

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Vol. 57

No. 658

JUNE 2003

The Story Paper
Collectors'
Digest



The Schoolgirl's Own



2

A GALLANT RESCUE!

(An incident from the grand long complete story of the girls of Morcové School, contained in this issue.)

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W.H. GANDER

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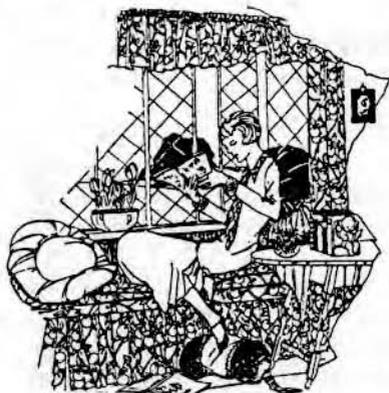
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THE EDITOR'S CHAT

I hope that when this issue of the CD reaches you we shall be having beach-and-deck-chair weather, so that outdoor reading can be enjoyed by us all. Whenever I read a summer number of *The Magnet* or *The Schoolgirl* I am, for a moment, transported to golden days in the 1930s when, as a schoolgirl, I sat in our swinging garden-hammock blissfully savouring the adventures of Harry Wharton, Barbara Redfern and their respective "Cos".

Reading *William* stories also turns back the years: I am very pleased to be able to inform CD readers that my biography of Richmal Crompton has just been reprinted by Sutton Publishing. This new edition of *Richmal Crompton: the Woman Behind Just William* also includes a lively and from-the-heart foreword by Martin Jarvis, whose cassette-recorded readings of William and Bunter (and so much else) are an abiding delight. The publishers are kindly arranging a special price for any CD reader who wishes to buy a copy of this new edition. (The normal retail price is £7.99 but, as you will see from the enclosed order form, it is offered to you at £6.00, post-free.) Orders direct to the publishers, please.

We have all been reading about Billy Bunter for ages, and his notorious exclamation of pain and horror "Yaroo!" is something that we often come across. Astoundingly, Brian Doyle now seems to have spotted an intriguing fact which has certainly escaped me – and, I suspect, most of us! He writes as follows:

On a light-hearted note: do people realise that Bunter's trade-mark 'Yaroo!' is

'Hooray!' backwards...!! As far as I recollect I have never seen it referred to among readers or collectors. Why, I wonder? Or am I perhaps being backward in coming forward with this riveting piece of information...? Never mind – as Bunter himself might well have said (or yelled): 'Hooray for Yaroooh!'

Still in the world of Greyfriars, I have recently received several requests for information about the availability of "The Greyfriars Suite" for Piano Solo, by Thomas Arnold Johnson. I thought I had a copy of this but cannot locate it. Can any reader supply details? Is it available on cassette, and does sheet music of it exist? Is anyone able to make copies for private use? Most important, of course, if the composer, Mr. Johnson, should come across this request, we'd love to hear from him.

Happy Summer Holiday Browsing,

MARY CADOGAN

BOLSOVER'S BROTHER
(Magnet 1011, July 2nd, 1927)
by Bob Whiter

There seems to be a divided opinion among Hamiltonians on the subject of majors and minors. In some instances such as the 'Manners' of St. Jim's and the 'Nugents' of Greyfriars; perhaps we were given just a little too much of a good thing. I am referring to the friction that occurred between the older and younger siblings, the younger of the two generally a spoilt-darling at home. George Wingate, Captain of Greyfriars had a minor, Jack Wingate, who falls into the latter category – but he was also instrumental in providing the plots for some really first-rate stories. Not only in single or mini series, such as the Vernon Smith expelled two-part series (Nos. 1329 and 1330, The Bounder's Good Turn and The Millionaire Detective, August 5th and August 12th 1933) but also previously in the Loder-School Captain, a nine part series, which appeared in *Magnets* 923-931 during the later part of 1925.

It was quite a change in 1927 (*Magnet* 1011 July 2nd) to have, relatively speaking, a story featuring a not so well known character, namely Hubert Bolsover; Bolsover major's minor. Percy Bolsover was the Remove bully, a hulking fellow, so big as to be able on one occasion to impersonate a fifth former, 'Coker' (see The Popper Court Tea Party, *Magnet* No. 1480 1936). We are told that although Percy was a nice older brother to Hubert his minor at home, this wasn't the case at school. Fearing his fellow students would think him a softy if he showed kindness, he hardly ever acknowledged the younger boy. So when Hubert tries to see his brother and raise a loan, (he's run up a bill at Mrs. Mible's tuck shop and she had mentioned it to Mr. Wiggins, the fag's form master) Percy refuses to listen to his minor and snatches up a cricket stump and starts to give him a severe thrashing, which is only stopped when the Famous Five intervene. Bolsover major is even more annoyed when Wiggins sends for and lectures him about settling the tuckshop bill. The Third Form master, well known for his absent-mindedness, was attending to some correspondence when the burly Removite

