

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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The Story Paper

Collectors'

Digest



WITH HIS SHOULDERS SUPPORTED BY SOFT CUSHIONS
WE FIND HIM REPOSING ON THE SOFA
A LAZY, YAWNING SCHOOLBOY LORD
WHO RICHLY DESERVES THE TITLE 'LOAFER'
APPEARANCES ARE SO OFTEN DECEPTIVE
IS A MAXIM WE SHOULD ALL BEAR IN MIND
NO KEENER BRAIN EXISTS AT GREYFRIARS
NO SCHOLAR WAS EVER MORE KIND
SO LET'S DRINK A TOAST TO JOLLY OLD MAULY
MAY HIS SHADOW NEVER GROW LESS
WITH HIS CHESTERFIELD MANNERS & BREEDING
AND HIS IMMACULATE WAISTCOAT & DRESS!

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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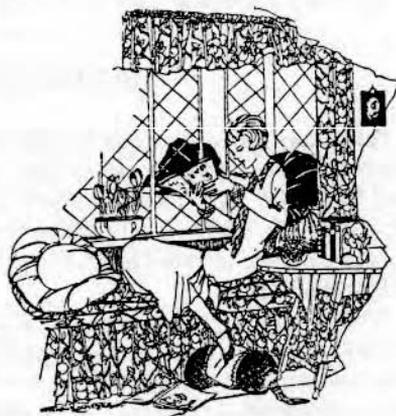
CAUSES FOR CELEBRATION

At their April meeting the London Old Boys Book Club celebrated the fact that John Wernham has been its President for 40 years. At the home of John's Museum Press (and his Clinic and College of Osteopathy) in Maidstone, members gathered for a truly glowing meeting. Lavish and luscious 'tuck' was provided by our wonderfully welcoming hostess, Gail Roots, and by Audrey Potts, whose fine iced cake carried a Bunter picture by Bob Whiter which is reproduced here.

There were many tributes to John's presidency, and to the authors - particularly Frank Richards - who have inspired the creation of the Club. (Andrew Pitt's contribution is included in this issue of the C.D.)

The London club has been fortunate in its Presidents. The first holder of this office was Frank Richards, and John Wernham has followed ably in his distinguished footsteps. Thanks and gratitude are due to John, not only from the London O.B.B.C., but from hobbyists all over the world who relish the publications of his Museum Press.

The year 2002 gives us further cause for celebration - our Queen's Golden Jubilee. As a tribute to her I have included this month a copy of Philip de Laszlo's 1930s portrait of



her. This was used as the frontispiece of the PRINCESS ELIZABETH GIFT BOOK (a volume published in aid of the Princess Elizabeth Children's Hospital). This included a great range of contributions by illustrious writers and artists. I have also included pictures of the Greyfriars juniors celebrating the Silver Jubilee of the Queen's grandfather, King George V, and the Coronation of her father, King George VI. This pictorial tribute can, perhaps, not only celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II but mark those two recent and deeply saddening events, the passing of Princess Margaret and of Elizabeth, the Queen Mother.

MARY CADOGAN



BOOKS TO LISTEN TO

CSA Tell Tapes (at 6a Archway Mews, 241a Putney Bridge Road, London, SW15 2PE) have produced two move audio-cassette collections which will appeal to CD readers. Edward Hardwicke (who played Watson to Jeremy Brett's Holmes in the TV series) reads 10 CLASSIC DETECTIVE STORIES in fine style, and with great flexibility of mood. Authors represented include Doyle, Chesterton, C. Day Lewis, Colin Dexter, Sax Rohmer and Edgar Wallace.

Martin Jarvis, popular with so many of us for his *Just William* cassettes and broadcasts, reads Kipling's PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS and does full justice to the fun, passion and mystery of these vivid stories of India during the British Raj. Each collection comprises 4 tapes and can be ordered from CSA Tell Tapes at the address given above.

HOW I BECAME A HAMILTONIAN

by Andrew Pitt

No doubt some people appreciate James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. But the London OBBC of which John Wernham has been President 40 years has a taste for a lighter and a happier literature. We at the club have many interests in common. I very much like Sherlock Holmes; somehow, though, it would be wrong to describe myself as a Sherlockian. But I do describe myself as a Hamiltonian and I will tell you why, and as someone who did not read the *Magnet* as a boy.

I'm not in *Who's Who*, but in that unlikely event, as a joke for those in the know, I might well put Greyfriars down as my school. There aren't many days when I don't think about the old school. I wonder if the editors would pick it up? Someone once asked me what I was reading at that moment. I said I was re-reading some Greyfriars stories. 'Greyfriars? Oh yes,' he said dismissively 'they're stories about a fat boy, aren't they?', thinking he had totally summed them up. How little he knew.

The hero of the Greyfriars stories is not the fat boy Billy Bunter but Harry Wharton, as you all know. I didn't always know it. As a youngster I had a few Armada paperbacks all entitled '*Billy Bunter and.....*'. Such was their pull, their magnetism, that I regularly re-read them. But by the time I consciously realised their hold on me Bunter books had disappeared from the shops. One day in my twenties I discovered a lot of Cassells in a second hand bookshop. I acquired them and more, and they were kept on a shelf near my favourite chair and I used to look lovingly at them and think contentedly to myself 'The World of Greyfriars is all within my grasp'. How little I knew.

The moment came when I discovered a Howard Baker volume. What on earth were these stories? Ah, I recalled that in the front of the *Armadas* it mentioned the *Magnet*. I was surprised to learn that the magazines had survived to be able to be published in facsimile. I was then amazed to learn that Howard Baker had at that stage published 70 volumes. Far from having the complete Greyfriars, I was 70 volumes behind in Howard Baker terms. Eventual direct ordering from the publisher led me to discover there was also a so-called book club series; I was about 70 volumes behind there too and not only that, there was this other school St Jims I knew nothing about. So this Hamilton wrote about 2 schools. I never thought I would acquire all these volumes but one led to another-I wanted another one to read. Next stage on the journey was Mary Cadogan's book which told me amongst many other things that Hamilton had written about a few more than 2 schools! This period was a Dr Who-like experience of opening a door and finding an enormous room full of treasure, which most people just didn't know existed and at the far end is another door. Go through it and you have the same experience and on and on. You lose track of the geography and time, just like the world of Greyfriars. I then discovered the CD and realised I was almost 50 years behind! But I eventually obtained a reasonable run and of course thereby found out a lot about the history but it was of necessity disjointed from the short articles written over the years. Finally I found that book called '*A History of the Gem and Magnet*' by Eric Fayne and Roger Jenkins, published of course by John Wernham's Museum Press. When I had read that book, everything fell into place. If you have read that book **you** can claim to be a Hamiltonian. The journey is not quite over yet. I joined this club. That's how I got here today.

I said that Harry Wharton is Hamilton's hero. These stories are Harry Wharton's Schooldays. Roger Jenkins perceptively points out in the *History* that Harry is a completely credible character because he's not perfect. His stubbornness and pride are the

fault. People have affection for Tom Merry; they have respect for Wharton. Tom Merrys are extremely rare. It's probably the Harry Whartons of this world that keep things going: reliable and completely dedicated. But sometimes I feel that Harry is a little too good. Perhaps Hamilton felt the same and so he developed that most subtle character, Vernon Smith. Smithy reformed, but unlike Levison, never quite fully reformed. 'Mr Quelch' wrote an article in the 1936 *Greyfriars Holiday Annual*; in it he said this about Vernon Smith: 'Probably the most interesting boy in my form. This tempestuous young man has given me more trouble than the rest of the form put together. He is an extraordinary mixture. Rebellious, undisciplined, hard and cynical.... He is yet capable of admirable devotion to duty, self-denial and unflinching heroism when occasion demands. I am a little prejudiced against Vernon Smith... yet I cannot help admitting that his vital aggressive personality and acute brain may carry him to heights which none of the others can reach.'

That degree of characterisation also took Hamilton to heights that none of the others could reach. Someone did say that Charles Hamilton had the Homeric gift of characterisation. I could go on. I could talk about Mauly for example, and I don't have time to go to St Jims this afternoon. But hold on. What about that fat boy? Am I one of those people who say that I like Greyfriars but not Bunter?

Bunter is one of the great comic characters of **all** time. What an invention! How many authors have a character the equal of Bunter? And in making that assessment, consider also classic authors. For me these stories have many attractions but above all it is the humour which marks out these stories and it is Bunter who is the source of most of it. With him in the story, humour can never be far away.

Consider the following scene, abbreviated a little for space reasons:

'For the sake of your relatives, Bunter, I shall not send you away from Greyfriars,' said the Head. 'I have decided therefore to administer a flogging.' The Head paused. Doubtless he expected Bunter to look immensely relieved.

'I-I - ' began Bunter.

Dr Locke waved his hand.

'You need not thank me, Bunter' he said icily.

'I-I wasn't going to, sir - '

'What?'

'If you please, sir, couldn't you make it the sack?'

'Make it the sack!' repeated the Head dazedly.

'Yes sir, you see I - '

'Boy! Do you mean that you prefer to be expelled from the School?'

'That's it, sir!' said Bunter eagerly.

'Are you in your right senses, Bunter?'

'Yes, sir! I mean - ' Bunter stuttered - 'I mean, I'd rather go home, sir! You see I should have a few weeks at least before I was sent to another school and I might get into a better school than this - '

'A-a-a better school than Greyfriars!' gasped the Head.

There is no better school than Greyfriars. I read my first proper Magnet in my twenties- it is an adult appreciation of the stories. Am I really too old to be reading them? That was another thing to be discovered: no age is too old to be reading Charles Hamilton.



NOSTALGIA IS BETTER THAN IT USED TO BE

by Tony Glynn

Our old friend the late Denis Gifford was the man who put the concept of the "nostalgia quotient" on the map. He did not invent it, of course, it appears to be something we are born with and it certainly intensifies with advancing years. Some, perhaps, only discover it as they grow older but I recently concluded that mine began to function early in life. I was certainly nostalgic for the nineteen-twenties when I was only 12. The curious thing is that, being born in November 1929, just as that roaring and dancing decade was gasping its last, I had no real memory of the era.

The *Nelson Lee Library* was to blame. That, too, is curious because that handy-sized weekly expired in 1933 when I was far too young to know it at first hand.

I explained in these pages long ago how, one day in 1942, I discovered a cache of *Nelson Lees* in the emporium of Syd, who sold second-hand periodicals near my Manchester home. This was at a time when juvenile publications had been badly hit by the wartime paper shortage. Many had disappeared and the remaining ones, with trimmed-down page counts, were appearing fortnightly. My favourite, *The Magnet*, had gone and was badly missed for I devoured the Greyfriars yarns. Making the most of what was available, my nostalgia quotient was on overtime when I mused on the pre-war age, when the world was full of juvenile weeklies, fat with good things.

Then I found the handful of *Nelson Lees* among Syd's hoard of books and magazines. They dated from 1928 and 1929. I had never heard of the magazine before but, from their covers, I knew at once that this was the stuff for me. Syd was asking a penny a time for them so I joyfully handed over the whole of my very meagre treasury for half a dozen or so and returned as soon as the financial position permitted and bought the rest.

The nostalgia quotient is going full tilt when I think of the yarns by which I gained a firm acquaintance with Handforth, Church and McClure, Nipper, Nelson Lee, Archie Glenthorne and the rest. There was *Handforth the Detective*; the Christmas series of 1928, with the obligatory ghosts; the return to St Frank's under false colours of the disgraced Bernard Forrest; a marvellous yarn in which Handforth is badly smitten when he helps a pretty girl in distress on the tube, and some of the school train series of 1929 in which the juniors travelled the country. I can now see this series as a circulation booster because I know that the little magazine was in failing health. There were some of the 1929 Australian cricket tour stories and one lone number from the 1927 great flood at St Frank's series.

This revealed to me how different Edwy Searles Brooks was from my earlier hero, Frank Richards. He did not in the least mind visiting a disaster upon the dear old school. I was to learn that, in fact, he had a fondness for putting the St Frank's chaps into the midst

of disasters, lost civilisations and adventures in fantastic regions, making Harry Wharton and Co look like cosy stay-at-homes.

So, there I was, in the middle of the war, wallowing in these tales from the twenties at every opportunity. The very decade took on a rosy glow when viewed through those pages. I imagined all was peace at that time and life must have been wonderfully expansive. The young ladies, frequently shown in the illustrations, wore short skirts and cloche hats and were clearly flappers just as my mother was a flapper who married in 1928 in a stylish white dress of almost mini-length, white stockings, white high-heels and a very becoming bridal veil. There was manly elegance in that fabulous time, too. Take Archie Glenthorne, for instance. What a twenties type he was with his sartorial splendour, his drawl and his monocle. My meeting Archie was my first encounter with the languid fashion-plate of the Bright Young Thing generation to be met later in the pages of PG Wodehouse and my fellow Mancunian Michael Arlen.

Archie had quite an effect on me. I went in for painful spasms of trying to be the wag of the form in those days, doing an Archie-inspired toff act using a large brass curtain ring as an eyeglass. When did you last see a brass curtain ring?

I felt I had the edge over my schoolmates when it came to reading matter. Oh, the current popular fare - mostly found in the Thomson papers - *The Iron Teacher*, *Strang the Terrible*, *Red Circle School* and the rest, was entertaining enough but I was certainly the only boy in the school who had his own time-machine, giving entry to long vanished St Frank's College and the glorious nineteen-twenties and I dwelt there as often as possible.

The flavour of the stories differed from contemporary boys' fiction and, indeed, from that of the Hamiltonian school stories issued from the same stable. ES Turner has described Brooks' writing as "brisk", which I think is the apt term. One was always carried along by a St Frank's yarn.

At St Frank's we were among the upper-crust, of course, in an atmosphere quite unlike that of my secondary school yet I always felt that my schoolmates and I would rub along easily with the chaps of St Frank's. The college seemed much less stiff than the Hamiltonian schools and more proletarian, not that Brooks - he who penned the famous "Communist school" series - ever preached anything resembling socialism. His masters appeared less stuffily Victorian than Charles Hamilton's beaks.

There was a friendly rapport between author and reader unique to the *Nelson Lee* and, for me, one of its great attractions. Brooks' chatty column was always headed by a photo of a reader and its tone gave me a feeling of being linked as by a time-machine to those Leeites of the golden twenties. They all seemed to be my kind of people: boys and girls from Lancashire and Yorkshire, the East End of London and Norfolk, Edinburgh and Cardiff, Cape Town and the Australian outback. We all might in spirit dwell in the ancient, ivy-clad walls of St Frank's and stroll together across the Triangle but there was not a snooty toff among us. And, of course, we all shared a huge sense of adventure.

How could it be otherwise when our housemaster was the distinguished detective Nelson Lee, and the dashing and inventive Lord Dorrimore might at any minute come bounding into our lives, introducing some revolutionary new mode of transport in which to whip us off into who knew what realm of danger?

There was a family feeling about this link between Edwy Searls Brooks and the young readers in the twenties which communicated itself across the years to me in the war years of the forties. Many a year later, when I became part of the family which had the

Collectors' Digest at its centre, I had contact by correspondence with one of those whose portrait had appeared at the head of Brooks' column, dear old Jim Cook. Jim was a London boy, later of New Zealand, who was a Leeite to the last. For years, he returned in spirit to the old college and entertained us with his regular *Letter from St Frank's*.

Another, whom I met in person, was John Russell Fearn, who by that time was a well-established professional writer, specialising in science-fiction. In the early thirties, he became the first Englishman to make a really big impact in the American science-fiction magazines and he always paid tribute to the influence of Brooks on his writing career. A second Leeite who went on to a literary career was a boy from British Guiana, Edgar Mittleholzer. It was with real sadness, that, several years ago, I read in a newspaper that this member of the old St Frank's family had died under very tragic circumstances.

Today, I have a substantial collection of the *Nelson Lee Library*, including all the numbers I found in Syd's shop so long ago. There they are: little magazines containing the work of a man who toiled on a weekly treadmill to keep up the wordage but made friends the world over as he did so.

Every time I look at them, I have to revise the old saying that nostalgia is not what it used to be. In fact, it has become much more powerful than ever.

Iron In The Soul II The League of the Green Triangle by Mark Caldicott

In the recent series looking at Brooks' Iron Island and Brotherhood of Iron serials I suggested that the themes laid down here had a lasting influence on much of his later work. I also suggested that from Brooks' own account of the birth of the Iron Island there was a strong possibility that the basic idea had come from the *Gem* editor, Percy Griffith.

Since writing that series I have, with the help of a fellow NOBBC member, Chris Scholey, had the opportunity to read those episodes of the serials I had not previously tracked down. This included the very first few episodes of the serial commencing in *Gem* 144 (12-Nov-10). The surprising result of my reading was the conclusion that not only was it possible that the idea for the stories was not Brooks' own, but that the scene-setting episodes of the story were not actually written by Brooks at all.

Some time ago, in correspondence from the much missed Bill Lofts I received a cryptic comment which, unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to follow up before Bill's death. Commenting on the *Gem* stories he wrote:

According to AP records the first Frank Kingston story was penned by A.B. Burrage – a well known writer "The Chained Death" No 206 but much later on, in No. 250 E.S.B replaced his missing tale in the famous "Nobody's Study" DXN by Charles Hamilton.

It is not easy to determine exactly from Bill's words which Frank Kingston story Burrage contributed, but it could well be that he was referring to this first ever episode. Therefore it is possible that the scene-setting writer was A M Burrage, a writer now best known for his story "Poor Dear Esme".

In *Gem* 144 (12-Nov-10) we are introduced to Philip Graydon, marooned on a desert Island. Graydon is a castaway, but one who displays astonishing powers. He has a well-

developed physique, with a walk which makes light of the toughest terrain, is unaffected by the tropical sun and has extraordinary strength. We learn that eight years previously Graydon became a member of the council of a society, The Brotherhood of Iron. Having done so he discovered that the Brotherhood was in fact an organisation of criminals and threatened to expose the whole concern to the police. The Brotherhood usually dealt with such threats by death, but wanting to capitalise on his prospects of wealth they took the alternative measure of transporting him to the Iron Island, where the Brotherhood stored their ill-gotten gains, until such time as he agreed to return to marry and to sign over his wife's wealth to the Brotherhood. So Graydon is marooned alone on the island with no hope of rescue. A hurricane drives a ship way off the normal shipping routes and a man is washed up onto the Island. His name is Frank Kingston. Graydon does his best to restore him to health but, too badly injured, he dies and Graydon conceives of the idea of taking his identity to protect himself from the Brotherhood should he manage to escape.

