded to open the parcel, removing the string, unfolding the brown paper and lifting the lid of the box disclosed within. Lovell, watching the Housemaster's face for a hoped-for twinkling eye denoting pleasure, was disconcerted by the awful look of displeasure that he was confronted with, by the torrent of words of anything but gratitude. He also realised that a brand new timepiece should not smell as through it had been purchased from a fish shop and allowed to age inelegantly elsewhere. Dark-hued kippers caught his eye as he stepped forward to regard the interior of the grit box, fish which had left their happy world of salt water many, many moons ago.

Manders found a use for his cane at last and pursued Lovell, the cane slashing wildly around his shoulders as far as the front door opening on to the quadrangle and there the raging volcano that was Manders left him.

The rest of the End Study were flabbergasted to hear of Mander's base ingratitude when the fourth member, totally out of breath and aching all over from the furious lashings, burst in upon them. When told of the miraculous change from clock to kippers, one name leapt to their lips. Who but that supreme practitioner of Ye-Olde-English-Public-School-Jape but ... As if summoned by magic the End Study door opened at this moment and the cheerful face of the most celebrated japer at Rookwood stood revealed, innocently inquiring as to Manders' undoubted pleasure at unexpectedly receiving the handsome clock. Putty Grace stood looking from one to another wondering at their frozen

silence and observing the lowering brows and formidable frowns that gathered upon their faces.

With a roar of fury Lovell was upon him. Later, Putty not only regretted the bashing but rather more that he had not thought of perpetrating the switch himself. He mentioned this regret up and down the passage, all of which contrived to keep the rest of the studies in a high state of amusement until bedtime. Oddly, nobody owned up to being the clever perpetrator and they all departed Rookwood the next day, bound for their various homes for the Christmas break.

While changing trains at Latcham Junction, Jimmy Silver and Co. were surprised to be wished all the best for the season by Cyril Peele, a Knut and always in opposition to the Fistical Four. Speaking particularly to Lovell he informed that junior that he'd be glad to help him again with another present for Manders – perhaps on his birthday. Along with the expected howl of rage, Lovell threw a furious punch through the open window. But it was too late. The train was moving and Peele gave him a cheery wave. Lovell simmered and comforted himself by imagining Peele's distressing appearance when the punch – and the rest – would land on Peele next term.



"Good-bye, old bean," said Peele mockingly. "When you make any more Christmas presentations don't forget to ask me for help!"

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(The above first appeared in weekly BOYS' FRIEND, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, No. 1280, 19 Dec 1925, and was reprinted in the POPULAR, 2<sup>nd</sup> series No. 568, 14 Dec. 1929. The illustrations by G.W. Wakefield, are from the reprint.)



**FOR SALE:** Kinema comics, Wild West Weekly. Pre-war penny comics, Mammorth American import books: 'The Funsters', Western Books, Hollywood Musicals and Universal Pictures books. All contain about 700 pages. Many other film books, Picturegoers, etc. LARRY MORLEY, 76 St. Margaret's Road, Hanwell, London W7 2HF. Tel. 0208 579 3143.



## FRANK RICHARDS' CLIFF HOUSE

by Margery Woods

No 1 Of A Grand School Story paper!

The Arrival of Bessie Bunter!

An Incident From The Girls Of Cliff House; Complete In This Issue.

So read the announcements on the cover of THE SCHOOL FRIEND of May 17th, 1919 accompanying the blue, white and red illustration of a very fat bespectacled schoolgirl and her parrot as she was met at the station by two slim and pretty schoolgirls whose expressions held just a hint of doubt and wariness. As well they might!

The brand new paper was devoted mainly to the adventures of the Fourth Form girls at Cliff House School, penned by a certain Hilda Richards, whose name would become synonymous with a host of appealing schoolgirls who would become like friends to young readers all over the world.

To many of these readers the school and characters in the new paper were fresh and strange, but those readers whose brothers read THE MAGNET (and who graciously allowed their sisters to borrow it when they'd finished with it) the name of Cliff House was not new and Bessie Bunter was instantly recognisable as the sister of Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School, so much so that some readers, perhaps the plumper ones, were not altogether happy about this fat girl who had such greedy habits and was a figure of fun. (Their comments to the Editor were duly noted.)