So far this could be a Brooks story, but then the scene switches to Paris where an actress Dolores de las Mercedes, is claiming she is the rightful Queen of France. This is not going down well with the Republican Government, particularly as Dolores is gaining a following. We learn that in fact Dolores is not French but a British actress who has hit upon a novel publicity stunt. However, her royalist claims are causing unrest in the country and, after she escapes an attack from an Anarchist bomb, the French government try to persuade her to drop her claims. Dolores refuses to do so and is kidnapped by the government and taken to a remote island where she is left in the hope that she will, through threat of isolation, change her mind.

The island on which Dolores is marooned is, of course, the Iron Island and Graydon soon discovers her existence. Between them they trick the visiting Brotherhood member, Don Sebastian, and escape to begin their battle with the Brotherhood which I have already described in some detail in the previous series.

There are features of the Paris episode which sit uneasily with Brooks' usual style. It does have the feel of an older, more cynical, more streetwise writer. The heroines or featured females in Brooks's pre-war stories are always portrayed as gentle and well-mannered. Apart from avoiding errors such as using "de las" in a French name, ESB would not portray a female who is manipulating the public by such misrepresentation and is expressing no concern that she is causing political unrest. Nor does Brooks tend to use politics in his plots. The feel of the whole Paris episode is not ESB. It is indicative that once Brooks has taken over the serial, the character of Dolores evolves until she is indeed the gentlewoman of the Brooks canon.

The conclusion, therefore, is that this story, so influential on Brooks' whole career, was taken on by ESB only after the basic foundations had been laid. If it is the work of an older writer, however, then this may also rule out A M Burrage, who was, like Brooks, only 21 at this time, although he was not so new to the game, having already been a professional writer for four years.

The *Gem* serials "The Iron Island" and the "Brotherhood of Iron" absorbed all Brooks' writing energy for nearly a year. The hasty conclusion of the serial in August 1911 therefore left him without regular work. He did not resume work of such regularity until the birth of the *Nelson Lee Library* in 1915. He was not without work during this period - a number of St. Jim's stories and some very short Frank Kingston stories appeared in the *Gem*, and two *Union Jack* stories and a series of Clive Derring tales in *Cheer Boys*,

Cheer kept his pen active - but the work was spasmodic. The *Nelson Lee* provided the opportunity Brooks was hoping for and, possibly wanting to recapture that early success, he persuaded the controlling director, Willie Back, to run a series in which Nelson Lee tackles the League of the Green Triangle.

Recapturing a basic plot idea is one thing; lifting a whole scenario is another. Moving forward to *Nelson Lee Library* OS 23 ("The League of the Green Triangle", 13-Nov-15) we are introduced to Douglas Clifford. Clifford has become a member of the council of a society, The League of the Green Triangle. Having done so he has discovered that the League is in fact an organisation of criminals. He visits the house of Professor Zingrave, the leader of the League and requests release from his oath. Although Zingrave appears to agree with his wish, in fact he arranges for Clifford to be kidnapped and imprisoned in Strathrie Castle, situated in the remotest part of northern Scotland. He is to remain there until he reveals how he has hidden his fortune.

Five years later. Nelson Lee and Nipper accept an offer from Colonel Addison to cruise around the coast of Britain in his yacht, the *Iris*. They are off the coast of northern Scotland when they sight a fire. Arriving at the scene they find a tramp steamer ablaze and heading for the shore, apparently to try to beach itself so that it will not sink. As it nears the shore the crew desert and the ship explodes, demolishing the wall of a building. The building is Strathrie Castle and by chance, the collapsed wall allows the imprisoned Clifford to escape from the place he has been forced to inhabit for all these years.

Clifford is picked up by Colonel Addison's yacht and tells Nelson Lee his story. He vows to take his revenge on the League, and Nelson Lee pledges his support. Clifford changes his appearance to look much older and the fight against Zingrave and the League of the Green Triangle begins.

Also in a parallel to the Iron Island series, Lee saves the life of a Triangle member, Martin Caine, who pledges his allegiance to Lee and is a valuable spy in the League camp.

NO. 23.—FOR READERS OF ALL AGES.—1⁰. If you prefer
America, 13, 1915



From what has been said, one may well expect that having established an almost identical scenario. Brooks would have adapted the episodes of the original serial to the Nelson Lee stories. In fact, this was not the case.

While all the main Iron Island characters (with the exception of the inventor, Professor Palgrave) had counterparts in the Green Triangle stories, the relationships were significantly changed to adapt to the Nelson Lee format.

The role of consulting detective played by Carson Gray had been a supporting one. Now, with Nelson Lee, it takes the centre stage with Nipper also taking a central role compared with the more peripheral boy assistant role taken by Tim Curtis. The female interest comes with a new twist. Instead of Dolores we have Vera Zingrave, a true Brooks female, the innocent step-daughter of Zingrave with whom Clifford is in love. Most importantly the super hero characteristics of Frank Kingston are not carried into the Douglas Clifford character. Clifford has no special powers. Brooks puts these into storage for a few months until he dusts them off for the first appearance of Waldo.

As far as the stories themselves were concerned, these are by no means simple reissues of the *Gem* episodes. It is true that occasional episodes bear resemblance to the earlier ones, but most are original.

And if the Brotherhood of Iron's leader, Lord Mount-Fannell, was a relatively nondescript character, this cannot be said of Professor Zingrave. The development of the Professor Zingrave character was an inspiration which I will explore in more detail in the next article.

FOR SALE: Pre-war Thomson boys papers. *Rovers, Wizards and Skippers*; £5.00 plus postage per copy. Also *Gems, Populars, Magnets, Modern Boys, and Union Jacks*; £2.00 plus postage per copy.
BEN BLIGH, 55 Arundel Avenue, Hazel Grove, Stockport, Cheshire, SK7 5LD.

FOR SALE: The Sexton Blake Detective Library. Vg, £8. Vintage Detective stories. Vg, £7. Crime at Christmas Sexton Blake, vg, £9. Popeye, Mike Higgs, near mint £10. The Big Fat Bunter Book, vg, £8. Star Trek Action, mint, £10. Dandy and Beano History of Fun, mint, £5.50. Comics an Illustrated History, near mint, £10. The International Book of Comics, D. Gifford, large soft back, no d/w, vg, £8. The Legend of Lord Snooty, mint, £5.50. All with d/w unless stated postage at cost, please send two 1st class stamps for larger list. J. DINING, 41 Harbottle Court, Byker, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE6 2AH. Tel. 0191 2761140.



THE NAME'S THE SAME - AGAIN

by Derek Hinrich

Sometime in the last millennium I contributed a piece to *Blakiana* in which I referred to the fact that over the years different contributors to the saga of Sexton Blake had used the same titles for their stories. When one remembers how long *The Union Jack*, *The*



THE
SEXTON
BLAKE
LIBRARY
No 203.

70

The MAN
FROM
CHINA

Sexton Blake Library, and *Detective Weekly* ran and the number of copies of each issued, let alone the other publications in which Blake's adventures appeared, it is perhaps not so surprising that there was some title duplication.

There is, however, one instance that is surely unique, where the same author used the same title twice for contributions to the *Sexton Blake Library* within ten years of each other. I know that in the course of the second series of the *SBL*, several first and second series stories were re-issued but this is not the case in this instance: the two novels are, apart from their title quite different.

The books are respectively *SBL2/722* and *SBL3/203*, both by Anthony Parsons and both entitled *The Man From China*.

The first was published, I think, in June 1940, and the second in, presumably, November 1949. *The Sexton Blake Library* had given up dating its issues some time before the first *Man from China* was published.

Both these stories are vindications of Bret Harte's dictum:

"That for ways that are dark
And for tricks that are vain
The heathen Chinese is peculiar"

at least when his conduct is subjected to the eagle eye of Sexton Blake or, to a lesser degree (naturally) to that of that Beau Brummel of the Yard, Superintendent Claudius Venner who represents official law and order in both novels. Now Venner is one of my favourite characters in the saga and, at Parsons's best, a figure of high comedy, and there is never any suggestion that Venner is "bent" – a publicity hound and a chancer, yes but "bent", no – yet how did he manage all those Savile Row suits, Lobb shoes. Lock hats, and Asser and Turnbull shirts and ties, on his policeman's pay? After all, Sherlock Holmes tumbled to the fact that Professor Moriarty was dodgy when he found that the professor had bought an old master painting (a Greuze) when his University stipend was only £750 a year and he had no private means. But we thought nothing like that of Venner. We were obviously less cynical then.

Both stories begin in China and then move rapidly to England for the remainder of the action. Each starts in an atmosphere of chaos. In the first, it is in a part of China infested by banditti disguised as soldiery, the followers of a "War Lord", some of whom pursue an Englishman Home believing that he holds the key to the whereabouts of a vast treasure, the property of a rich merchant whom they have murdered by over-enthusiastic torture. In the UK the plot is thickened by the activities of a dubious accepting house, or bucket shop. There is fraud, murder, drug-smuggling and a distribution racket. There are dark deeds off the Channel coast, and trouble with the blackout for the time is clearly that of the "Phoney War"

There is in fact rather a lot of plot: there usually is in Parsons's books. But Sexton Blake soon sees a chink of light through this web of Chinese mystification. Indeed Parsons uses the term "chink" fairly freely throughout both books. No talk of PC then. It was just a different world. And *The Man From China* Mark I was a very satisfactory ninety-six pages and fourpence-halfpennyworth of blood and thunder. What bargains *The Sexton Blake Library* were!

The 1949 story is another matter.

Once again we begin in China in turmoil, with an old Chinahand, a mini-hong, in flight from a fractious mob, and escaping by the skin of his teeth aboard a coaster bound

for Hong Kong, while his bungalow and godowns blaze behind him. This merchant, Thomas Cramer, is ruined but help is at hand; for a fellow refugee aboard the ship is an Eurasian, Thorpe Yellin, a man with an egocentric belief in himself and with vast political ambitions for the future in China. Yellin believes he can achieve his grandiose dreams with the help of his uncle, a rich merchant and successful receiver of stolen jewellery in Limehouse.

The period of this story is curious. Late 1949 was the time of the collapse of the Kuo-Ming –Tang government, its flight to Formosa, and the Communist victory in the Chinese Civil War. But the setting cannot be contemporary for the action following Cramer and Thorpe Yellin's flight to England is spread over a little more than four years. I suppose it is set like Dornford Yates's "Chandos" novels in 192- or 193-.

To continue, the two, loathing each other, enter into a criminal enterprise in England. Cramer fronts a jewellers in Bond Street selling, after re-cutting and setting, the produce of Yellin's uncle's hoard, the uncle in the meantime having "conveniently" died. Naturally the Englishman, despising his partner as *chi-chi*, cheats him, firstly by leading a double life and secretly establishing himself as a country gentleman in Sussex on their proceeds and then by siphoning off the rest of these abroad (he has some problems avoiding exchange control regulations which is another problem with the time-scale). Then he dies of a heart attack, leaving his relations, who have gathered about him in Sussex, wondering where the money is.

Now enter stage left, Thorpe Yellin, wondering where the money is; and stage right. Sexton Blake, on a retainer from the Inland Revenue, wondering where the money is; closely followed by Superintendent Venner wondering who murdered a bright young Detective Sergeant of the "Met" one dark night in Bond Street outside Cramer's shop, something of which Venner strongly disapproves.

Once again, you see, there is plenty of plot to unravel. Blake, Tinker, Venner, and Venner's "handmaiden" (and hidden "brains") Sergeant Belford, put their heads together and gradually they tease it out. The mystery is solved after many a twist, Venner gets his man; and the Inland Revenue as usual, rather than the family, gets the money.

It is quite a good read but not such a bargain as the 1940 book.

There are, by the way, some limits to internet second-hand book dealers. I looked up Anthony Parsons on one and found a substantial list of his Sexton Blakes for sale, quite promiscuously intermingled with copies of the memoirs of Sir Anthony Parsons, once our man at the UN, amongst other places.

THE GNOMID

by Derek Ford

I think Gilbert Chester would be quite a young man when he first read Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* serial in *The Strand Magazine* in 1901-2. Following in the footsteps of the Hound-haunted Baskervilles family it was in the *Union Jack* for November 23rd, 1929, that he came up with his "masterpiece" (according to the cover) *The Gnomid*, dramatically illustrated by J.H. Valda.

The case starts with star actor, Bertram Warrender, soaking up atmosphere for a new crook play in Li Chun's dockside den. A riot breaks out, there is gun fire and the

lights go out... "The foul crew fight frantically for the door and safety." Finding himself alone, Bertram cautiously snicks on the light to find a roll of canvas, partly unwound, crushed in the late stampede, a portrait of a young woman. He escapes through a skylight with his trophy but on the way, in his taxi, to Sexton Blake he is waylaid and catches a dagger in his shoulder but manages to escape.

Chapter Two finds Bertram at Baker Street, where Blake identifies the dagger as South American Indian work with a queer sort of gargoyle on the hilt. The painting was stolen from Lord Carham's Murwood Manor, an ancestral portrait of Lady Diana by Van Dyck, worth about fifty thousand pounds. A high-speed run to the lonely Fen country, where lay the Carham's ancestral home.

In the portrait gallery they find an empty frame which the canvas fits perfectly. A torn tapestry covers another picture: "Glowing out from a vague, shadowy background was a Thing repulsive, hideous. It was a monstrosity – a squat beast whose dangling, scaly, enormous hands were a travesty of human hands, just as its lumpish, fanged, goggling face was a travesty of a human face....Crouched, bunched together, the revolting, pinkish freak sat in thought – if such a grotesque, mis-shapen organism could think. "Then, from somewhere outside the house, the air was cut by a wild, mortal scream.

On the terrace, lay the dead body of Lord Carham, his shirt front pierced with eight small holes widely space, oozing blood. Claw marks from two monstrous hands. In Blake's torchlight, queer footmarks – weird, bird-like impressions, yet set about a curious, bulbous indentation.

Along the balustrade a shadow shuffled. Squat, diminutive, it might have been a huge toad but for its gait. Bent stiffly forward at an angle, it sped down the coping as on castors. A car races up the drive, from which stumbles the drunken Algernon Westerfield, nephew of Lord Carham, the new peer. Staring at the curse of the Carhams a little later, he wildly declares that he has seen the Gnomid. Then a young girl, panting with terror, hustles through a window fleeing from "that Thing – that Shape", taking a short cut to the station after visiting the Towers, nearby. An actress, Anne Debroy, with the face of the girl in the picture.

Now the butler is telling about "the queer picture" having been painted by Sir John Carham after he went mad. Sir John, the founder of the family fortune, in the reign of James the First, five years in the Americas, returning with a fortune in gold and jewels. And his will placed a curse on anyone who destroyed or disposed of anything he had painted.

In a burning bungalow, where Anne and Bertram have gone for the night, Blake finds the dead body of the new peer: "On his chest were eight great blood clots – the widely spaced puncture marks such as had bored his uncle's shirt front." Bertram has been lured away by a false phone call and Anne is missing.

Back at Murwood, Blake finds a visitor, Conrad Grifstein, from the Towers, claiming the Carham estate after Westerfield had signed it over to him. Just after Grifstein has gone Blake captures a ghastly shape coming through the window behind him in the mirror. Gorilla-headed, grotesquely clawed – the Gnomid, depicted in that old-time painting. "His chair shot backwards at his thrust. It caught the creature full in the legs. And as the claws smote the thing fell sideways, thrashing the air with its frightful nails." The lamp goes over. Something thuds violently against the panels of the door – Pedro to the rescue. Blake leaps for the door, as the foul assailant whisks past in the dark. Twice

Blake fires at it, as it exits. Then Pedros is in the room but gets stuck in the window. A search for it is unsuccessful.

Two items of interest to the case now surface when it is found that Anne Debroy is heir to a small legacy, and that the son of Conrad Grifstein, Mordaunt, has returned from a flying boat trip to find the source of the River Amazon, with a number of interesting specimens of the flora and fauna.

In a thick blizzard of snow, accompanied by Pedro, Blake and the actor set out to check for the Gnomid again. "Ahead, the hound was nosing into the snow, growling and in obvious excitement... Stiff and stark lay the Gnomid." But it was barely three feet high, not wounded. Certainly not the brute of last night which was much larger. They lock their grim find in an outhouse of the manor. Tinker shortly afterwards lands a light plane in a snow-clad field, so that they can survey a mysterious hangar at the Grifstein's place by telescopic lens.

A raid follows on the Grifstein's in which Anne Debroy is found, Mordaunt Grifstein tries to escape in his plane and crashes to his death, and his father is found dead with a poison bottle at his side. And from a cupboard "Out fell a grotesque suit of painted canvas – a weird replica of the monstrous thing depicted by Sir John Carhams' brush. By it lay a pair of leather gauntlets, fitted with long steel talons worked on a strong spring". Hard-up Grifstein used the Gnomid disguise, aided by his son, to speed up his possession of the Carhams' estate. Then another complication arose when Anne Debroy came forward with a better claim. Young Grifstein was hoping to marry her and secure her fortune to him.

Sexton Blake had the rare specimen Gnomid cased and presented to the Royal Biological Association. And presumably the suit went into his Baker Street museum. Conan Doyle never told us what Holmes did with the dead hound.

THE YOUNG FRANK RICHARDS IN FACT AND FICTION

by Keith Atkinson

PART I

I have called this article 'The Young Frank Richards in Fact and Fiction', but the main fact is that we know very little about his boyhood. Frank Richards' own autobiography begins when he was seventeen, at the time when he sold his first story for five guineas, a time from which he tells us he never looked back, but fortunately his various biographers have managed to unearth a few more facts about him.

Charles Harold St. John Hamilton (alias Frank Richards, Martin Clifford, Owen Conquest and many other pen names), was born on the 8th of August, 1876 in a small terrace house at 15 Oak Street, Ealing, the sixth of eight children. His mother was Mary Ann Trinder who had married his father, John Hamilton in 1864 at the tender age of sixteen.

His father was originally a stationer but later, probably for reasons of health, became a journeyman carpenter or joiner. Because of his large family it was necessary for him to be careful with money, but it seems that at times he carried this to extremes and never threw anything away which could be repaired with his tools and his gluepot. He

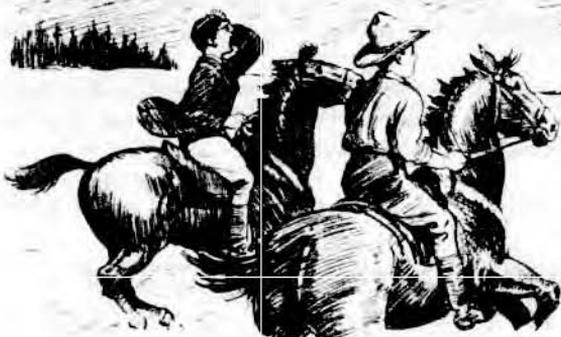
was also a typical Victorian father and ruled the household with a rod of iron. But, although he called for strict economy at home, he was never economical in his drinking, and this, coupled with the fact that he suffered from tuberculosis for the last three years of his life, probably led to his early death at the age of forty-five when Charles was only seven years old.

This led to further financial difficulties, but here his mother's brother (Uncle Walter) came to the rescue, and, as the owner of several houses which he let out to tenants, he saw that they always had a roof over their heads although this entailed several moves when these houses were required for business purposes. Money was also found to send Charles and his elder brother Richard to a 'School for Young Gentlemen', Thorn House School in Ealing (and other private schools). The school was divided into Classical and Modern sides, and was probably used by him as a basis for Rookwood School, which was similarly divided.

**FIRST GRIPPING STORY OF FRANK RICHARDS' SCHOOLDAYS IN THE
BACKWOODS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA!**

A Tenderfoot in Canada!

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.



*Captured by Redskins!
Frank Richards' long
journey across Canada
to his uncle's ranch
ends on a thrilling note!*

Here he learnt French, German, Latin and Greek, and, after he left school, a private lady tutor taught him Italian and brushed up his Latin. Charles was always very bright at languages, a fact which added to the authenticity of his stories in later years when he took his schoolboy heroes to foreign countries or introduced foreigners into the stories, but he never mastered the intricacies of mathematics.

He was always very fond of reading, especially the works of Sir Walter Scott and Charles Dickens, and also avidly read stories of the Wild West and Canada, and it was probably on these that he drew when, in 1917 he commenced writing a long running series of stories about Frank Richards' imaginary boyhood at Cedar Creek School, in the backwoods of British Columbia, in *The Boy's Friend* under the pen name of Martin Clifford.

I do not possess copies of *The Boy's Friend* for this period, but a long series of reprints of the Cedar Creek stories was published in the final two years of *The Gem*, running from July 1938 to October 1939, which I estimate would bring the series up to

about the end of 1918 in *The Boy's Friend*, although the order of publication was probably varied somewhat to fit in with the seasons. Certainly the Christmas story printed in 1938 was not the one published in 1917 and which was reproduced in the *Charles Hamilton Companion No. 5* published by the Museum Press.

We first meet the fictional Frank Richards on board a liner making its way up the St. Lawrence river to Montreal. The steamer has stopped at Quebec and Frank is standing by the rail watching the passengers coming and going, when he receives a sudden slap on the shoulder and, on spinning round he sees a sturdy lad of about his own age. Frank Richards has been known as the fighting man in the Fourth Form at St. Kit's in England, and enters into a fight with the newcomer who staggers back from a punch and knocks flying a tall, baggage-laden American gentleman. The Canadian lad hurries Frank away from the scene to avoid trouble and introduced himself as Bob Lawless. Frank's Canadian cousin, who is to lead Frank to his Uncle's ranch. They land at Montreal and proceed by rail and then by steamer up the Great Lakes, then by train again through the Rocky Mountains, and thence by wagon to Cedar Creek where they spend the night in a ramshackle hotel.



The Redskins rode round and round the two motionless boys, yelling in savage triumph. Frank Richards watched them with fast-beating heart.

Bob regards Frank as a tenderfoot and a greenhorn and tells him that there is to be an Indian rising. Frank regards this as a joke, but when he over-hears other men talking about it in the hotel he begins to take it more seriously, but still agrees to ride with his cousin to the ranch the following day. Frank Richards as we know him seems an unlikely cowboy, but there is no doubt that he could ride a horse. In his autobiography he tells us of the time he rode up the bridge path on Mount Vesuvius and comments that he has "ridden on far tougher trails", though where and when he learned to ride he does not say.

As they ride across the plain towards the ranch they are surrounded by six yelling Indians. They are captured and tied to a tree. As evening falls the Indians lie down to

sleep. Bob gets his hands free and unties Frank. They reach the Lawless ranch safely and Frank is astounded to find that the whole thing is a put-up job by Bob and that the Indians actually work on the ranch. Bob has a good laugh, but then apologises and praises Frank for not showing the white feather, and they become good friends.

After a few days of freedom, canoeing and riding, Bob announces the fact that they have to go to school. Unwittingly Frank has brought with him an Eton suit and a topper and Bob encourages him to wear them to school, to which they have to ride on horseback. On the way they meet two rough cattlemen who are astounded and amused at the sight of Frank in his topper and shoot it from his head, and he then realises that Bob has played another trick on him. He has no option but to continue to school in his Etons where he is the subject of much laughter and ridicule by the other pupils, both boys and girls, much in the same way that Tom Merry was laughed at when he arrived at St. Jim's in a velvet suit.

His also surprised to find that the Head is a personable young lady called Miss Meadows and that her sole staff consists of Mr. Slimmey, the assistant master, who takes the younger pupils. He also finds the schoolwork straight forward and easy, and that his Latin books are not required. Eben Hacke, the school bully picks a fight with him and a terrific battle ensues in which Hacke, who is bigger and stronger than Frank but, has little boxing science, is defeated after much damage on both sides, and they finally shake hands and become friends.

In the next story Bob kids Frank into thinking there is a bear near the school and he rushes in to call Mr Slimmey out with a gun, which he cannot find and dashes out waving a pair of compasses instead. Frank is again laughed at and he is scolded by Miss Meadows, but when a bear really does appear at the school he and Bob show great bravery by barring the door in its face to protect the others, and then getting out of a window and canoeing down to Cedar Creek to get help. They ride back to the school with the hunters and the bear is shot and killed before any harm is done, and the boys are congratulated.

Then comes a short series introducing Vere Beauclerc, the son of a drunken remittance man who lives on handouts from his aristocratic brother in England, and who is supposed to be based to some extent on Frank Richards' own father. Beauclerc saves Frank Richards' life when he is involved in a canoeing accident on the river, but Bob Lawless dislikes his snobbish demeanour and quarrels with him. They fight in the woods and Bob is defeated, but just then a Mexican half-breed, who has a grudge against Bob and Frank after they have beaten him when he tried to rob them, fires at Bob from the bushes. Beauclerc jumps between them and is wounded by the bullet. Fortunately he recovers from the wound and the three then become firm friends. Bob and Frank are then instrumental in helping the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to capture the Mexican.

And so the series goes on with Frank Richards emulating the heroes of his other schoolboy stories by outwitting Kern Gunten in trying to run a crooked sweepstake, and next earning the gratitude of a crusty farmer, after being caught in his orchard, by rescuing his small son from the path of a wagon and horses. Then Vere Beauclerc fights and beats a prizefighter to win fifty dollars to save his father, who has gambled away all his allowance, from drifting into crime. All plots well used by Frank Richards, but all made interesting and enjoyable by his unique style, especially in a different setting.

But the next story is interesting because it makes the first mention of Frank Richards as a writer. In a story called 'The Schoolboy Author' Bob Lawless comes upon his cousin sitting on a log near the school, scribbling in a exercise-book, and enquires what he is

doing. Rather shamefacedly Frank admits that he is writing a story. Bob is inclined to laugh and is going to tell the other fellows, but Frank begs him not to as he does not wish to be ridiculed. Bob promises to keep it to himself and asks "When did you begin this game?"

"Well, I've always scribbled," said Frank rather shyly, "I used to do stuff for the school magazine when I was at school in England. And I've written a lot of yarns too -- and I've chucked them away when they were finished. Sort of built that way you know."

Bob asks to read the story and, somewhat to his surprise, Frank's "scribble" interests him. Frank has written about some of his experiences on his journey across the Atlantic up the St. Lawrence river, and across Canada on the railway, and Bob reads it through to the end.

"By gum, Frank!"

Frank Richards looked at him,

"Rotten?" he asked.

"No, ripping," said Bob, "Blessed if I ever thought you could scribble like this! You'll be a terrific author some day, Franky."

"I wonder!" said Frank!"

Bob then tells him that there is a literary competition going on in the 'Fraser Advertiser' with a prize of twenty dollars for the best short story and encourages Frank to have a shot at it, and finally Frank agrees.

Unknown to them Kern Gunten has overheard what they said and determines to try to win the prize money by trickery.

Gunten is the son of the local storekeeper through which the post and all the newspapers have to pass. On Saturdays his job is to collect letters and packets for the post, and, having picked up the packet containing Frank's story, he opens it, alters the title, and sends it in in his own name.

Frank has written the story of the Mexican rustler who had been recently run down in that section by The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and entitled it "On the Trail". The following week the paper announces Gunten as the winner of his story called "Running Down a Rogue" .

"Rotten!" said Bob. "The editor's a silly ass of course."

"A champion ass!" said Beauclerc. "Better luck next time, Frank."

Frank smiled rather constrainedly.

"The editor's all right," he said. "The first rule of the game is not to swear at the referee, you know. The man knows his business and I don't. I don't think there will be a next time."

"Rats! You'll be scribbling again in a day or two; you can't help it," said Bob.

And on that point, at least, Bob Lawless was right.

Of course Gunten is found out and the prize money recovered from him, and he is ducked in the river as a punishment.

(To be continued)

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The Art of Walt Disney by Field, Collins 1st 1945. Lge format. Boards rubbed, mark on inside cover where book plate removed. Gen VG £12.50.

Cinderella sheet music. Nice pictorial front. VG £5.00.

Mickey Mouse Annual Dean copyright 1945. Front end paper stuck to board. Little colouring on a couple of pages. Boards very worn. A reading copy waf £6.00.

Mickey Mouse Annual Dean copyright 1952. VG+ £17.50.

Mickey Mouse Annual Dean copyright 1957. Light corner bumps, top inch spine re-glued. Gen VG/VG- £10.50.

Walt Disneys Crossword Puzzle Book. Birn Bros 1960. Fine unused £15.

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Gone With the Wind Film Story: Hollywood Publications Ltd 1948. Card wraps with many photos from the film. Covers worn, £6.50

Riff Raff: Picturegoer Famous Films Supplement. 16 page lge format magazine format. Spencer Tracy & Jean Harlow on the cover. VG £2.75.

The Wizard of Oz by Fricke, Scarfone & Stillman. 1st 1989 Hodder. The Official 50th Anniversary Pictorial History. Large format, full of photos & ephemera from the 1939 film. Fine in fine dw. £18.50.

King Solomon's Mines Ward Lock bk of the Stewart Granger film. 8 colour plates & dozens of sepia stills from the film. Pictorial boards. VG £12.50.

Don Q's Love Story by Prichard. Grossett & Dunlap USA. With 8 stills from Don Q, Son of Zorro. Some fading to spine else VG- £4.00.

The Black Pirate by Gates Hutchinson nd. 6 photos from the Fairbanks film. G+ £3.50.

Little Caesar by Burnett Vane nd Title page missing else VG in VG dw £3.50.

Stanley & Livingstone Ward Lock book of the film. Binding worn & bumped but all 16 colour plates and 100 b/w stills from the film present. £9.50

The Iron Mask (Fairbanks: 67 pages with photos in *Screen Book magazine* USA May 1929. Spine taped & a little corner wear, but a superb Fairbanks item. £15.00.

THE FEMALE STARS

Bergman: Ingrid Bergman by Bergman & Burgess. 1981 Shpere paperback. VG £2.50.

Bergman: Ingrid Bergman by Curtis Brown. 1975 Star Books (paperback) VG £2.50.

Crawford: My Way of Life by Joan Crawford. 1st UK 1972 Allen. Fine in fine dw £10.00.

Crawford: Conversations With Joan Crawford by Newquist. 1st 1980 Citadel (USA). A brief biography then interviews with the star. Nr fine in VG dw. £10.00.

Davis: The Lonely Life by Bette Davis. 1st 1962 Macdonalds. Autobiography. VG+ in VG+ dw. £8.50.

Davis: Bette Davis A Celebration by A. Walker. 1st 1986 Pavilion. Lge format full of photographs. Nr fine in VG+/nr fine dw. £12.50.

Dietrich: Marlene Dietrich by John Kobal. Studio Vista softback 1968. VG+ £2.50.

Dietrich: Marlene Dietrich by her daughter Maria Riva. 1st UK 1992 Bloomsbury. 800 pages many photos. Nr fine in VG dw £15.00. (post £3)

Fields: Gracie Fields Her Life in Pictures by Hudson. 1st 1989 Fine in fine dw. £7.50.

Fields: Gracie Fields Her Autobiography 2nd imp. 1960 Muller. VG+ in VG dw. £3.50.

Fontaine: No Bed of Roses An Autobiography by Joan Fontaine. 1st UK 1978 Allen. Torn front endpaper else nr fine in VG+ faded dw. £10.00.

The Films of Greta Garbo by Conway, McGregorm & Ricci. 1st nd. VG+ imn VG dw £15.00. (post £3)

Garbo: Garbo On Garbo by Broman 1st UK 1991. Fine, fine dw £12.50

Garbo: Garbo A Portrait by Walker. 1st 1980 Fine in VG+ dw. £12.50.

Vivien Leigh A Biography by A. Edwards. 1977 rep nr fine nr fine dw. £8.50.

Matthews: Over My Shoulder: An Autobiography by Jessie Matthews. 1st 1974 Allen. Fine in VG+ dw. £7.50.

Piaf: Piaf by Berteaut. 1st UK 1970 Allen. Biography of Edith Piaf. Nr fine VG+ dw £7.50.

Stanwyck Barbara: Barbara Stanwyck by Dionio. 1st UK 1984. Nr fine, nr fine dw. £6.75.

Films Of Gloria Swanson by Quirk. 1st 1984. Nr fine in nr fine dw. £12.50. (post £3)

The Shirley Temple Scrapbook by Burdick. 1st 1975 JD (USA) Lge format full of illustrations. Nr fine in VG+ dw. £12.50.

Pearl White, The Peerless Fearless Girl by Weltman & Lee. 1st 1969 A. S. Barnes (USA) The story of the serial queen. Edges of the first 6 preliminary pages chewed at edge. Rest VG in laminated boards (poss ex lib - but no stamps that I can see). Waf £6.75.

I REMEMBER

by Bill Bradford

The BOYS BROADCAST published by Amalgamated Press from 22.10.1934 until 29.6.1935, a total of 36 issues. Price 2d it was an extra large paper of approx. 14"x 11", initially of 20 pages and a cover of blue on cream, it was shortly increased to 24 pages and, a little later, the cover changed colour to blue and white on a red background, far more striking. I remember buying the first issue and several subsequent ones, but in 1934 there were about a dozen desirable weeklies so there were hard choices to make. Although I have not a complete run, I have sufficient issues to give you some insight into its contents.

The first story in No 1 was JEREMY'S JOURNAL by William Freeman, relating to a 17 year-old lad seeking his fortune and his father. This ran for at least 8 weeks, normally of 4 pages. Next we have YELLOW HORSE by Walter Holton, a 2 page complete Westerner.

THE RIDDLE OF THE MAZE by John Marsh featured a private detective Anthony Logan and (inevitable) young assistant James Kent. These characters seem to appear in every issue of the paper and the stories were superior to the average thriller in other boys' papers. Usually 3 plus pages.

The centre 2 pages featured BROADCAST CALLING, a chatty item by the Editor. SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE by Capt Essex, a story of the First World War told of the adventures of Tom King, Flannigan Flynn and Alphonse Gerrard, unlikely allies. This ran to at least 9 episodes of 3 pages, illustrated by Glossop. STREET OF THE SPORTSMEN by S.H. Nelson concerned a Northern football club, threatened by a local shipping magnate. Ran for at least 8 weeks of 2 pages. In SAM AND PARTNER by Avonmore West, two friends, wrongly sentenced to Borstal, escape and are sought by police over next 8-9 issues. Usually 2 pages

Free gifts with this issue were conjuring cards and a silverline pencil. Issue No 2 gave away a handbook diary. The same leading stories, but the short story was replaced by the first of a short series about a Captain Daring and his exploits on the high seas attributed to Walter Holton. Unfortunately I lack issues 8 to 13, but No 14 introduces us to FRANK, CRUISER AND BENDIGO, a young flier, a merchant navy officer and a Negro stoker. These stories continued for the rest of the paper's life, 4 to 5 pages weekly Shades of Jack, Sam and Pete!

Another new series was a western, featuring Smiler King. This ran for 17 weeks, each with a different title; 5 pages, illustrated by Glossop. Also, THE SCHOOL OF SECRETS, a remote school in the wilds of Cornwall, run like a prison for boys whose guardians want them out of the way. This also appeared as BFL 624, credited to Reid Whitley (Coutts Armour). It ran for 17 weeks, averaging 4 to 5 pages. I am sure the plot has a familiar ring to it but cannot place it.

This issue saw the first of a series of free gifts in the form of photo cards, initially of famous sportsmen, also the paper settled down to a weekly offering of 4 longish stories and a 'shortie'. Incidentally, many of the covers were by a G.W. Buckhouse, of whom I know little.