The first story of the arrival of Bessie, complete with an evil-eyed parrot, has been well documented. Soon Bessie was rounded off--if not in weight--and while humour inevitably surrounded her, by the end of story three Babs and Co were telling Bessie that she was not the fat little horror she pretended to be, a rather tactful way of pointing out that Bessie would change her ways and eventually become a member of the Co. She had "got them out of a licking" and they present her with a bag of jam tarts and offers of a cake. Bessie is on her way...

There is still uncertainty as to how many of the first Cliff House stories Frank Richards wrote for THE SCHOOL FRIEND before editorial policy decided that the sheer pressure of work made it impractical for him to take on the new girls' paper permanently as well as his other commitments on THE MAGNET and THE GEM. Some say he penned the first eight, others the first six, others only the first four; whichever, the foundations of the independent Cliff House were well and truly laid down in those first stories. Many of the characters leapt to life from the pages, in particular Miss Bullivant, who is there complete on the very first page of the first issue, stalking down the corridor with a frying pan stuck to her rear after she inadvertently sat down on a chair in Study No 7, unaware that the chair was already occupied--by the pan of toffee Dolly Jobling was unsuccessfully concocting.

But Cliff House went back a lot farther than May 17th 1919.

The girl who would become one of the most popular Cliff House characters was first introduced in 1908, in the fifth issue of THE MAGNET. This was Marjorie Hazeldene, and by the end of the first year of Greyfriars Cliff House School began to be linked with Greyfriars. By May 1909 Cliff House actually invades Greyfriars, much to the surprise and shock of the boys. There is something amiss with the foundations of Cliff House's

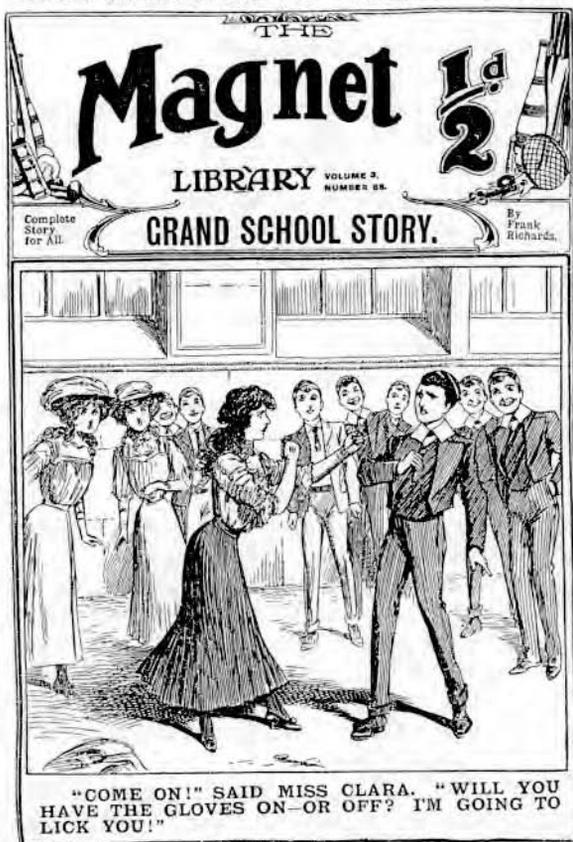
building so until the architects sort out the problems some thirty girls would be staying at Greyfriars. They join the classes too, and the account of Mr Quelch's new teaching experience is sympathetic, touching and humorous. Clara is established as a very modern girl, pugnacious as well as spirited, to the extent of threatening to lick Bulstrode---the biggest bully in the Remove---with or without gloves. Of course even Bulstrode realises that he can't fight a girl and is thoroughly humiliated as he has no option but to apologise for his rudeness to the girls.

This was a three part series and, as well as a great deal of japing, contained drama when the girls break out at night and Marjorie ventures over the wall to buy tuck for a feast. She encounters a tramp in the dark lane but fortunately Harry Wharton is also out

on a bounds-breaking expedition to tell a bedtime story to the sick child of a nearby cottager. So he is in the right place at the right time to rescue Marjorie, and on their return to find the tramp about to burgle Greyfriars.