Issue 27 saw the start of a new series, CORKY WELLS WONDERS, a slightly humourless tale about a travelling showman and his menagerie. This was of 2 pages and

The SCHOOL of SECRETS



Fighting with **KIT CARSON**



FRANK

CRUISER and BENDIGO

appeared for 7 weeks. No 29 included AB OF THE CAVEMEN, a story of the days when the world was young, only 2 pages for 8 weeks.

Hitherto the paper claimed to broadcast the best stories, but issue 31 and onwards described it as one of 'adventure films and fighting fiction' and began to publish the stories of current films, with 'stills'. This week we had the first part of FIGHTING WITH KIT CARSON, starring Johnny Mack Brown, also TIT FOR TAT, featuring Laurel and Hardy. The Publishers must have been looking to the future as the paper was eventually 'incorporated' with BOYS CINEMA – and we know what that meant!! This issue also saw the first of a 6 part crime serial (3 pages) THE CRIMSON CLUE, set largely in a remote Scottish island.

The film covered in No 32 was SON OF KONG, with Robert Armstrong (but no Fay Wray), also a 2-page article on the life of Victor McLaglen; the Editor's column had a picture and reference to John Wayne, then relatively unknown. The next issue (No 33) includes DEVILS ON WHEELS with Frankie Darro and VIVA VILLA starring Wallace Beery and Leo Carrillo – I well remember this one. It also had an article on Max Baer, cowboy, boxer and film actor.

The featured film in issue 34 was LUCK OF THE GAME with Eddie Quillan and Betty Furness (names that I vaguely recall but will mean nothing to most of you). More stories illustrated by Glossop. The last copy in my possession, No 35, contains NO GREATER GLORY, starring Frankie Darro, plus the current serials.

In a recent auction of the collection of the late Dennis Gifford, I bought a bound volume of editorial copies of BOYS BROADCAST, but, alas, the final issue, No 36, had been removed. As many of you will know, Dennis was an ardent collector of first and last issues, but what a shame to spoil an otherwise lovely volume. I remember, some years ago, he just pipped me to No 1 Bullseye!

To summarise, reading copies today I think the of writing in the B.B. was superior to that in many of its competitors, certainly more mature and attractive to the older boy, and I am hard put to think of others with 5 to 6 large page stories. Why, then, did it have such a short life? Well, other large format papers met a similar fate, *Buzzer*, *Wild West Weekly* and the oversized issues of the *Modern Boy*. Was it because they did not fold easily into the packet pocket (criminal) or was it that more but shorter stories were preferred? Perhaps, like myself, others found a wide choice and were reluctant to give up old favourites.

Early issues named authors, all unknown to myself. Lofts and Adley give each as their real name and say that they only wrote for BOYS BROADCAST. Do I detect some editorial chicanery? I do not know who was the Editor

FOR SALE: Gem facsimiles Nos. 783, 788, 808, 1272, 1284 – 50p each. SOL's no. 400 - £2. Nos. 326-339, 344, 369, 394 - £1 each, reading copies. Sexton Blake Library No. 242 - £2. 115 American comics 1970s-1980s - £30. Postage at cost. SHEPPARD, 1 Forge Close, Bempton, Bridlington, YO15 1LX.

MORCOVE'S OIL PAINTING AND THE CHAOS IT CAUSED

by Ray Hopkins

"In a beautiful half-wooded hollow, the gleam of a moorland pool came from amidst the rich gold of a cluster of silver birches." Tess Trelawney, the clever girl artist of the Fourth Form at Morcove, decided that here was the perfect setting for the portrait in oils that she was planning to execute.

Quite by chance that sunny afternoon, six members of Morcove's celebrated Study 12 coterie had come across a gypsy girl of stunning beauty. Her delicately refined features and shy response to Tess's request belied the brightly coloured blouse, the serrated-edged black skirt, bandana and sash that she wore. The gypsy girl, who tells them that she is called Zonia, believes that she was stolen when a baby. Fading hopes that her real parents are still searching for her are revived by the excited thought that they may come across the finished painting.

An old gypsy woman is sitting outside the caravan, an enchanting wooden, brightly painted home on large cartwheels. She smiles fondly at Zonia, evidently pleased that she has some companions of her own age to talk to. The gypsies that Zonia refers to as mother and father are expected to return shortly and must know nothing of the portrait Tess is painting.

A sound from the old woman, whom Zonia refers to as granny, and her finger raised in warning, alerts the gypsy girl that noises in the woods presage the imminent return of the couple. While Tess rapidly packs the painting paraphernalia into her large canvas carry-all, Betty Barton, Polly Linton, Paula Creel, Madge Minden and Naomer Nakara stand as a shield between her and the couple whose dark features become suffused with anger when they observe Zonia in company with a group of uniformly well-dressed girls of her own age. Muttering imprecations they run into the camp clearing. The juniors' glances waver between the beautiful girl and the ugly grownups, "This olive-faced slouching woman, this swarthy man with his dark face, her parents? Impossible!" "It was her demeanour that forbade the idea that she was the daughter of gypsy parents. She had none of the insolent fearlessness." The gypsy man orders them off the encampment, shouting that he wants "no Lahdy-Dah notions putting into her head." Tess clutches her canvas carry-all tightly as they hurry off, aware that he is shooting suspicious glances in its direction.

Betty, Polly and Co. meet Zonia again the following Saturday at Barncombe Fair where the gypsy girl is in charge of a stall selling basket-work. Zonia begs Tess to let her come to Morcove if and when she can slip away from the encampment. Sensing Zonia's desperation to have her portrait completed, Tess agrees eagerly. But the assignation is ill-fated and the happy creative atmosphere, which has been augmented by others from Study 12, is ruined when the gypsy woman bursts into the study. With a terrible cry she sees what is going on and threatens to thrash Tess and Co. if they ever set foot in the gypsy camp again. Zonia has already disappeared from the study, terrified. Later, the Study 12 chums, fearing Zonia's safety, return to the gypsy camp. It is deserted with all signs that the gypsies were ever there completely obliterated.

"An old stone house, all gone to rack and ruin with a wilderness of a garden," is the dreary setting where Zonia finds herself. He who Zonia calls father drags her up a bare flight of stairs along a passage where the paper is peeling off the wall. He flings her into

The Schoolgirl's Own



ZONIA'S GIPSY MOTHER

A dramatic incident in this week's long complete tale of Morcove School.

2nd

No. 140. Vol. 8.]

PUBLISHED EVERY TUESDAY.

[Week Ending October 8th, 1923

an empty room. He says that she will be under lock and key until he secures her portrait and tears it to pieces. This very night he plans to break into the school and destroy the painting.

Sometime after midnight, noises from below awaken Polly. She silently shakes Betty awake and, closely followed by Paula, they creep downstairs. Twitching with nerves, the latter trips on the stairs and crashes into the other two. The ensuing thumps and exclamations alert the intruder to the fact that he has been overheard. The three juniors race to the entrance of the Fourth Form passage where they are confronted by the burglar. As they attempt to detain him, he knocks them right and left. Betty tells Tess that the man who broke in was Zonia's father looking for the portrait in her study. The portrait

is still there and Tess finds a safe hiding place in case the gypsy makes a further attempt to steal it,

Panic-stricken in case of pursuit, he rapidly runs the two miles that the new refuge of the gypsy family lies from Morcove. When he has regained his breath enough to berate Zonia for causing him all this trouble, she interrupts his loud bullying with, "I am convinced you are not my father and mother. Ever since I was old enough to think for myself I have felt less and less bound to you by any natural ties. Your action over that portrait has convinced me." After he threatens her by saying that she will stay locked in the room upstairs until he has destroyed the painting, Zonia cries, "I know what both of you are by now! A couple of wicked gypsies who got hold of me years ago."

Zonia wrenches herself out of the gypsy woman's clutches and is down the dark passage and out of the ruined building before they realise she intends to make her escape. The darkness aids her and the gypsy man loses her in the impenetrable gloom. She runs for a mile and sinks to the ground trembling with fear as she realises that she has no money or food, or a change of clothing. Finding herself surrounded by a dense fog and too frightened to move in case she inadvertently returns to the building from which she escaped, she falls asleep where she is found in daylight by Betty and Co. They are dismayed to see that her clothes are "glistening with beads of moisture" and she could be wet through and in great danger of becoming ill. They insist on Zonia's returning to Morcove with them, confident that Miss Somerfield will agree to their looking after her.

The kindly Head, after hearing the gypsy girl's story, insists on her taking a hot bath and replacing her wet gypsy costume with clean, warm clothing. Miss Somerfield takes a strong liking to Zonia and is impressed to hear that she used to study as much as she could at the camp, even learning some Latin from a book she had come across in a 2d box outside a bookshop. She quizzes Zonia and discovers she has knowledge "in many subjects that a dweller in a gypsy camp might have been expected to be quite ignorant of." Zonia is overjoyed to think that this session with the Head might lead to her becoming a scholar at Morcove. But her happiness is short-lived!

Betty and Polly decide that the older gypsies should be informed that Zonia is safe and well and will be staying at Morcove but their news is waved aside by the couple when they arrive at the old house. The old lady is very ill and needs a doctor. The Morcove juniors run into Barncombe and are fortunate to rapidly return with one. Granny is asking for Zonia who, when she hears of the sad state that her old friend is in, says she must return to the one who has always been kind to her. Dressing in her own gypsy clothes, she leaves them all feeling sadly that "she was a girl who would have been a great credit to Morcove if only she could have enjoyed the changed life that had been hers so briefly."

Upon her return Zonia finds that the doctor has sent for an ambulance and granny is to be taken to hospital upon its arrival. She feels she has made a wasted journey but she receives some important information from granny as she is saying goodbye to her. Though barely conscious, the old lady manages to whisper that the gypsy man had stolen her as a baby. She struggles to remember the name of Zonia's real parents, Zonia leans closer to her and it is at this point that the gypsy woman enters the room, surmises what granny is trying to say and throws Zonia out into the passage.

After granny is taken away in the ambulance the gypsy man tells Zonia that if she will promise not to run off again or make any attempt to see the Morcove girls they will stay near Barncombe so that Zonia can visit the old lady frequently. He says, "If you

won't give your word, we'll leave tomorrow and go far away, away from the Infirmary and Barncombe." Zonia, feeling her heart is breaking, agrees to his terms realising an empty life of loneliness lies before her.

That evening, Mr. and Mrs. Barton are expected to be at Morcove to visit Betty. This gives her something to look forward to after the important hockey match taking place during the afternoon against Barncombe House School. The Morcove team decides to go into Barncombe a little early so that they can take in some fruit to granny in the Infirmary. On the way in, Betty and Polly bump into Zonia as she is leaving and are amazed at the change in her attitude toward them as she passes them with barely a word. Zonia says nothing of the promise that she has made to the gypsy man and is frightened that he will retaliate by whisking her away if he hears she has spoken to them.

Morcove win the hockey match three-two and Betty speeds off on her bicycle, leaving the two teams enjoying a convivial Barncombe tea at the Creamery, a favourite tea-time meeting place for juniors from both schools. She has to get back to Morcove in order to be there ahead of her parents' arrival by car.

A big carhorse is startled by the loud bursting of a lorry tyre close by it and it stampedes in Betty's direction. She, startled by the loud bang, has fallen off her bicycle in the middle of the road, lacerating her knee. Zonia, running down a side street to investigate the cause of the bang, sees that Betty is in peril. Making a valiant dive she manages to tug the horse and the empty van to which it is attached around the fallen schoolgirl. At this highly charged moment, Mr. and Mrs. Barton drive up in their car and, while her mother clasps Betty tightly, Mr. Barton embraces Zonia and chokingly says to her, "My brave, noble girl, but for you, my wife and I would have come along in our car, to find our child lying dead," Mr. Barton insists that she must come to Morcove with them. She will be able to go to bed in the sanatorium to recover from her awful experience.

The upshot of this fortuitous encounter is that, after hearing Zonia's story from Betty, Mr. Barton, convinced that the older gypsies cannot be her real parents, decides that he must adopt her and take her back home to Lancashire. So Zonia is "ransomed from the life of bondage by the large sum of money which Mr. and Mrs. Barton were only too glad to pay for her release from the clutches of the evil couple."

Thus the author surprises the reader at the conclusion he has invented to this series. In fiction, children stolen by gypsies are inevitably reunited with their own parents who often turn out to be wealthy. Possibly Horace Phillips intended to produce such a denouement in a later series which was editorially vetoed for I can find no evidence that he ever did so. Zonia apparently did not become a regular member of the Fourth Form at Morcove and is one of those ephemeral characters who, in current parlance, was "famous for fifteen minutes."

(This series appeared in the weekly SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN nos. 140-142, 6-20 Oct 1923 and was reprinted in SGOL first series no. 219, Sep. 1929, under the title of "Morcove's Gypsy Schoolgirl.")

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

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

Part 6: Adventure 1946-1949

by Ray Moore

Before I begin this article proper I'd first like to take this opportunity to warmly thank Derek Marsden, surely the most knowledgeable chronicler of the DC Thomson 'Big Five' bar none, for generously providing me with copious notes on the antecedents of the 'Adventure' picture strips catalogued below. I just wish I could have done them justice in the space provided.

It was in Sept 1946 that the oldest of the Thomson boy's story papers 'Adventure' became, as indeed it had been a quarter of a century before, something of a pioneer when it instituted the publication of what would turn out to be a regular procession of picture strips, an unheard of occurrence in any of the Dundee based firms boy's titles to date. The front cover and later the front and back, not to mention a good few pages sandwiched in between, being given over to picture strips for virtually the rest of the paper's life and easily making it the most likely repository for a strip in any of the Thomson boy's papers until the arrival of the redesigned 'New Hotspur' in Oct 1959. As it turned out the oldest Thomson boy's paper thus heralding the trend that would bring about the end of not only itself but also of its nearest kith and kin, the rest of the titles in the Thomson boy's paper stable. Each, in turn, destined to become an outmoded victim of the post war generation's boys' itchy footed desire for something new.

As always of course Thomson's would fight a loyal and stalwart rearguard action in order to protect their own and it would be a creditable fifteen years between the publication of 'Adventure's first cover strip, 'The Human Eagles' (1167-1178) a picture strip drawn with quite amateurish simplicity by **James Malcolm**, a relative newcomer to the DC Thomson Meadowside art dept, and the paper's final leave-taking.

In 'The Human Eagles' the pith-helmeted hero Congo King 'the finest shot and the greatest hunter in Africa' and his giant Zulu blood-brother Umtala go searching for the treasure chamber of King Solomon in 'the lost land beyond the mighty mountains of the clouds', and along the way stumble across the remote Golden City where they fall foul of the city's evil ruler Zark and his flying minions, equipped with mechanical wings, the eponymous 'human eagles'.

Of course any mention of darkest Africa, lost treasure and King Solomon all in the same sentence puts us into Rider Haggard territory but here only marginally so. 'The Human Eagles' strip in fact owing most to an earlier 'Adventure' prose story of the same name that had appeared in 1934 (657-668) but even then not as much as might have been expected. The original 'human eagles' having been the vanguard of a warrior force put together by the megalomaniac ruler Chaka the Lion for the purpose of gaining him dominion over the whole of Africa. The original Chaka's plans being ultimately scotched by two adventurers Congo Jake and his friend and travelling companion Allan Kent.

By and large the strip version of 'The Human Eagles' set the standard for a lot of what was to follow. A simplistic picture strip usually based on an earlier, more involved, prose story, or indeed several, with plot lines and character names sometimes gleaned from a number of sources. A method of constructing a script that no doubt kept many a

Thomson boy's paper sub-editor out of mischief and gainfully employed from one year's end to the next!

The next 'Adventure' strip was 'The Savage Head of St. Judes' (1179-1190) and this certainly lived up to that oft used advertising blurb 'a school story with a difference'. Again drawn by **James Malcolm**, but this time with a little more confidence in his penmanship, this strip brought a little of the Africa featured in 'The Human Eagles', in the shape of the Jekyll and Hydeish pedagogue Dr Garson, to the quad of a sleepy English public school.

Dr Garson, after having spent many years in the wilds of darkest Africa, was to say the least an idiosyncratic choice as headmaster of a boy's school embedded in the heart of the English countryside. The oddness of the choice being confirmed when the young sports master Mr Locke and Captain of the School Dick Danby discover the newly appointed Head's nocturnal predilection for donning a leopard skin, inhaling a strange exotic incense and creating havoc in the neighbourhood by 'going native' in a 'nature red in tooth and claw' sort of way. Dr Garson ultimately coming to a gory end at the hands of a huge ape just as he had done in the 1936 'Adventure' story on which the strip was more than loosely based 'The Evil Head of St. Judes' (747-770).

In the 1930's 'Adventure' had had something of a love affair with the sagas of the Norsemen and the next picture strip to be published 'The Quest of the Golden Hammer' (1191-1202), drawn by **James 'Peem' Walker**, was a simplistic synthesis of several of these without being faithful to any one in particular. The strip gleaned elements, several contradictory in nature, from three stories in particular 'Erik the Viking' from 'New Adventure' in 1931 (486-503), 'Who will follow the Blazing Helmet!' from 'Adventure' in 1937/38 (835-852) and another tale titled 'Erik the Viking' that had featured in a pocket library that was given away free with 'Adventure' No 913 in April 1939.

In the picture strip Erik returns from an expedition to find his home burned and his people murdered, a starting point possibly suggested by the pocket library story in which another Viking named Hørdard the Just returns from a expedition to likewise discover a similar scene of devastation except that, in that instance, Erik himself is wrongly accused of being the perpetrator of the carnage. A plot development which then leads the pocket library story off in an entirely different direction to that taken by the picture strip.

In the picture strip Erik also discovers that a sacred Viking relic, the Golden Hammer of Thor, has been stolen and that the culprit is one Varda the Wolf. A quest for reparation and vengeance then ensues with Erik setting sail in his ship the Iron Ram accompanied by his warrior friend Harvard the Hacker.

For the origins of Erik, his ship the Iron Ram and Harvard the Hacker we must turn to the original Erik series from 1931 when the young Viking warrior begins his sea-going exploits by stealing the galley, the Iron Ram, from King Olafand on his voyages defeats, but nonetheless wins the respect of, another Viking sea-captain Harvard the Hacker. Apart from the names though little of the plot of this story seems to have made it into the picture strip series sixteen years later. For its' storyline, or at least the central idea of the quest, albeit embarked upon for vastly different reasons, we must instead look at 'Who will follow the Blazing Helmet!' which began in 'Adventure' in Oct 1937.

In this 1937 series Erik is the younger son of the ailing Viking ruler Ulric the Giant (a character who would resurface in the 1947 picture strip not as Erik's father but as the occupier of a fortress besieged by Erik) and, knowing that the moment of his death is drawing near, Ulric charges Erik with the task of locating his elder brother Varda the Wolf

Adventure

№1238 AUG. 7, 1948

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THE LOST LEGION



The secret of the tattoo on Jimmy Dale's back is revealed when the Ruler of the Lost Roman City tells how a traitor priest, helped by Killer Gool, stole the sacred Golden Eagle. The priest had tattooed the chart after Colonel Dale had saved him from Killer Gool.

IT WAS THE CLUE TO THE HIDING PLACE OF THE GOLDEN EAGLE!



THE SHADOW OF THE PILLAR MARKED THE SPOT.



THE SOLDIERS LIFTED THE PAVING STONE AND —



THE SACRED RELIC WAS REVEALED!



AT JIMMY'S REQUEST GOOL WAS SET FREE BUT DRIVEN FROM THE CITY.



(the name subsequently given to the central villain in the picture series), who is away on an expedition, and delivering safely into his hands the symbol of Viking kingship the Golden Helmet of Thor.

When we look for similarities between this story and the later picture strip, and there are a number of incidents that occur on both quests that are obviously based one on the other, it is interesting to be able to see how the 'Adventure' editorial dept cobbled together the strip from earlier work, a plot detail here and a name transposition there. This strip, like so many of its ilk, not being so much written as concocted.

Next up on the 'Adventure' picture strip roll-call came 'Blue Dragon Pyke' (1203-1214) again drawn by **James Malcolm**. The hero of the title being Bill Pyke an ex-sergeant in the Hong Kong Police Force who, vigilante style, tracks down the Circle of Six, the leaders of a murderous band of cut-throats and looters named the Blue Dragon

Tong, the criminal organisation who in an earlier encounter with Pyke had marked him for death by searing the brand of the Blue Dragon across his chest. Bill Pyke having first crossed swords with his oriental adversaries in two text series in 'Adventure' in the 1930's, Nos 568-577 (1932) (Note in issues 568-574 the title of the paper was 'New Adventure') and Nos 732-750 (1935/1936).

'Blue Dragon Pyke' came to an end in the last issue of 1947 and the first issue of 1948 saw it replaced with 'Keeper of the Dread Sword' (1215-1226). This being of particular interest as the first picture strip drawn by artist **Pete Sutherland** who, after five years in the Thomson art dept, would turn freelance and provide much work for the Amalgamated Press in the 1950's and, then in the 1960's and 1970' become one of the most familiar artists working in the new breed of DC Thomson boy's picture papers. Most notably in 'Victor' for which he would draw the most memorable picture strip images of the old 'Rover' story paper favourite 'The Tough of the Track'.

In 'Keeper of the Dread Sword' **Pete Sutherland**, at the very beginning of his artistic career, rather crudely helps elucidate the story of the 'dread Sword of Tarka' and it's mysterious masked Keeper. The Keeper, with his seemingly mythic scimitar-like weapon, which can cut hardened steel as easily as it can cut finest silk and which brings death to all those who hold it without the knowing it's secret, meting out justice in the lands of the East.

The fundamental basis for this strip having been a story of the same name, but written to cover a more expansive canvas, that had appeared in 'Adventure' in 1937 (793-

Next Issue on Sale
Next Week

BALDY HOGAN NEEDS HELP—
ARE YOU SUPPORTING THE UNITED ?



SONS OF THE DIRK

Ewan Macdonald, leader of the Sons of the Dirk who are held in Dunrock Castle is attempting to save Bonnie Prince Charlie from ambush by the Redcoats. By delivering a letter from a captured English general, he has managed to enter the Redcoat encampment. Now he is preparing to put his plan into operation.

UNAWARE THAT HE WAS BEING
WATCHED, EWAN CLEFT
FROM HIS TENT.



WHEN THE PRINCE AND HIS
MEN APPEARED IN THE
DISTANCE —



806). The weapon in the original having been the Sacred Sword of Tamerlane which, in earlier times, that legendary ruler of the East, had used to carve himself out an empire second to none. In the intervening centuries control of the sword itself having become seen as a talisman toward the control of all Asia and the role of its Keeper therefore singularly paramount.

The sixth 'Adventure' cover strip 'The Lost Legion' (1227-1238) was the fourth drawn by **James Malcolm** and featured the return of the heroes from the first, Congo King and his blood-brother Umtala.

While there seems to be no direct textual reference point for this strip in earlier issues of 'Adventure' Derek Marsden does cite the 1929 Edgar Rice Burroughs' novel 'Tarzan and the Lost Empire' as a possible source for the central theme of the strip. Although the notion of an ancient civilization caught in a time bubble in some remote region, while perhaps not necessarily Roman as in this strip and in the Tarzan novel, was certainly not a new concept in boy's fiction even then.

In the strip Congo King and Umtala save a young boy from becoming a lion's lunch and discover in his possession what appears to be an ancient Roman coin. This coin then leading them to the lost land of Ophir where, legend had it, a Roman legion had disappeared without trace some two thousand years before and, lo and behold, what do King and Umtala discover there but the descendants of those lost legionnaires living exactly as their forefathers did.

At the close of 'The Lost Legion' the 'Adventure' cover strip went from twentieth century 'ancient Rome' to eighteenth century Scotland and, if there is one type of story that recurs time and time again in the Thomson papers that is a signature to their point of origin it is surely those set in and around the Jacobite uprisings of 1715 and 1745.

Based as they were in Dundee and with an editorial staff that were patriotically Scottish to a man the Thomson titles loved reliving the days of the Old Pretender and Bonnie Prince Charlie and giving the redcoated English and the traitorous Scottish earls that fell in league with them a bloody nose. One such patriotic tale forming the basis for 'Sons of the Dirk' (1239-1250) drawn, it must be said, by Englishman **Pete Sutherland**.

The strip tells of a school set up at Dunrock Castle on the shores of Loch Eil in the Highlands at which the sons of defeated clan chiefs, under redcoat guard and the self serving gaze of the traitor Black Campbell, are taught to forget their old clan ways and old clan allegiances. As it turns out however this 'taming' process is fatally undermined by the formation of a secret society within the school called 'the Sons of the Dirk', who not only help to destroy the school from within, until it is eventually overrun by a loyal clan force, but also along the way help save Bonnie Prince Charlie from an ambush.

'Sons of the Dirk' owed its title to that of a prose tale that had appeared in 'Adventure' in 1939 (897-911) but for its script, or at least most of it, and ignoring the usual tinkering with character and place names, this it owed to another 'Adventure' story that had first been published in 1938 aptly titled 'The School that was made for Traitors' (862-882), with this 1938 tale being what the original 1939 'Sons of the Dirk!' story had itself been a sequel too.

By now the artists **Pete Sutherland** and **James Malcolm** were taking it in turns to illustrate the 'Adventure' cover strips and so it was the latter's task to do the pictures for the next to appear 'Outcast of the Incas' (1251-1262).

In this strip a five-year-old boy, orphaned when his parents are killed by a band of savages, becomes the focus of worship for a tribe of Incas, a circumstance that threatens the authority of Kark the Incan high priest.

Despite his power being undermined in this way Kark still manages to convince the tribe that the boy should undergo a lengthy rite of passage in order to prove that he is worthy of their veneration. A rite that includes exile, until manhood, into the care of Arkas the Hermit and then the subsequent completion of a series of dangerous tasks. Most of the main plot points of this strip having originated in a story that had appeared in 'Adventure' in 1933 'The Outcast of the Aztecs' (621-630) the setting having been changed, for no obvious reason, from Mexico to Peru.

April 1949 provided a rare treat for those readers of 'Adventure' who had warmed to the paper's picture strip content as, for four issues, it featured not one, but two picture strips for the first time. A new cover strip 'Lost Warriors of the Arctic' (1263-1274) drawn by **Pete Sutherland** and 'The Black Slink - the Shadow Spy' (1263-1266) which took up two-thirds of an internal page and was drawn by **George Ramsbottom** who had drawn his first picture strip 'Invisible Dick' way back in 'Dandy' No 1 in Dec 1937.

'Lost Warriors of the Arctic' was in some respects a hybrid of two picture strips that 'Adventure' had already published, 'The Quest of the Golden Hammer' in that it featured Vikings and 'The Lost Legion' in that these present day Vikings were living, much as they had done centuries before, cocooned from the modern world in the crater of an extinct Arctic volcano just as the Legionnaires in their remote African valley in 'The Lost Legion' had been doing.

The Viking's world here being disturbed when they are discovered by young Chip Malcolm and his monkey Ginger, the pair having been separated from the rest of the crew of the whaling ship on which they are travelling when it founders in a gale. And the strip itself being a sort of thumbnail sketch of an earlier more involved story with the same title that had been published in 'New Adventure' (534-546) in 1932.

As for 'The Black Slink - the Shadow Spy' this told, in four, cramped black and white instalments how the caped, Batman-like, hero of the title brings to account Kloog, the master spy, who will steal the secrets of any government provided the price is right. Too perfunctory by half to do the plot possibilities any justice at all it seems, at this stage at least, publishing two strips in the same paper in the same week was considered too radical a step for one of the Thomson boy's story papers to have taken. And so, after a mere four instalments it was gone and it would be another two and a half years before 'Adventure' would attempt to 'do the double' again.

One of 'Adventure's most popular characters since his inception in 'New Adventure' in 1931 (517-533) had been western hero Solo Solomon and in June 1949 it was his turn to star in his first picture strip (1275-1285) drawn by **Jack Gordon**. In this strip, which seems not to have been based on any earlier story in particular, Solomon and his trusty steed Gasbag, so named because of his ability to 'talk' thanks to his master's ventriloquial skills, help the ranchers of Poison Creek, Wyoming clean up a band of rustlers led by the mysterious Black Hood.

Up until now all the 'Adventure' cover strips had shared one thing in common, they had each occupied the cover for twelve issues but 'Solo Solomon' broke this sequence and was completed in only eleven instalments. This curtailment allowing a new picture strip 'Dixon Hawke and the Yellow Ghost' to grace the cover of the first new format, wider

paged 'Adventure' (1286). A format change, after twenty-eight years, that brought it and the similarly enlarged 'Rover' in line with both their younger companion papers 'Wizard' and 'Hotspur' for the first time and as good a place as any to leave our history for the time being.

(Illustrations are copyright D.C. Thomson)

OH THOSE WONDERFUL HOLIDAY PLANS!

by Margery Woods

It was a glorious June day. The first real visit of summer that year.

Brilliant sun-sparkles dappled the placid surface of the River Sark, where happy laughter rang from the boating enthusiasts making the most of this burst of summer after the long cold and wet spring that had seemed as though it would never end. From the Riverside Tea Gardens seven chums from Cliff House watched the scene and gave serious thought to the approaching summer hols. This year they had choice.

"Well I don't mind as long as there's plenty to eat," said plump Bessie Bunter through a large mouthful of chocolate gâteau. "I've been starved to death ever since the Lettuce Leaf arrived." Bessie sniffed her disgust at the thought of the latest innovation at Cliff House; a dietician whose main aim in life---apart from ensuring that the pupils received the best of healthy food---seemed to be the transformation of Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter into a glowing, vital sylph-like picture of what she considered the ideal healthy schoolgirl. Poor Bessie was suffering; The worst of it all, Bessie didn't look any different. She was still as rotund as ever, the full complement of chins still survived and the rosy cheeks were as plump as ever, despite the new restrictions on what the tuck shop could sell and her chums forbidden under pain of death to sneak rich titbits into study teas. If it were consolation, the bossy new dietician had already caused displeasure among the staff and several rumpuses in the kitchen. Bessie reached for more consolation in the form of a



second large slice of the Riverside's speciality, which the chums hadn't the heart to keep from her, and mumbled through the crumbs: "So where are we going, Babs?"

"That's what we're hoping to decide today," laughed Barbara Redfern, the Junior School Captain, "as soon as the boys arrive. They've had several invitations as well which include us."

"We ought to choose the new Coldburne dig," said Clara naughtily. "Lots of exercise to help Bessie get that new sylph-like figure."

"Don't be cruel," rebuked gentle Marjorie Hazeldene. "It's not fair to tease her."

"Well it's for her own good," said Clara, unabashed. "But I wish I knew which idiot told her it was all genetic. Now she's convinced it's all the fault of her genes."

"Not the trolley-loads of goodies she packs away," chuckled Diana Royston-Clarke, the fortunate possessor of the perfect sylph-like shape while being able to eat whatever she fancied without ever gaining a gram. Maybe there was something in the genetic theory, the girls wondered.

"Well I have to keep my strength up," Bessie protested. "Being skinny doesn't suit me."

"Ha!" The chums dissolved into merriment while the slim and elegant Jemima Carsairs polished her monocle and observed dryly: "How do we know that, fair Spartan? We've never seen you skinny."

"And not likely to," laughed Mabel Lynn, the Fourth's golden-haired actress. "I doubt if---" she stopped as Marjorie stood up, her eyes alight with pleasure.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry's stentorian tones reached far beyond the Riverside Tea Gardens as the Famous Five and the Bounder of Greyfriars greeted their Cliff House chums. Bob and the Bounder both tried to seize Marjorie's hand at the same time and Bob won by an inch. Marjorie, a hint of colour tingling her cheeks, said quickly, "Move up girls---there is room for two more chairs here."



Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent drew an empty table up to extend the girls' table and Smithy went in search of a waitress to order fresh supplies of tea, coffee, lemonade and an assortment of eatables, the sight of which made Bessie's eyes glisten anew. Marjorie, whose grasp of economics was probably firmer than any of her companions, said hesitantly, "We ought to go Dutch on this lot."

The Bounder said evasively, "We can talk about that later, okay?" and Marjorie sighed. She knew that talk would never be allowed. She also knew of the Bounder's generosity and his wealth that backed it, but that was not the point.

"Right." Diana put her hands on the table. "Shall we declare this meeting open? Diana, like Smithy, had a strong tendency to take charge, but on this occasion they were happy to indulge her. "Fire away," laughed Babs, and Harry Wharton said solemnly: "Madame Chairperson has declared we open the meeting. Who'll second that?"

"We do;" they cried in unison, attracting amused smiles from a party of hot and dusty hikers at a nearby table.

"Less noise please---and I dislike the word 'chairperson'," Diana said sternly. "Now, Babs, give us your briefing on our holiday invites for this summer."

Babs dimpled. "I never knew we were so popular. We've had four invitations and all of them include our Greyfriars friends. But whichever we choose we lose Jemima for the first two weeks. Explain, Jimmy."

Jemima sighed deeply. "You know the Guv's with NATO now. Well he's summoned to be co-host at a big convention in New York and he's decided it's time I began to give him a little feminine support. Sort of advanced spartan duties and so forth. But he's leaving the decision to me of course."

They nodded, serious for the moment. They knew how deeply Jemima cared for her long-widowed father and sensed the loneliness that sometimes pervaded his busy life. "Afterwards," Jemima went on, "he plans to relax for a couple of weeks at Inglestone--- where he has a job for us all if we honour him with our company, ahem, and then on to Delma."

"What kind of a job?" Clara demanded.

"Oh, settle some rumours of a jolly old ghost."

"I thought ghosts liked cold and dank winters," laughed Bob.

"Apparently this one likes a bit of warmth." Jemima looked distinctly owl-like as she polished her monocle.

"Well I'm game," enthused Clara, "and I've always enjoyed our visits to Delma, especially if M'lizi is there."

"And old Mother Faa and her merry men?" teased Mabs.

More mirth, and the tale of the famous siege of Delma Castle had to be recounted to the boys. "Enough!" Diana broke in, banging a spoon in place of a gavel. "Carry on, fair Babs."

"The second is from Miss Coker. She has written to me, but Harry will tell us about this. Number three is Di's cruise, which her father is arranging in partnership with your father, Smithy. And lastly, the fourth invite is from Jack and Jen at Amberleigh. There's another dig there."

"Will we be digging Connie Jackson up?" demanded Clara. "If so, no way!"

"We could always bury her again," said Mabs with a giggle.

"So that's our choice so far; a Med cruise, an archaeological dig, fun with Jemima, and a holiday with Miss Coker, whom we've yet to meet. And we still have our family ports of call; Holly Hall with Babs' people---right, Babs?---and we can go to Mabs, except for the last two weeks because her father will be away working on a new production at the Edinburgh Festival." Diana paused and looked at Wharton. "Your turn, Harry."

"Well two of our invites are twins of yours. To join Aunt Judy at the Moat House, and to join Smithy and Di for the Med cruise."

"Which is out for me," said the Bounder.

The girls stared. They had never seen Smithy retreat so icily behind one of his grim, bitter expressions, and they could not help wondering at the cause. Even Diana, who knew him quite well, looked puzzled. Marjorie betrayed concern.



Bob slapped the Bounder on his shoulder and grinned. "Old Smithy had a real spot of bother on our last visit to France. Is that it, old bean?"

Smithy shrugged Bob's hand away petulantly, "It is, and my father hasn't forgotten it, though I've no idea how he found out. But when we first discussed this cruise he warned me that there'd be no trips ashore for me anywhere on the Riviera within reach of a casino." Smithy stopped and met the puzzled eyes of the girls. "I might as well tell you. I once made a total idiot of myself at Boulogne, at the gaming tables, and did something of which I'm still bitterly ashamed. I must have been out of my senses. I actually---No!" he shook off the hand Wharton put on his arm, "it's true. I actually stooped to theft, telling myself it was only borrowing, after I'd lost every penny I had with me and cleaned Tom out. But for Tom I don't know---"

"What about Tom?" broke in a new voice behind them. "Sorry I'm late, I got held up. What's the matter, Smithy?"

For once Smithy did not greet his chum. "That time in Boulogne. I thought I could skin the tiger. And I felled you for your pains."