Marjorie was undoubtedly the author's favourite girl creation, and so very early on in THE MAGNET the boy-girl relationship was established. First Harry, then Bob. Christmas 1909 finds the chums at Wharton Lodge while Marjorie and Clara were at Hazeldene's place nearby, so the chums spend a great deal of time together over the hols, including fun with a Christmas pudding competition to see who could make the best---and the worst!---pudding. The results were weird as well as uneatable and the various secret acts of sabotage caused more contenders for the booby prize than the best. Needless to say Marjorie and Clara won the prize with their joint effort, and Bunter's cement offering took the booby---a shilling monkey on a stick to which the chums had contributed threepence each.

## 'THE INVASION OF GREYFRIARS!'



Throughout the next three decades Frank Richards developed and deepened the friendship between Greyfriars and Cliff House. Bessie entered the fray quite often, as did Clara, Miss Primrose, Miss Bullivant and other members of the girls' school. But it was Marjorie Hazeldene who took precedence. The emotional content was strengthened as the misdeeds of her weak brother tested her loyalty and that of Harry and Bob. The Bounder, after a disgraceful start which involved the despicable Ponsonby of Highcliffe, became a third devotee of Marjorie and like Bob, risked trouble for himself in his efforts to prevent her from total disillusion over Hazeldene.

This all made compulsive reading and balanced the antics of Bunter, who was one of those who would hog the pages if not kept on a tight rein. Many authors at some time discover they have created a character who would take over the action if allowed to. Fortunately Bunter's usefulness outweighed the irritation some readers experienced when more anxious to get on with the story. But Richards timed it all perfectly: just as Bunter's antics threatened to go over the top, drama and emotion broke in until crisis came and suspense became almost unbearable. Then Bunter would erupt into the action and bring the relief of laughter.

This relief, however, was somewhat strained in the story of Bunter the Masher. Suddenly Bunter took a shine to Marjorie Hazeldene. His imagination took fire. Of course he wrote to her. Of course she wrote to him. But a chap doesn't kiss and tell. When Bunter took a pride in his new fashionable appearance the chums were almost convinced by Bunter's claim to secret meetings with the delectable Marjorie. Skinner was convinced and planned to capture a photograph of the apparently ardent couple meeting on the cliff top and Bob Cherry was almost beside himself with worry. How could she? She'd always disliked Bunter. Yet when she handed him a letter and asked him to give it to Bunter because she'd missed the collection at Friardale he had to admit what must be the ghastly truth.

He couldn't give his mind to anything, not even footer, and mooched about moodily on his own. Later, Bunter was flashing a postal order with triumphant smirks, but his studymate, Peter Todd, who was of a very astute turn of mind, had been watching and thinking. He also has a good memory and he discovers the truth.

Bunter has told Marjorie that her brother, away from Greyfriars at the time, owes him money and he has an I.O.U. to prove it, which he doesn't really want to send to Hazeldene's father. So Marjorie has paid up in yet another effort to keep her wayward brother out of disgrace. And she has also unwittingly let Bunter score a second boost to his appalling vanity. But after the reckoning Bunter must have wondered if it had all been worth it. The Remove gave him the choice of going to the Head to own up to fraud or a flogging from them, which he unwillingly chose as the slightly less of two evils and for which the Remove borrowed the Head's birch. And Bob had dealt with Skinner and the would-be paparazzo's photo negative. The sun had come out again in Bob's world; he was happy again.

This story showed Bunter at his most despicable. Bunter was many things. Crafty and idiotic, thieving yet thoughtful of his mother, boastful but ignorant, and above all greedy. But this was unforgivable.

After the secession of Cliff House and Greyfriars enforced by the Second world-war it seemed that Cliff House was unlikely to return. But Frank Richards had other ideas. In

1949 the hardback series published by Charles Skilton issued BESSIE BUNTER OF CLIFF HOUSE SCHOOL.

A lesson in French opens the story, with Richards back in full strength as he exploits all possibilities when he introduces Bessie, a huge pear, the French language and the long-suffering French mistress. Bessie, mouth crammed, owns to having a pear in her desk.

"Two!" accuses poor Mademoiselle, and dual meanings have to be sorted out until Bessie is forced to consign that pear to the delectation of the waste-paper basket.

Sorrow does not help Bessie's ever shaky translation efforts. It entertains the class, but not Mamselle.

"Assez! Assez!" she shrieks.

Bessie blinks indignantly. "Miss Bellew doesn't call us names in class," she squeaks. "And Miss Primrose wouldn't like us to be called asses---"

Collapse of class!

But soon the action is transferred to Greyfriars where brother Billy, who had promised to take his sister to the circus, had been gated by Quelch. Marjorie's brother was in dire trouble again and had run away, to take refuge in the potting shed at Cliff House, and Marjorie had to get food to help him.

Bessie, on learning that the circus treat is off, vows vengeance on Mr Quelch, a somewhat dangerous course of action. Getting herself into his study where she plans 'to deal' with him, she notices a registered letter lying on his desk. She decides to hide it behind his bookshelf. A vengeance that would have far reaching consequences for Marjorie and her scapegrace brother.



Smaack! Hazeldene gave a wild yell as Bessie Bunter's fat hand smote his face. "Bessie!" shrieked Marjorie Hazeldene. "I'll smaack him again!" exclaimed Miss Bunter, dancing round the enraged and dismayed Hazel. "I'll give him porpoise! I'll give him fat little beast!"

Hazel's selfishness, thoughtlessness and jealousy (of his sister's regard for Bob Cherry) are all strongly characterized in this situation, as well as his trait of emotional blackmail, which is always present in the Greyfriars stories when Harry, Bob and Smithy are drawn

into yet another scrape because they can't resist Marjorie's pleas for help on behalf of her brother, nor do they wish to be the messengers of truth about his shameless exploitation of his sister's care.

Frank Richards' characterization of these five principal characters has all the perception, psychology and grip of an adult novel. Perhaps it is this quality in his storytelling, combined with his effortless flow of humour and his talent for sheer action which holds the secret of his continuing popularity with all who discover his writing today, forty years on.

Impossible not to wonder why he didn't pursue the adult market for further worldwide fame. But the answer is simple. He wrote for youth. He loved youth. And youth loved him---right through into adulthood.

Most of all he wrote for the honour of Good.

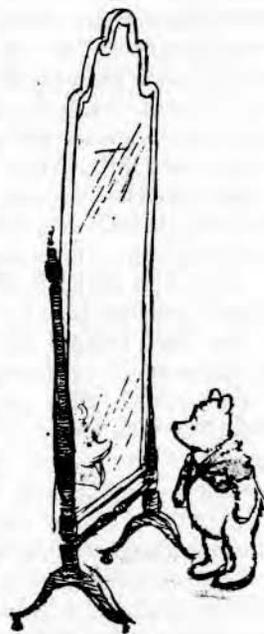
Long may his memory live on.



## BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS - AND AFTERWARDS by Mary Cadogan

At this time of year there are lots of nostalgic books around in the shops, and it can be bewildering to choose what to buy. However, careful browsing often shows that some of the offerings deal only superficially with their subjects, although the packaging of the books in question might be very attractive. I have tried here to select books which I feel will give long and lasting pleasure - for adults, sometimes for children, and sometimes for the whole family.

First on the list of books which I would be asking Santa to deliver to me would be **THREE CHEERS FOR POOH** by Brian Sibley (Methuen £14.99). This is aptly subtitled 'A Celebration of the Best Bear in All the World' and it marks the fact that Winnie-the-Pooh is now 75 years old. It is a bumper book, crammed with gorgeous illustrations which have been chosen with much care. The text, as all who know Brian Sibley's work will surmise, is meticulously researched, and written in a lively and appealing style. This is a book for the whole family, and it is a real treasure. The author knows and loves his subject and provides wonderfully interesting background to A.A. Milne's saga of Pooh and Christopher Robin, as well as a fine literary assessment of it.



Kenneth Grahame's **THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS** seems to be reprinted every year with illustrations by a different artist. We now have a handsomely produced version with glowing, full-colour pictures by that very distinguished illustrator, Michael Foreman. Published by Pavilion Books at £14.99, this - like **THREE CHEERS FOR POOH** - is a

much a family's as a children's book. The type is large and easy to read: the book is "coffee-table" in size, and Michael Foreman's pictures echo the engaging quality of Kenneth Grahame's eternally appealing narrative which, unusually is here complete and unabridged.