All pleasant thoughts of holidays had ebbed from Tom Redwing's sunburnt face. He said quietly: "That's forgotten, long since, Smithy, and you know it. I'd do the same again to stop a friend going headlong into danger. Now forget it, please."

The Bounder's mouth was tight with bitterness. "My father hasn't. He read me a lecture about the casinos. He still doesn't trust me, even though he knows I'm trying to take life a bit more seriously. So no cruise for me under those conditions."

Diana and Marjorie glanced at each other and encountered the same concern in Jemima's expression. The three girls all liked Smithy and enjoyed his company, despite knowing he had a dark side to his reputation. Marjorie in particular had cause to be grateful to him for his efforts to keep her scapegrace brother Peter out of trouble, efforts made entirely on her behalf. The atmosphere had chilled and she sensed an awkwardness from the Famous Five. Smithy looked grim and unrepentant but both Marjorie and Jemima perceived what it had cost him to make that confession. Then Diana clapped her hands.

"They say confession is good for the soul so cheer up." She smiled at the Bounder. "I once blew a whole month's pocket money on lottery tickets---! just had to go on buying them. I never won a bean and my father was furious and refused to give me any money until the next month. So I was subbing everywhere. So what?" she shrugged. "We all do something silly at times."

"Some tea or lemonade, Tom?" Marjorie filled the pause. "And these cream scones with strawberries are delicious."

"Thanks." Tom smiled shyly at her as he accepted the proffered plate while Jemima poured him a glass of lemonade.

The awkwardness passed and Harry Wharton said: "Right, we pass on the cruise for the time being. Now Aunt Judy. She's a darling, the countryside is great and the coast is not far off. She phoned me last week to ask how she could get in touch with you at Cliff House and mentioned a treasure hunt with her latest collection of disadvantaged children. Sounds like a super summer party. And," he risked a sidelong glance at the Bounder, "she thinks the world of old Smithy here. Wouldn't hear a word said against him."

"Hear, hear!" chorused several voices.

"But there's one snag," warned Harry.

"What?"

"Coker;"

The boys groaned.

"Exactly," confirmed Harry. "Can we put up with him for a month?"

"No," said Johnny Bull flatly.

"But perhaps the girls might have a civilising effect on him," said Bob hopefully.

"He can't be as bad as all that, surely," said Babs.

"He's worse than that," groaned Frank Nugent.

"The worsefulness is over the bounds of estimable awfulness," said Hurree Singh, who had been quiet until now but intent. Obviously he was moved to make a heartfelt contribution to the discussion of the awfulness of the great Horace James Coker of the Fifth.

"Well I'm prepared to try to tame him," volunteered Clara.

"We've been trying that for years," sighed Harry. "Anyway, to continue: A friend of my uncle has just acquired a large houseboat, newly fitted out, but has been called away on business. He wondered if we'd like to try it out on a gentle meander round the rivers. I have to admit Aunt Amy isn't too happy about the idea although my uncle was assured that it's perfectly sound. So that's another possibility. The last invite is to join a nationwide sponsored bike ride which on the southern section means we could finish the hols at Cherry place."

"I'm game," said Tomboy Clara. "How about that, kidlets?"

"What if the weather's ghastly?" Diana looked doubtful.

Babs also looked doubtful. "I don't think Bess would manage it."

"Get some of the fat off her," said Clara heartlessly.

"Personally I like a bit of luxury and less discipline," Diana did not seem as keen as Clara. "So that's for further discussion. Think it over. A big bike session, with rules, I imagine. A bit tough. Aunt Judy's invite sounds great but has a snag; Coker. We know Jemima's will be fine and we can easily fix something up until she's free."

"We could always swan around on the boat for the first couple of weeks," said Harry, taking up the summary. "Then there's the cruise; promises decent weather but no Smithy if he's still determined to cut it."

"I am," came the Bounder's implacable tones.

"So that leaves the dig," said Harry. "Tell us a bit about that, Babs, as you've been there already."

"It's at Coldburne, the Saxon settlement near Amberleigh Abbey. We had a great time there, didn't we girls?"

"Except for Connie," Diana reminded her.

"Jack rang me at the weekend!" Babs went on. "He says the society has got a huge grant so we can open up the top field, and the society is to have a heritage centre next year. Jack's finished the restoration of the East wing so he and Jen can put at least ten of us up, and Raymond Handy has offered accommodation as well so we wouldn't be in the camp with the students this time." Babs smiled reminiscently. "I've also had a personal invitation from little Emma who insisted I stay with her. Of course I said I couldn't commit us until we'd discussed our holiday plans with parents. But one thing is certain: Connie is barred."

"Thank heaven for that!"

"Sounds as though it could be okay." The Bounder spoke for the first time with a show of interest. "As long as there's some civilisation within reach."

"But we've forgotten the biggest fly in the ointment," grunted Johnny Bull. "Bunter!"

The boys sighed. "Getting away without the insufferable Fat Owl was always a problem. Somehow those fat ears always managed to pick up a clue. Bunter couldn't be beaten at putting two and two together and spelling holiday with a skill that Mr Quelch must have yearned to find brought into class."

"Well," said Clara, "all the digging and sifting and carrying wouldn't suit Bunter. It can be hard work. Bunter would soon tire."

"What wouldn't suit me?" The fat voice startled them. Bunter had crept up on them so quietly, no doubt hoping to overhear the holiday discussion. "You might have waited for me before you started on the grub," he grumbled, reaching a fat paw over Wharton's shoulder. But a swift strong hand got there first and closed over the flabby marauding paw with a grip of steel. Baulked of the last piece of gâteau, Bunter yelled, "Leggo, you beast! You're breaking my arm!"

"Oh, is this an arm?" grinned Smithy, holding up the said limb in an iron lock. "I thought it was a half ton of lard."

"Ha ha ha!"

"Somebody rescue the rest of the tuck while I roll Bunter into the river," Smithy hung on to the wildly struggling fat owl.

"I'll help," volunteered Nugent. "Bunter wasn't invited."

"Let him go," said Wharton, suddenly mindful of Bessie, who was watching the antics with an alarmed expression. Although there wasn't much love lost between the Bunter siblings there was always the risk of blood proving thicker than water and Miss Bunter had been known to indulge in the occasional somewhat ferocious tantrum.

Reluctantly they released the indigent Bunter as Harry said: "I think we've outlined the possibilities so shall we each decide on our favourite holiday and then meet again here on----"

"No!" hissed Bob Cherry. "Big ears are still flapping round here. Arrange by phone. Right?"

Harry laughed. "By phone, and not here. Okay girls?"

"Agreed," they said, watching the disappointed Bunter still rubbing his aching arm. They gathered up hats and bags and sauntered out along the riverside path, still discussing their fortune in receiving so many generous holiday invitations. Smithy was still moody but suddenly he realised he had an escort as first Diana, then Jemima and then Marjorie came to his side and tried to persuade him to change his mind about the cruise.

"Talk to your father," Marjorie urged him. "Even if you still decide against the cruise don't let this form a breach between you. It's not worth it."

The Bounder remained non-committal but he did say he would think about getting back on friendly terms with his father. The boys exchanged meaning glances as they watched this little episode. Although the Bounder wasn't giving anything away they knew he was enjoying the attention of the Cliff House girls.

"He'll weaken," whispered Bob Cherry.

"Perhaps it's time we had girls at Cliff House," Harry remarked.

"Might work wonders in the reforming line."

For a while Bunter trailed along behind them. He wasn't going to give up so easily. He'd find out where the beasts were going for the hols and he'd be there. Not for worlds would he admit it but any thought of a holiday at home in the fabled luxury of the equally fabled Bunter Court never entered his fat head. That cruise to the Med might fit the bill. Of course Smithy was the worst beast of them all, with feet big enough to match. Old Aunt Judy's place wasn't too bad but Coker was the drawback.... Bob Cherry's place wasn't up to much, like Wharton's, where they didn't treat a special guest with the deference he expected... Delma Castle and the other place the Carstairs had were unknown to Bunter, apart from the odd bits of chatter he'd overheard Bessie telling their mother. If only they'd make up their minds exactly where they were going he could start making plans...

Bunter rolled on, ever hopeful, while the holiday decision remained a delightful mystery, waiting to be solved.

Oh, the happiness of the hols!

(Readers. Which holiday did they eventually decide on? Entries to our Editor by August 31st. Margery will write the story and send a signed and dedicated typescript to the Sender of the first correct entry drawn out of the hat. Because of the length the story is unlikely to be published in C.D. Quarterly issues and serials are not really suited to each other and a summer holiday story could never replace a Christmas mystery in the C.D. Annual.)

A WINNER ON THE POST

The story of Nat Gould

by Steve Holland

Although nowadays he has slipped into obscurity, Nat Gould was, at the turn of the century, one of the biggest sellers of sporting thrillers this country knew. Best known for his tales of the Australian track, some twenty-four million copies of his books were sold to a public[1] who clamoured for his brand of romance and racing; *The Times* listed him, alongside Charles Garvice and Edgar Wallace, as "the most popular novelists in the English-speaking world," and his books were vigorously promoted by his publisher, John Long, with advertising posters and bills to be found in railway stations and elsewhere before the century had reached its teens. During and after the first world war, Gould was amongst the most popular reading of wounded Tommies[2]; in the mid-1930s, dozens of his books were reissued for the tuppenny libraries in hardback by Modern Publishing, and reached an even wider audience in paperback when sixty of his books were reissued by Mellifont Press in the 1930s and 1940s, many of them still being issued in new editions in the 1960s.

Gould has since fallen foul of publishers' shrinking output and changing fashion, although some of his titles have appeared in facsimile reprints in Australia where he is often considered a 'local writer,' despite spending only eleven years in that country. They

were, however, Gould's formative years as a journalist, and at a time when Australian sport would make the pages of newspapers around the world.

Nat Gould's byline appeared on 120 novels in a writing career that spanned 35 years. He usually published four titles a year, sometimes as many as seven, rarely fewer than three, and was so prolific that John Long had 22 novels on their stocks when Gould died[3]. Few of them were masterpieces, but a random dip into one or two offers a taste of the romance and excitement Gould entertained his public with:

"I wish I could take you to Stanton," he said.

"Why not?" she answered immediately.

"Yes - why not?" he said, because he did not know what to answer.

"It would be fun," she said. "But it would shock the country people, wouldn't it?"

"There was a merry, roguish look in her eyes, indicating a fervent desire on her part to make the shock felt.

"Hang the country," said Guy.

"By all means," she replied, "but not the people. That would shock them too much" - *Not So Bad After All* (1897)

"Strange to say, at that moment, as though he knew an enemy was near, Mystery gave a lunge at the bridle and threw up his head. Larry, not being in the best of humour at having to leave the course before the last race, gave vent to his feelings in a good round oath and a savage tug at the bridle. This caused Mystery to pull back, and as he did so he touched Hugh Ralton, who stopped close behind him. The touch startled Mystery, and quick as lightning he lowered his head and lashed out viciously behind with both legs. There was a dull thud, a groan, and then a heavy fall, and Hugh Ralton lay on his back on the grass as still as death." - *Only a Commoner* (1895)

The common plot to many of the books - apart from romances with merry-eyed girls and horses taking justice into their own hooves - was that of a down-at-heels Englishman emigrating to Australia to find his fortune and return home in triumph; he would find gold in Cootgardie, success in the theatres as an actor, or win by a nose in a thrilling last-minute dash for the winning post on an outsider. Gould spiced up his formulaic plotting with local colour, having travelled extensively in Australia, and with his knowledge of the racing and theatrical scene. He rarely strayed from his basic plot - in *Harry Dale's Jockey* he made a gin the winner of the Grand National Steeplechase, and *A Lad of Mettle* was about an English emigrant who found work as a jackaroo and later plays cricket for Australia at Lord's - but wrote with vigour and an obvious love of sport that carried his reader along. When announcing his death, *The Times* wrote- "Mr Gould wrote quickly, but never too quickly to spoil a good story."

Nathanial Gould was born in Manchester on 21 December 1857, the son of a well-to-do tea merchant and was educated at Strathmore House in Southport. Finding he had little interest in the family business or in agriculture when he tried farming, he finally found his calling when a relative helped him get the position of 'editor's pupil' on the *Newark Advertiser* in Nottinghamshire.

After a year, Gould believed himself qualified to call himself a journalist, and decided to seek his fortune in Australia. Borrowing the fare from his mother, he sailed on the *Liguria* from Gravesend in June 1884, and landed in Sydney although two days later he was off to Queensland, having successfully replied to a newspaper advertisement for the job of chief reporter on the *Brisbane Telegraph*. During his three years in Brisbane he met and married Elizabeth Madeline Ruska whilst carving himself out a successful niche as a sports reporter. His flair for writing was noticed by the editor of the *Sydney Referee*, who offered him a job; Gould became 'Verax', the paper's turf writer and tipster and a popular and influential figure in Australian racing.

This was the era of Carbine, the famous Melbourne Cup winner, of jockeys like Hales and Corrigan and bookmaker-gamblers Humphrey Oxenham and Bamey Alien. Gould had the inside track on all of them, and enjoyed a taste for good living, being a familiar sight at Larry Foley's or Tattersall's. Even after a boisterous evening, he would rise at dawn at his home in Redfern to hike four miles over the sandhills to catch the early morning track trials. Then he'd hike back for breakfast and head into town for a shave at Joseph, a barbers shop and tobacconists run by Joe Phillips who ran one of Sydney's best known illegal books. A notoriously bad gambler, Gould had struck lucky one day on a 400-1 double on the Newmarket and Australian Cup, and arrived early to collect his winnings. As he stepped into the building the ancient ceiling caved in, and Phillips was left standing knee-deep in debris. As the dust cleared, he spied a familiar rotund face with its handlebar moustache in the doorway, and quipped: "Cripes, look who's here. No wonder the roof fell in – Nat Gould backed a winner."

Gould first moved into fiction in 1889 when he heard his editor on the *Referee* complain that he could not find an author for a racing serial for the paper. Gould dashed home, thinking it an opportunity to earn himself a few extra pounds, and launched into a story about the Melbourne Cup with the words: "Nobody knew exactly who Jack Marston was." Not even the author, who was making up the plot as he went along each week. *With the Tide* eventually ran for forty-two episodes and only came to an end when the editor thought it was becoming too much of a fixture. Gould went on to write five more serials for the paper, and sent his first effort to London publishers Routledge who bought it out in hard covers in 1892 under the title *The Double Event*. His novels *Jockey Jack* and *Running It Out* appeared in 1892, the year a 50-to-1 outsider won the Melbourne Cup, proving his novels weren't completely unrealistic.

From then on, Gould concentrated on writing sporting thrillers, although as 'Verax' he continued to report on events. One memorable win by Malvolio in 1891 led to some heavy celebrating with trainer James Redfearn on the journey back to Sydney; the two staggered from the train after their all-night party and made their way towards the cab rank...only for Gould to turn and totter back to the carriage to recover the Melbourne Cup trophy.

He continued writing for newspapers such as the *Sunday Times* and *Evening News*, and for eighteen months was editor of the *Bathurst Times*. But in 1895, Gould decided to bring his growing family - which eventually would include three sons and two daughter, Sydney Nathaniel, Herbert Ruska, Doris Isabel, Frederick William and Winifred Madeline - to England and returned in April that year on the Orient liner *Orizaba*, sharing passage with another famous sporting legend, Carbine, who had been purchased by the Duke of Portland as a stud. Always intending to return to Australia, Gould never found the time, as

the demands of his publishers kept him busy for the rest of his life. He lived at Newhaven, a large house with its own stables in Staines Road, Bedfont, Hertfordshire, around the corner from the famous sportsman, Captain Matthew Webb, the first man to swim the Channel.

Older residents recall only one tale about Gould, who enjoyed good living: one day he arrived at the Railway Tavern in a horse-drawn cart, and drank a whole bottle of champagne. The horse knew this well travelled route, but on this occasion the police turned up and he was arrested for being drunk. When the case appeared before the local magistrate, the latter commended the police for their correct action, but dismissed the case anyway, Gould arguing that he was fully in control of himself.

Gould wrote his stories in longhand and, if pushed, could finish a novel in a fortnight. "I never trouble about any particular plot," he once said. "I just write away till I bring the tale to its proper end." It was a writing philosophy he followed successfully for the rest of his life, although when he died, aged 61 on 25 July 1919 after a short illness, the freespending Gould left only £7,800, a significant sum, but only a tenth of what his contemporary Charles Garvice left. The notice of his death in *The Times* commented that "perhaps he was too prolific a writer to strive after literary effects, but if art in any sphere in life finds a basis in the pleasing of a multitude, Nat Gould was an artist with few above his shoulders." [3] In Australia, gambler Barney Alien offered a different kind of tribute: he named a promising colt after one of Gould's best thrillers, *Gambler's Gold*, and the horse later raced with considerable success at Randwick and other Sydney courses.

NOTES

With thanks to Julia Sutherland of the National Library of Australia and local historian Eddie Monday for their help in compiling this article

[1] Exact sales are impossible to estimate accurately, and I have also seen Gould's total sales as high as 35 million.

[2] In a survey cited by Charles Masterman in *England After War* (1923), the authors most in demand were Baroness Orczy Charles Garvice Nat Gould and 'Sexton Blake'.

[3] Eventually, some 29 novels and short story collections appeared after Gould's death, two of which were possibly reprints of earlier novels with new titles. A further novel appeared bylined Nat Gould Jr, presumably written by Gould's son, Sydney Nathaniel Gould

[4] *The Times*. 26 July 1919.

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A HUNDRED TO ONE CHANCE

BY

NAT GOULD

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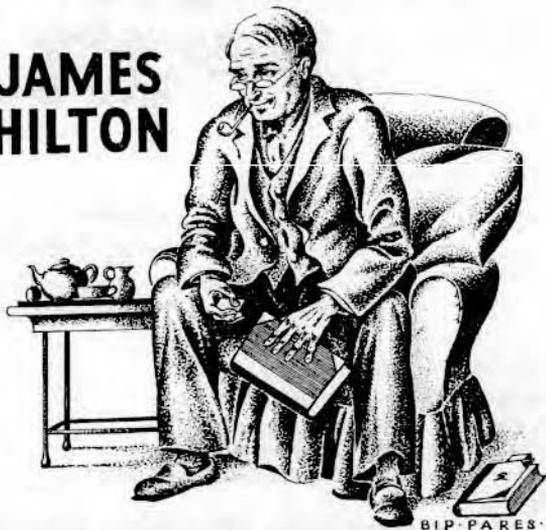
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BIP PARES
by John Hammond

A CHAPTER OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND
SOME MORE STORIES OF MR. CHIPS

TO YOU
MR. CHIPS!