The fourth in the series of La Rochelle books by Elinor Brent-Dyer, SEVEN SCAMPS, has now been reprinted by the Friends of the Chalet School. Like its three predecessor volumes it is a well-produced paperback, and its card cover carries an extremely attractive illustration by Nina K. Brisley. There is an informative introduction by Ann Mackie-Hunter and Clarissa Cridland which sets this adventure in context in relation to other books in the La Rochelle series, and also to Elinor Brent-Dyer's celebrated Chalet School stories. The introduction also gives chapter and verse about the covers and illustrations of earlier editions of the book. This reprint includes the black-and-white interior pictures by Percy Tarrant, drawn for the first edition in 1927. It says a great deal for these reprints that, although I sold off all my hard-back La Rochelle books some years ago, I am now happily re-collecting this bright and beautiful paper-back series; SEVEN SCAMPS is obtainable from Friends of the Chalet School at 4 Rock Terrace, Coleford, Bath, Somerset BA3 5NF.

A book which may haunt the reader long after he or she has put it down is TIME AND AGAIN by Margaret Moncrieff, published by Bettany Books at £9.99, and available from them at 8 Kildare Road, London E16 4AD. Margaret Moncrieff is better known to book-lovers as Helen McClelland, who wrote a biography of Elinor Brent-Dyer and other books dealing with her works. She is known in the musical world as the cellist Margaret Moncrieff, and has probably chosen to write this book under that name as it has a strong musical theme. It is both a mystery and a strongly atmospheric ghost story. It would be a pity in this review to spoil the surprises and mysterious happenings of the book. Let me just say that TIME AND AGAIN is a touching and not-to-be-missed novel in which the potent ingredients of elusive memories, great music and a 'haunted' old turret room link young people from very different societies and periods. The deftly handled time shifts satisfyingly convey the atmosphere of both the late 1930s and the present day.

Many C.D. readers will be acquainted with David Schutte's four books about the young adventurers known as The Naitabals. This mystery series, now reprinted, includes two new titles, GHOST ISLAND and DEAD MAN'S CHEST. The author has produced two further stories of sleuthing and suspense, SAM AND THE U.F.O. and SKELETONS IN THE ATTIC. These are not part of the Naitabal series but they are equally readable. SKELETONS IN THE ATTIC is certainly one of the best mystery tales I have read during this year. After the death of his mother Peter begins to discover strange things about his early life and background. Helped by his sturdy chum Joe he gradually unravels the secrets of the 'skeletons' which the two boys find in the attic. There are many challenges before the mystery of Peter's true identity can be established, and David Schutte describes the boys' painstaking efforts in detection as vividly as all the adventurous happenings which befall them. All these fine-value paper backs (they are £5.00 each) can be obtained from Junior Genius, 93 Milford Hill, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP1 2QL.



## NEWS OF THE OLD BOYS BOOK CLUBS

### CAMBRIDGE CLUB

For our October 2001 meeting we met at the Cherry Hinton home of Adrian Perkins.

We held a short business session which incorporated the AGM for the 2000/2001 session.

The afternoon's talk was "My Early Wireless Memories: Part 1, 1948" with Tony Cowley. Radio imagination: This was a magic lantern show in sound, Using many tape excerpts Tony conjured up memories of the time. For a four-year-old youngster the wireless was a daily schedule of sounds superimposed on a weekly schedule of sounds.

Sounds recalled included: The Greenwich time Signal/Big Ben/The Shipping forecast/Radio Newsreel/Bells Across The Meadows[the interlude]. The era's variety and comedy shows/the dramatic presentations/the musical programmes: Workers' Playtime – Much Binding In The Marsh – Dick Barton – Twenty Questions.

To enhance our enjoyment of the sounds Tony circulated the BBC Handbook for 1948 and a period Radio Fun comic. ADRIAN PERKINS

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

A large and cheery crowd of members and guests attended the September Annual Luncheon at the Brentham Sports Club, Perivale.

It was, as always, a high-spot in the Club's programme and we were delighted to welcome our special guests, Una Hamilton Wright and Ernest Dudley, and of course our President, John Wernham with Gail Root.

At the conclusion of the excellent meal, Bill Bradford proposed a toast to the Club, including Absent Friends. Chairman Norman Wright then proposed a toast to the guests, to which Una Hamilton Wright responded. Our Luncheon Party this year commemorated the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Charles Hamilton: Mrs. Hamilton Wright spoke of the sadly small attendance at the funeral on that day of bleak and bitter weather. Touchingly she commented that she liked to think of our friendly and jovial gathering as a more adequate wake for Frank Richards, albeit forty years on.

After the toasts, many of us moved on to Bill Bradford's home to enjoy his warm hospitality, and more friendly chat.

The October meeting was held at Yateley W.I. Hall.

Bill Bradford gave an interesting talk on the Bath Magnet club, which had celebrated the works of Charles Hamilton and other authors as far back as 1939.

Roy Parson's Quiz was won by Mark Taha; Norman Wright's 'Collector's Item' was the *Boy's Own Magazine* of June 1965 which he confessed was 'incredibly boring'. Alan Pratt gave a talk about footballing, red-Indians and novelty foreigners from *The Champion*, and Roy Parsons won the Quiz set by Eric Lawrence, who is now sadly unable to attend our meetings. The programme ended with an intriguing talk from Norman Wright on *Scoops: The Story Paper of Tomorrow*. Apparently this paper was in advance of its time, it never caught on and ran to only 20 issues.

Hosts Ann and Roger provided a splendid tea and were warmly thanked for their hospitality. VIC PRATT.

## NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

There were two very different presentations at our September meeting. Paul and Mark Galvin talked about the 3D Viewmaster. Collecting the Viewmaster and reels is very popular in the USA and also has enthusiasts over here.

Joan Coleman gave the first talk in a series about Edith Nesbit. She was born in 1852 and was bullied at school. Being highly imaginative she was frightened after seeing the 'Mummies' of Bordaux.

Joan read from 'The Enchanted Castle' and 'The Would Be Goods'. We are all looking forward to part two. PAUL GALVIN

Twenty of us assembled on the occasion of our Annual Luncheon at "The Ascot Grange" Hotel, Headingley, Leeds on Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> October. Our special guests were our President, Mary Cadogan, and our speaker, Professor Jeffrey Richards of Lancaster University. We were also delighted to have with us Gillian Baverstock – daughter of Enid Blyton.

After a very informal but delicious lunch, we assembled in a separate room to listen to Jeffrey Richards present a most excellent talk – "Lancashire stars of Screen and Radio". Normally, the word "Lancashire" would not go down well at this side of the Pennines!. Jeffrey presented an extremely well researched and lively talk – of course, mentioning such stars as Gracie Fields, George Formby and Norman Evans. Illustrated by audio cassette recordings, this made a most entertaining presentation.

To finish off the day, after some relaxation at the hotel, 15 of us had seats at the world famous City Varieties Theatre, to see a splendid presentation of "The Good Old Days", thus rounding off a most memorable day. JOHNNY BULL MINOR.

At our A.G.M. in November all the Club's Officials were re-elected and plans were discussed for next month's Christmas Party.

We had a sneak preview of next year's programme which looks very exciting even though there are a few gaps to be filled. Our Secretary then read from the November minutes of 50 years ago when the Club had the sum of £4 in the bank. We all agreed that party of January's meeting will include a book sale. PAUL GALVIN.



**WANTED:** Boys Friend Weekly, Jan-June 1917, nos. 812-838. Derek Smith,  
14 Crescent Lane, Clapham, London, SW4 9PU.





Terry Wakefield

OUR GRAND CHRISTMAS NUMBER

THE RAINBOW 2



HONEY FOR FATHER CHRISTMAS

Illustration by [unreadable]

No. 201. Vol. 8.

December 15, 1917.

"Hurry, hurry! These things for Father Christmas!" cried the little boys, their voices loud. "Hurry we go round the Christmas tree!" And what a lot of toys they had! "I'd like a football, please!" said Dicko. Mrs. Smith says he had to have his shoes as well!

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Editor: Mary Cadogan, 46 Overbury Avenue, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 6PY

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