**JAMES
HILTON**



In a previous issue of CD I requested information regarding the artist Bip Pares. Thanks to replies received from a number of readers I am now able to supply some further details about her. (You will notice I use the word 'her'. I had wrongly assumed Bip Pares was a man, but it turns out she was a woman, and a beautiful one.)

Her surname is pronounced Paris, and she was married to a man called Christopher Bradby. They honeymooned in the mountains of Sikkim, meeting up with the Tilman/Shipton Everest expedition of 1938. Afterwards she wrote an enchanting book, lavishly illustrated, called *Himalayan Honeymoon*. The book was published by Hodder in 1940 and is now highly collectable. She designed the covers for two of Eric Shipton's mountaineering books, *Blank on the Map* and *Nanda Devi*.

She illustrated or designed dust jackets for numerous novels published by Hodder and Stoughton, including Victor Canning's *Mr Finchley Discovers His England* and

Polycarp's Progress, A. E. W. Mason's *Fire Over England* and Francis Parkinson Keyes' *Also the Hills*. She was a prolific dust jacket artist throughout the 1930s and 1940s.

She will be particularly remembered for her work in illustrating the novels of James Hilton. In addition to drawing the jacket designs for *Goodbye Mr Chips*, *To You Mr Chips* and *We Are Not Alone*, she also drew the cover designs for the Pan paperback editions of *Random Harvest* and *So Well Remembered*. Her attractive illustrations for the first edition of *Goodbye Mr Chips* in 1934 (reprinted in many later editions, both hardback and paperback) seem to capture the essence of Hilton's character, the gentle schoolmaster Mr Chipping, so well portrayed by Robert Donat in the classic film version.

NEVER KNEW THEY'D BEEN ABROAD

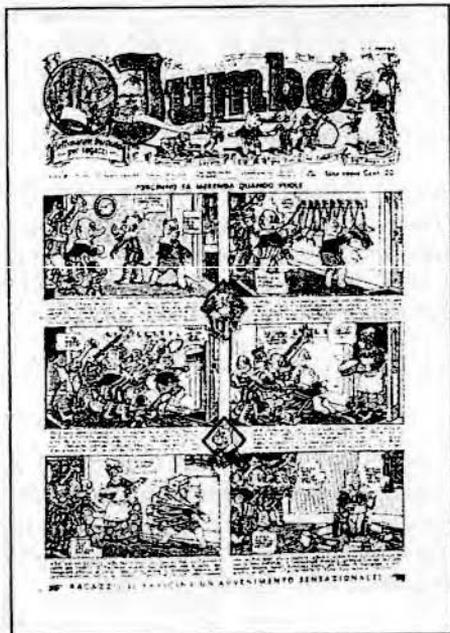
The Bruin Boys in Italy in the 1930s

by R. Hibbert

Jumbo

Anno di nascita:

1932



I was a regular and avid reader of *The Rainbow* in the late 1920s and the early 30s. Must have read pretty well every word too, because I can remember, aged six, having a doorstep discussion with the man who delivered my copy and pointing out that on the masthead were the words EVERY MONDAY. I was getting my copy on a Saturday and I only half believed his statement that I was receiving the paper two days early and not five days late.

But, regardless of whatever day of the week *The Rainbow* flopped through the letterbox, for two, getting on for three years, I was a close student of the lifestyle of the Bruin Boys. And, on the whole, it was fairly cosy. True, they had no parents, and Mrs Bruin - who without any help in the house was expected to give them board, lodging and clothes - couldn't manage much in the way of teaching. The

Boys never got as far as Long Multiplication, never mind Long Division and, although they could read and write, their spelling wasn't up to much.

BUT, they had guaranteed fluffy white snow everywhere from mid- December to mid-January and personal visits from Father Christmas on the 25th, some sort of boat race

in March, large Easter eggs at Easter, a visit to the fair at Whitsuntide and a whole four weeks at the seaside in the summer.

We have now reached the point of this article.

Mrs Bruin would take the boys to a boarding house at some small seaside town, called Winkleton or Pebblesea Bay, or something like that, and, apart from a helter-skelter, lacking in amusements. There was a beach and there were cliffs with caves and that was it. So they made their own amusements which usually caused trouble for Mrs B. All their holidays were taken, so far as the reader could judge, in ENGLAND.

So, when I bought a copy of *IL GRANDE LIBRO DELFUMETTO - THE BIG BOOK OF THE COMIC* - (edizioni paoline, 1988) in Milan I was surprised to find that the Bruin Boys had their own comic in Italy in 1932. *IL GRANDE LIBRO* etc is by Piero Zanotto and traces the history of the Italian comic from its early 20th Century beginnings to 1988, and there hasn't been much change since then. Nowadays their comics are in the American comic book style, but in the 1920s and 30s were in the same tabloid format that was used in England.

Sig. Zanotto gives us many pictures of the covers of the comics and writes a short account of each paper. Herewith my translation of his words on the re-christened *RAINBOW*:

JUMBO:- first published in 1932

JUMBO was one of many weeklies published by Vecchi. It followed the pattern of the English comic *THE RAINBOW* and most of the illustrated material was taken from that paper. The front page had a picture story about the Bruin Boys by Foxwell. They were humanised animals, school friends of the little elephant Jumbo, and pupils of a kind of boarding school run by Mrs Bruin (La Signora Bruin). Although there were speech balloons, underneath the pictures were fairly lengthy descriptions of what was happening. This was a firm English tradition."

Jumbo, Tiger Tim's right hand man in England, becomes the star character and has the comic named after him. The story heading "Porchino fa merenda quando vuole" means something like "Porkyboy can have lunch whenever he wants" and the caption at the bottom of the page "Ragazzi, si avvicina un avvenimento sensazionali" means "Children, a sensational event is coming up". Probably a Free Gift of the cardboard cut-out variety.

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.

Part One

The edition of the companion papers from time to time in his chats, would publish lists which, according to his readers' letters, showed the most popular characters appearing in the stories.

In the case of the *Magnet*, I seem to remember that Vernon Smith and Bob Cherry generally vied for the readers' approbation.

I suppose because of his sometimes rather hasty temper, Harry Wharton seldom seemed to head the list. This always seemed a pity to me – I invariably thought his numerous sterling qualities far outweighed any negative ones. I don't think there were many who would have made a better captain of the Remove. Switching for the moment to Saint James (St. Jim's) and Rookwood – schools I enjoyed these almost as much as Greyfriars. I think Harry was a far more believable character than Tom Merry or "Uncle James" (Jimmy Silver). But to return to Greyfriars, I would like to pen a few lines on a character I always really enjoyed reading about; not only in his generally supporting role, but in the few but very important occasions when he took the lead.

I am speaking of Herbert, Lord Mauleverer. When 'Mauly' first arrived (*Magnet* 184) "The Schoolboy Millionaire" – he calmly hired a coach and horses and, with several Removites picked up at Friardale station, drove at breakneck speed to the school, through the gates and into the quadrangle.

We don't hear too much of the Schoolboy Lord in the early days; I suppose you could say one of the landmarks was in *Magnet* 776 (1922) entitled "The Ghost of 'Mauleverer Towers'", reprinted in the 1940 Holiday Annual as "Sir Fulke's Warning!".

The Famous Five and Jack Drake, the erstwhile member of the Remove, now Ferrers Locke's boy assistant, are invited to spend Xmas with Mauly at his ancestral home. (Billy Bunter is conspicuous by his absence at the Towers on this occasion.) It is in this story that we are first introduced to Mauly's cousin, Brian Mauleverer, a wastrel and gaolbird. Mauly, possibly against his better judgement, had kindly invited him to The Towers for the festive season. Instead of showing his gratitude, Brian, playing on the old superstition that if a gauntlet drops from the armoured figure of Sir Fulke Mauleverer, it is a warning of death, tries to bring about Mauly's demise in order to become the heir to the earldom. Thanks to Jack Drake his baneful efforts are thwarted.

We hear no more of Brian Mauleverer until the second South Seas series in 1938, *Magnets* Nos. 1589-1598. Strangely enough neither Mauly nor the Famous Five recognise him, although Mauly found him strangely familiar. Mind you by this time, Brian has become a beachcomber, sunburnt, and sporting a beard and long hair; known as Isabel Dick he certainly presented a completely different appearance. However, sandwiched between these stories there are several occasions when Mauly's star is in ascendance. If I fail to mention one of your personal favourites I ask for your forgiveness. My next selection is the "High Oaks" series. *Magnets* 1043-1049 (1928), Harold Skinner out to cause trouble. Out of spite, he lets Dr. Locke, the headmaster see a single separate sheet from Mr. Quelch's celebrated 'History of Greyfriars'. In it he refers to a long past former headmaster – a certain Dr. Trumington who had flogged not wisely but too well – so harsh had been his treatment of both masters and boys that he caused a barring out led by Lovelace of the Sixth, the then Captain of the school. These rough notes in Mr. Quelch's

handwriting ran: "The Head was arbitrary and tyrannical. It is painful to write such words of the headmaster of Greyfriars, but it is the undoubted fact. His tactless interference in the Form-rooms, between masters and boys, earned him both dislike and contempt." No date is mentioned and Dr. Locke mistakenly thinks his old friend and colleague is describing him! This misunderstanding results in the Remove master's dismissal: his form, certain that their master's discharge is an act of dictatorship, leave the school in protest.

Mauleverer takes command and buys up a large neighbouring mansion and turns it into a school. At first, in spite of all inducements, Mr. Quelch refuses to take control, and the reader is treated to a number of humorous efforts on Mauly's part to keep order.

For the benefit of those who have yet to read this great series, I'll not spoil it for them by relating how the situation is resolved. A little farther on in the *Magnet's* history comes, in my humble opinion, a much-underestimated series. I refer to the Franz Kranz – Bob Cherry kidnapping set of stories. Even the razor-keen Vernon Smith is hoodwinked by the old boy of the school, and kidnapped. It is sad to say his main reason for trying to find the missing member of the Famous Five was to quash his own expulsion. Redwing, the bouncer's own special chum is the next victim to fall foul of the kidnapper; but it is the 'lazy' schoolboy Lord, contemptuously alluded to as "a yawning noodle" by the kidnapper's man, Bane, who finally solves the mystery of "The Vanished Schoolboys". I love the sequence in which Mauly gives the famous five his seasons for deducing that Franz Kranz, is the kidnapper. "There's one thing you seem to have overlooked, Mr. Sherlock Holmes!" said Johnny Bull, with a grin.

"Lots of things, very likely; but what's the particular point?"

"The kidnapper's been seen – and he's a man with a beard and a nose like a big tomato. Kranz hasn't a beard, and his nose is a little knob."

"Dear man!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Well, what do you mean?" demanded Johnny warmly. "Think Kranz can alter the shape of his nose whenever he likes?"

"Yaas!"

"You howling ass----"

"Know a fellow named Wibley?" asked Mauleverer.

"Eh! Do you mean Wibley of the Remove?"

"Yaas!"

"Of course I know him, fathead! What about Wib, ass?"

"Member he does theatrical stunts?"

"Yes, you duffer! What about it?"

"Ever seen him with a different nose on?"

"Lots of times! Oh!" ejaculated Johnny.

"You mean that the kidnapper may be got up in a false nose?"

"Why not?" yawned Lord Mauleverer.

"He could hardly do kidnapping stunts in his own jolly old name and character."

Mauly even risks bringing down Mr. Quelch's wrath on his head when he borrows the key to the vaults. This is done so that he can spread a carpet of marking ink for the kidnappers to tread in, and thus leave a trail of inky footprints. These proceedings earn him three canings in one day; two from Quelch and one from Loder, the sixth form prefect.

Even when, through the exertion of his own brainpower, the juniors are found and rescued, he still puts in a good word for Vernon-Smith, who was under the sentence of expulsion when kidnapped.

-“And Mauleverer – my dear boy –“

“Yaas, sir! But it was really Smithy who did it sir!” said Lord Mauleverer.

“Smithy was the man who first got a clue and followed it up”.

The Bounder gave Mauly a grateful glance.

(To be continued)

A RIVAL FOR SHERLOCK

by Derek Ford

Last year was the centenary of the publication of Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and there was renewed controversy over the collaboration of Bertram Fletcher Robinson in its inception. They had plotted out the tale, it seems, on a golfing holiday to Cromer, on the Norfolk coast, in March 1901. But the book is always printed with just one name on the cover.

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the great detective.
Vol. XVIII--13.

Some substance to that collaboration I have recently come across in the pages of *Pearson's Magazine* in the announcement below, probably of 1902 or 1903. Fletcher Robinson, a Daily Express writer, died in 1907, but the exact year of publication could be ascertained from finding Volume XVIII – 13 of the magazine, leading to *Lady's Home Magazine* and Addington Peace, a name unknown to detective fiction fans. I now hope someone acquainted with the British Library will take up the search.

I wonder if you would get in touch with Derek Hinrich over his *Blakiana* article "The Living Image". I am sure "The Echo Murders" was never based on "The Terror of Tregarwith" in the SBL – there was no 'Echo' for the film title in that book.

As I remember it, Blake was investigating the acoustic murder (hence the 'Echo') of everyone in two small Welsh(?) villages. The clue was a poster of a travelling circus

which Blake noticed in both deserted pubs. It was really more “Knockout” style than SBL. I cannot recall anything of the “Meet Sexton Blake” film.

Perhaps something happened on these American tapes in translation of Derek’s computer. I hope all will be explained in the next C.D.

Derek Hinrich replies:

The London OBBC’s *Sexton Blake Index* definitely identifies the source of *The Echo Murders* as SBL3/47, *The Terror of Tregarwith*, and reading the book and viewing the film (of which I now have a copy) confirms this. My summary of it is accurate. I do not of course know why the film’s title was chosen. There is an echo in the sea cave sequences and I suppose that is the reason.

I am afraid Mr. Ford’s memory is playing him false, at least as regards the plot of the film. The plot he remembers certainly sounds intriguing – rather like one of *The Avengers* episodes with Patrick Macnee and Diana Rigg – but I am afraid I do not recognise it. Could it be that of one of the ITV *Sexton Blake* series of the late ‘60s? I only saw one of these, that adapted from *UJ11460, The Red Swordsman*, by Robert Murray Graydon.

I must apologise, incidentally, for a mistake in my article. The reference in the fifth and sixth lines of the seventh paragraph should be to *Meet Sexton Blake* and not to *The Echo Murders* which does not, however, affect this issue.



ThrillerUK *The magazine of Cult Fiction*

ThrillerUK is a small press fan magazine that celebrates 'Cult Fiction' both old and new. It is named in honour of *The Thriller*, the pre-war 'Story paper' which featured the likes of the Saint and Norman Conquest.

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BETTY HOPTON
(A tribute from Darrell Swift)

To those readers of *The Collectors' Digest* who are not yet aware of it, with deep regret I have to report the passing of Betty Hopton who died in hospital on the 31st of May.

Betty was a regular contributor to our magazine and was well known at the various hobby meetings she attended with her loving husband, Johnny. When it became known that she had a tremendous collection of *Noddy* memorabilia, she soon became a celebrity in her own right. As soon as a report was made, the media got on to it and in no time, various newspapers, magazines, radio and television reporters were going along to Betty's and Johnny's home to view the large display and to take pictures and make interviews. Betty soon became very well known and, indeed, an international celebrity for the foreign media soon got involved.

She was interested in reading and collecting in nearly all areas of our hobby – she was a fan of *Greyfriars*, *St. Jim's*, the stories of *Edwy Searles Brooks*, the *Just William* books, *Schoolboys' Own Library* and *Schoolgirls' Own Library* as well as having an interest in various annuals. Rupert was also a favourite of hers.

Betty suffered from severe arthritis for much of her life and depended very much on Johnny for support, and to enable her to get to the many meetings she loved to attend. Who can forget Betty and her enchanting smile, despite the severe problems she had: she and Johnny must have had their down moments, but they supported each other, and always had a good word and a smile for others.

In their early days, Betty and Johnny were a music and singing duo – a very talented couple. Betty could not have had a better husband than dear Johnny – his love for her was beyond question. One just had to look at the way he supported Betty – despite his own health problems.

To those who met Betty, it was a privilege to know her. Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to Johnny as he mourns the loss of the wonderful lady he loved so much.

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REVIEWS BY MARY CADOGAN

BEATRIX POTTER TO HARRY POTTER: PORTRAITS OF CHILDREN'S WRITERS, by Julia Eccleshare (£15.00).

Published by the National Portrait Gallery, to mark their current exhibition, this handsome hardback includes 70 pictures of authors (mostly photographs) of which 35 are in colour.

It is a delight to have in book form this "gallery" of greatly loved writers: most of us will find our favourites represented – everyone from Frank Richards, W.E. Johns, Enid Blyton, Richmal Crompton, Angela Brazil and Anthony Buckeridge to Edward Ardizzone, C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Jacqueline Wilson, Philip Pullman and J.K. Rowling.

Julia Eccleshare has contributed excellent, succinct but informative articles about them all and, as well as providing interesting facts, she assesses, in the limitations of the allowed space, the reasons for the popularity of individual books and authors.

This is indeed a book to treasure. It can be obtained through the National Portrait Gallery, St. Martin's Place, London, WC2H 0HE, and, presumably, from bookshops.

ALISON UTLEY: CREATOR OF LITTLE GREY RABBIT by Denis Judd (Sutton Publishing, £8.99).

How good it is to see this biography (originally published in 1986) back in print. Alison Uttley's stories for young children about Little Grey Rabbit, Sam Pig and their engaging animal associates are well known. So too are her wonderfully atmospheric books for older children, such as *A Traveller in Time*, and her essays and autobiographical accounts of country life. Denis Judd's illuminating book about her deservedly ranks with his other distinguished biographies (his subjects include King George V, Prince Philip and Jawa Harlal Nehru).

Denis Judd had access to Alison's 40 volumes of unpublished diaries, and from these and further meticulous researches he gives us a vivid picture of the long and often deeply troubled life of this highly talented, strong-willed, competitive and sometimes ruthless author. He also conveys her "unquenchable curiosity, fine mind, ... sensitive spirit and unshakeable resolve".

Alison was born on a farm in Derbyshire in 1884 and she died in 1976. She trained as a scientist at Manchester University, where she met the man who became her husband. Tragically, he was to commit suicide, leaving her to earn a living for herself and her son. As Denis Judd records, she did so, brilliantly: "...she achieved the fame she craved and the financial security she needed by the heroic exertion of her chief talent – that of a born writer."

Alison achieved physical security but psychological security seems to have eluded her: personal and family relationships were difficult, and it seems that her affection for her only son, John, was so obsessive that it seriously damaged his life. (Alison persuaded him to cancel his wedding the day before it was due to take place, and when later on, he *did* marry, she made no secret of her dislike for his wife. Shortly after Alison's death, John – like his father – took his own life.)

However, despite the darker aspects of Alison Uttley's life, we shall always be grateful to her for her fine, and so often serene, studies of country life. Denis Judd

skilfully builds a portrait in depth of this resilient author, and conveys the moods and quality of her works.

***THE SPYFLYERS* by Captain W.E. Johns: limited edition published by Norman Wright, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, Herts, WD19 4JL.**

Many of us relish the First World War Biggles stories which have a very special atmosphere and vitality. Norman Wright has now published *The Spyflyers*, Johns's only non-Biggles novel with a Great War flying theme. It was originally serialised during 1933 in *The Gem*; then, later in the same year, it appeared as a hardback from John Hamilton, and in 1938 was reprinted in *The Boys' Friend Library*. It is good that this story, rich in the thrills and chills of aviation and espionage is once again available. (Alex, my husband, thinks it is the best story he has read of Captain W.E. Johns.)

It is now enhanced by an informative Introduction by Jennifer Schofield, and a zesty coloured front cover illustrated by Andrew Skilleter who has also contributed a black and white line frontispiece. As a bonus the covers of the *Boys' Friend Library* and John Hamilton editions are also reproduced in colour, and each copy of this limited edition reprint carries the signatures of Andrew Skilleter, Jennifer Schofield and Norman Wright.

The heroes of *The Spyflyers* are an engaging and intrepid duo, Captain Rex Lovell R.F.C. and his Observer, Tony Fraser, who have been at school and university together. Their aeronautical skills and derring-do, plus an ability to speak German, result in their being sent (as volunteers, of course!) on missions behind enemy lines which demand every ounce of their courage and quick-wittedness. Adventures come thick and fast, from the dog-fight which starts in the first paragraph to the complicated twists and turns of spying and counter-espionage which Rex and Tony have to unravel.

A point made perceptively in the Introduction is that, because readers never learn what Rex and Tony look like, and because they are always referred to as "boys" rather than men, "they seem to become representatives of all the young officers of the time, as well as individuals". It might also be noted that *The Gem* and the *Boys' Friend Library* were particularly designed for young readers rather than adults: there seems no doubt therefore that the original readers of *The Spyflyers* would, because of this more "boyish" than "manly" approach, have strongly empathised with Rex and Tony.

It is, of course, important not to reveal now to potential readers the mysteries and puzzles of the book's plot. However, as well as cliff hanging excitements, *The Spyflyers* provides serious reflections on the perilous exploits which are demanded from espionage agents, and our heroes plunge into their spying missions with their eyes open to the hazards involved. They are frequently reminded of the difference between the death in action of a pilot and that of a spy, whose work is largely unknown and unsung: "The man who gets killed in the fury of combat dies a soldier's death: the man who faces a firing party against a blank wall in the cold grey of dawn, does not."

There are intriguing ironies as well as mysteries and adventures for Tony and Rex. On several occasions, for the purpose of concealment they have to wear German uniforms and to fly a captured enemy machine. This produces fearful challenges when Rex and Tony, in their "hun" garb and roles, are sometimes in danger of being shot down by R.F.C. pilots. At all costs, of course, Rex and Tony wish to avoid wounding, killing or bringing down British pilots so they are hard-pressed to survive. Similar identity crises occur on the ground for them behind enemy lines.

How they cope with hazards and obstacles like these – and many others – makes rewarding reading, and happily Johns never completely submerges, in the convolutions of espionage, his wonderful flair for describing the exhilaration of flight, or the dangers of flack – and – battle-ridden skies in wartime.

(If you wish to order a copy of *The Spyflyers* do not delay: this is a strictly limited edition. The book has to be ordered from Norman Wright at the address given above. It costs £20.50 plus post and packing: UK £1.40, Europe £2.40, USA/Can. £4.05, rest of the world £4.35.)

Another most interesting publication from Norman Wright is *G.H. TEED (1886-1938): A Life of Adventure* by Steve Holland (whose work is well known to C.D. readers). This 44 page booklet is both a biography and a bibliography of Teed, one of the best writers of the Sexton Blake saga, and of other detective and adventure stories for boys. As Steve Holland says, "Teed's writing was not only prolific – it was good." He had a flair for creating colourful characters and extremely atmospheric stories.

Serge Heber Teed was born in Canada in 1886, the son of a prosperous merchant. He travelled a great deal during his early life, and this booklet provides hitherto unknown, or barely known, details about his travels and the adventures resulting from them.

It also comprises a perceptive study of Teed's writing: "His contribution to Blake was to give him the world to play in", and of course to create characters as rich and multi-faceted as George Marsden Plummer, Dr. Huxton Rymer, Yvonne, Roxanne and "a formidable cast... that Teed would return to time and again".

Teed achieved success as a writer – though not, perhaps, happiness and contentment. He married three times and, sadly, died "of every disease in the book", but mainly through cirrhosis of the liver, brought on, apparently, by heavy drinking.

Enthusiasts of Teed's stories will be pleased to have this informative and lively account of his life and work. It can be ordered from Norman, at the address given above, for £5.00 (U.K.), £5.25 (Europe), £6.00 (USA and Canada) and £6.25 (rest of the world). These prices include postage.

ENID BLYTON: An Illustrated Bibliography. Part 1: 1922–1942, by Tony Summerfield

Most of us who are too old to have enjoyed Enid Blyton's books in our childhood have nevertheless later in our lives been caught up in her appeal. I remember, at the age of eleven or so, discovering, buying and wallowing in her colourful weekly, *SUNNY STORIES*, even though I felt that I was then far too old for it: Hers is a very potent magic, touching several generations, and Tony Summerfield of the Enid Blyton Society has done yeoman work in researching and recording her prolific achievements.

This present Bibliography is a *tour de force* which no student of popular literature and illustration should be without. Almost 200 pages long, it has delightful coloured covers which reproduce pictures and covers from some of Enid's early books. Inside, as well as astoundingly detailed bibliographical information, we find literally hundreds of black and white reproductions of covers and illustrations from the books and magazines.

As well as celebrating the writing skills of Enid Blyton, this book is also a tribute to her many illustrators. The tremendous range of their pictures is well conveyed, and it is good that Tony Summerfield has been able to identify so many of the artists.

The book works at two levels. Although first and foremost it has the serious purpose of listing (as far as humanly possible) all of Enid's works over the twenty-year period covered, it is also a feast of nostalgic gems. We can use it as a reference book, or we can simply look lovingly at the pages and pages of engaging illustrations.

As a Bibliography it is not only extraordinarily comprehensive but genuinely 'user-friendly'. Having this volume, which is Part 1, in my possession, I now long for Part 2 and, so prolific was Enid Blyton, the several other bibliographical volumes that must still be to come! Tony Summerfield's book can be ordered from The Enid Blyton Society, 93 Milford Hill, Salisbury, Wilts SP1 2QL at £14.95, plus £1.00 for postage and packing.

* * * * *

Jennings Encore Une Fois!

by Andrew Pitt

The annual Jennings Meeting was held at the White Hart, Lewes on Saturday 15 June. Darrell Swift welcomed all including Anthony Buckeridge and his family. Anthony's son Tim presented a selection of Anthony's recent fan mail, some very poignant. One correspondent rhetorically asked whether the Jennings books will 'last' and answered that as long as boys remain boys and men recall being boys, they will. Val Biro told us the story behind the new book of previously uncollected Rex Milligan short stories published by David Schutte: Peter Hicks had discovered the 16 stories originally published in 'Eagle' and illustrated by Mazure. In his new artwork and illustrations Val had decided to echo Mazure's style. David Bathurst then gave us an informal quiz where we had to guess the missing phrase from Jennings extracts.

The highlight of the day was a series of 10 scenes acted by a party of French children from Thierry Chevrier's school who had come over especially for the Meeting. These were excellently done (in English) showing great preparation. Everyone was charmed. Peter Singleton then recounted nostalgically the place of train journeys in the Jennings books including the hilarious tale where Jennings and Darbishire are 'lost' and then join the search party looking for themselves! Warwick Sickling from New Zealand recalled that his obsession with books started with Rex Milligan. Darrell told us that Diarmaid Jennings—on whom Anthony partly based Jennings—is a little frailer. Darrell also identified the dedicatees in the front of the Jennings books. Jonathan Cooper, a classics master at a prep school, then considered Jennings as a classical hero: masters appear as god-like figures; as Achilles had his boon companion Patroclus, so Jennings had Darbishire; even monsters are slain, eg. Jennings does actually bowl out Mr Wilkins. For Anthony's forthcoming 90th birthday, Jonathan then declaimed a Latin Address in praise of Anthony in the manner of those honoured by the Universities; this was really well done. (I don't recall the man who taught me Latin being like Jonathan. Jonathan even reads Jennings stories to the boys before 'Lights Out': what a life!)

Another schoolmaster, Philip Lindley, gave us a nice analysis of the staff at Linbury in 'Behind the Staff Room Door'. Philip's message was that Boys will be Boys but Teachers must be Teachers. Well put. Sir! Throughout the day Corin Buckeridge, Anthony's other son, performed songs from *Jennings Abounding* - the Musical. Many were very witty. If you know Richard Stilgoe, you have some idea. The French schoolchildren then sang Happy Birthday to Anthony; and they were to visit him at his home the next day. Other news was that there might be a new TV series. So ended a very good day. Thanks again, Darrell.

* * * * *

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By FRANK RICHARDS

Going at almost a snail's pace up Regent Street, Billy Bunter and the Famous Five were hailed by a bunch of fellows in Greyfriars caps.



NEWS OF THE OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUBS

SOUTH WEST O.B.B.C.

At the beginning of our Spring meeting on 19th May we were told the news that Johnnie and Betty Hopton would not be joining us for a while as Betty was in hospital after a big operation. We were all sorry to know this and signed a card to wish her a speedy recovery.

Una Hamilton Wright started the afternoon showing us, and talking on, letters which she had received from her Uncle, Frank Richards, when she was young. These showed how interested he was in her School progress in such subjects as Latin, music, poetry and literary criticism, etc. By the way, the name Una comes from Spencer's "Faery Queen".

Andrew Pitt then told us about Kingsgate, Kent, where Frank Richards lived, and explained which different parts were used in the stories in the *Magnet*, including the activities of the smugglers in the area.

When we came back from our study tea, Laurence Price told us he had been coming to the S.W. Club regularly for 10 years, and said how he had enjoyed these meetings. He went on to tell us of his childhood reading, including Rupert, Eagle, and Toby Twirl amongst others. As he had brought along copies of these books we were able to refresh our memories.

To conclude the meeting Tim Salisbury played a recording of "The Myth of Greyfriars" (BBC) which Terry Jones had sent to Tim a few years ago. We miss Terry, who can no longer come to meetings.

The S.W. Club has been flourishing for over 20 years and welcomes any enthusiasts in the S.W. area or S. Wales to attend our meetings. Ring 01934 626032 for information.

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

At our April meeting ten members gathered at the Willingham village home of Keith Hodkinson.

After our usual short business session, Keith talked about the use of special effects in the cinema since the start of the last century. In talking about the pioneers of trick photography he mentioned the many techniques they had developed. Their efforts were eventually recognised by The Motion Picture Academy who presented an award for special effects in the Cinema – for most years from 1939. Beginning with an excerpt from a 1903 film (*The Great Train Robbery*) – Keith provided a commentary on the SFX techniques used – as he continued to mention and to show us excerpts from films up to the recent Titanic (via such milestones as the 1936 film *In Old Chicago* and the 1970's Star Wars saga).

ADRIAN PERKINS

NORTHERN O.B.B.C

Our April Meeting saw Derek Marsden with us as our speaker from Liverpool. We were also delighted to have three other visitors with us from that area and it was good to see Richard Burgon with us - on vacation from university. Derek's presentation was entitled "The Education Process in the 'Big Five' - Let Battle commence". Derek is an expert on the "Big Five" of the Thomson papers - "The Hotspur" being designed as a story paper.

Derek fascinated us with a run-down of the school stories that appeared in the papers - who can forget "Red Circle" - and told us how some of the plots were designed, and sometimes stories repeated in future editions of other papers. We were amused by some of the titles - and indeed, the précis of the plots! Some were incredible, to say the least, and certainly unlike the activities at Greyfriars! Without doubt, this must have been Derek's most fascinating talk, for which he had done much research and he held us enthralled for the whole proceedings.

JOHNNY

BULL MINOR

At our May meeting we were pleased to welcome Keith Kormington who was making his annual visit to the club from Thailand.

Joan Coleman concluded her talk on the life and work of Edith Nesbit, dealing not only with her development as a writer of children's novels, but also with her somewhat unconventional love life. It seems that she would have been quite at home in these more enlightened times!

Geoffrey Good then read from Magnet No 1110; Fisher T. Fish had complained about his tuck being bagged, but on the higher plane where Mr Quelch dwelt 'comestibles had been purloined' and someone was going to suffer. No prizes for guessing who.

Those of us attending our June meeting were saddened to hear of the death of Betty Hopton. Paula Johnson presented a survey of the historical detective story, beginning in Roman times with Marcus Diddius Falco, the detective created by Lindsay Davis, through the dark ages to sister Fidelma by Peter Tremayne, and Judge Dee by Robert van Gulik, then the ever popular Cadfael, on to 18th century fictional detectives and finally Victorian detectives such as Willam Marsh and Amelia Peabody. Very entertaining. Chris Scholey then reminded us what a good writer of school stories was our own Eric Fayne, with his tales of Slade and Mr. Buddle.

CHRIS SCHOLEY

LONDON O.B.B.C.

A special meeting took place on 7th April at John Wernham's Clinic in Maidstone to celebrate his 40 years as Club President.

Gail Roots and her colleague Rhona had prepared an excellent buffet lunch which had something delicious for every palate, and the tables were adorned with beautiful floral decorations. In addition, there were various toasts and speeches. Roger Coombes presided over a tribute to John Wernham's forty glorious years as President (celebrated also on a splendid commemorative menu card). Fittingly, expert Hamiltonian Roger Jenkins who has known Mr. Wernham for fifty years, was first to speak, offering his reminiscences of their early meetings in Kensington, and numerous trips to Folkestone: "it always seemed to be sunny".

Mary Cadogan was next to pay tribute, celebrating the "lustre and distinction" that Mr. Wernham brings to the Club, and drawing attention to his great dedication to the London O.B.B.C. and *The Hobby*; with Museum Press publications keeping Hamilton's work very much alive. Comparing Mr. Wernham to Colonel Wharton, Mary read from the excellent "Courtfield Cracksman" series to illustrate her point.

The irrepressible Darrell Swift from the Northern O.B.B.C. offered his own jovial and enthusiastic tribute, recounting how he had Mr. Wernham to blame for the fact that he had joined the Club in 1975.

As Mark noted, "I say, you chaps, the grub's all right!" and Audrey had produced a delicious fruit cake, which was graced by an excellent illustration of the Fat Owl by our old friend Bob Whiter.

Next it was the turn of one of the club's new boys to speak. Len Cooper lamented the fact that he was too young to have ever had the opportunity to run down to the newsagent's to buy a story paper with "a farthing, like Ray did," to which Ray responded dryly, "thanks very much!" As Roger Coombes noted, "at least he didn't say 'groat!'" Len told us how he got started with the works of Frank Richards, when he borrowed three Bunter books from the library as a youth. His interest was rekindled a mere twenty-seven years later. Len's enthusiastic and good-humoured address was most entertaining.

Ray Hopkins of the Sixth Form had an amusing reading for us, from a 1908 *Magnet*, detailing Bob Cherry's arrival at Greyfriars, which fitted in very well with the proceedings.

Another new boy was next. Andrew Pitt spoke with clarity and passion about what it was to be a Hamiltonian, in a resonant presentation which excellently summed up many aspects of the appeal of Hamilton's work.

Finally, John Wernham spoke to the Club. "It doesn't seem like forty years," he said. John reminisced about days gone by, remembering how he had been "transferred from the drab world of wartime to the real world of Greyfriars and St. Jim's". His closing words struck a particular chord: "When I'm tired or jaded, give me half an hour with the old books and I'm cured at once."

A warm welcome was waiting for London O.B.B.C. members at the historic and picturesque King John's House, Romsey, on Sunday, 12th May, for a luncheon meeting organised by Roy and Gwen Parsons.

The June meeting took place at Len Cooper's home in Newport, Pagnell.

Len presented an item entitled "Kingsgate: A Journey's End", which was an account of a visit made by himself and Andrew Pitt to the Thanet Coast where they visited Roselawn, the house in which the great Frank Richards spent the last thirty-five years of his life. Len's enormous television played an important part in what Len called a "multi-media extravaganza... or 'video' as it is sometimes known." Len's talk provided a detailed portrait of the area in which Mr. Richards lived; and the video footage was very evocative of its breezy seaside location and scenes from the great man's stories. Featured in the video was footage of the nearby "Captain Digby" pub, which prompted Bill Bradford to mention that it was on the beach down below that he had proposed to his wife, Thelma.

VIC PRATT