arrived: distracted, he inadvertently puts two pound notes in the wrong envelope and later posts them off. He'd merely written a query to The Snooks Tourist agency about a certain vacation he was thinking of taking. The registered envelope for which the currency was intended together with the unfinished letter was left lying on his desk. Called away from his study for a chat with Mr. Prout prior to taking his form for their prep., he is horrified when he returns to his study, to find the unfinished letter and envelope but no two pounds! We are treated to an amusing sequence when the timid form master has Gosling the porter and Trotter the page move the furniture about in his study in a hopeless search for the missing currency notes. Mr. Wiggins is loath to entertain the idea of them having been stolen, and not severe enough to remonstrate with the porter and page to be more careful with his goods and chattels. When Bolsover minor is able to pay Mrs. Mible's bill, suspicion falls on him. He is accused of theft; nobody will believe his story of finding them lodged within the pages of his Caesar. Rupert de Courcy, on a visit to Greyfriars with his friend Courtney, had unintentionally overheard the fag's dilemma and secretly placed the required amount there. Having returned to Highcliffe with his friend, the Caterpillar knew nothing of all this. Realising that he has been negligent in looking after his younger brother, Percy Bolsover resolves to take the blame for the assumed theft. Just as the Head is pronouncing the sentence of expulsion on him Mr. Wiggins, holding two pound notes, bursts into Big Hall. The Snooks tourist Agency, surprised at receiving money with a mere enquiry had returned the two notes. Realising (not without some cogitation) what had happened, the master of the Third hurried to atone for his absent-mindedness. Of course, no one is expelled, the Head even commending, in spite of his falsehood, the burly Removite, whilst his form – to quote from the pages of the *Magnet*: 'With a rush the Remove fellows surrounded Bolsover major. For the first time since he had been at Greyfriars Percy Bolsover had an ovation from his form. Nobody in the Remove had suspected the truth; nobody had dreamed that the bully of the Form was capable of what he had done. But now that they knew, they were willing and eager to make amends "Shoulder high!" roared Bob Cherry. Up went the burly Bolsover on the shoulders of Harry Wharton & Co. High on the shoulders of his Form fellows, surrounded by a cheering crowd Bolsover major was carried out of Hall. For the first time, probably for the last – he was the hero of the Remove, and all the form delighted to do him honour'.

If you haven't already done so – read this delightful story – I'm sure once again the magic of Frank Richards will warm the cockles of your heart – it does mine every time I read it.

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.

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BOOK REVIEW

by Brian Doyle

Richmal Crompton: the Woman Behind 'Just William' by Mary Cadogan. Sutton Publishing, 2003, £7.99 Paperback. (See order form for special offer for C.D. readers.)

William's back! Or rather his gifted creator is, as Mary Cadogan's biography of Richmal Crompton (the first, best and definitive in the field) now appears in a fine new paperback reprint. It was first published by Macmillan in 1986, with a paperback edition appearing seven years later. Now Sutton Publishing (who are based in a place called 'Thrupp', which I feel would appeal to William somehow) in their wisdom, and they are surely blessed with lots of it have come up with a further, brand-new paperback edition, including all the original illustrations and with a striking and joyous cover. It has something new as well: a special Foreword by Martin Jarvis, that distinguished and distinctive actor who has read so many of the William stories on BBC Radio and on all those best-selling tapes too. I once met Jarvis and naturally the subject of his superlative William readings came up.

"I just love doing them – it's like a paid holiday, not like work at all," he said warmly. "William's like an old friend so I find it comes fairly easily. I really just go back to those far-off days when I was eleven and getting into scrapes!"

Jarvis enchantingly begins his Foreword by imagining that he and his childhood friend, Colin, summon up the courage to call at Miss Crompton's house (at Bromley, Kent, in those days) and are delighted (and slightly over-awed) to be invited in, made welcome and offered iced-buns and liquorice-water (what else?) plus a chat about William and the Outlaws...!

He also compares her with Dickens and Wodehouse and ends by saying: 'Through Mary Cadogan's perception and understanding we can learn more about the fun, the background, the humour and truth of both William himself and the unique woman behind him.' Quite so.

Mary Cadogan's wonderful book tells us much that perhaps we didn't realise about Richmal Crompton. That she had to cope with polio (which left her lame in one leg, meaning she had to walk with a stick for the rest of her life) in her thirties and breast cancer (she had a mastectomy in her forties). But, thankfully, none of this seemed to make her too down-hearted and she continued to drive her car around, smoke cigarettes (and occasionally cigars!) and, of course, write prolifically. Her illnesses never appeared to overshadow the happiness and humour of her William stories.

As well as her 38 William books, she wrote over 40 adult novels and nine books of short stories, apart from many of the 'Just William' BBC Radio plays of the 1940s.

She wrote more than 350 William stories plus one full-length William novel ('Just William's Luck' in 1948). And many are still available in paperback editions from Macmillan. 'A Whole Library of Laughter' as the ads on the jackets of the old Newnes editions used to



"If you'll give me two shillings," said William, "you'll never see me again after I'm twenty-one."

say...

'Just William', 'Just Richmal'... and 'Just Mary' must surely join the trio these days, notably for giving us both this marvellous biography and also for the great book 'The William Companion' (and others) in the past.

If you enjoy the immortal 'William', you'll certainly enjoy this lively, entertaining and essential book about his creator and (as Shakespeare might well have said) his 'onlie begetter'...

THE MYSTERY OF EAST CLIFF LODGE

by Anthony E.L. Cook

The following story is one which sets at least a mystery and at best food for thought and has a parallel with which I feel sure the majority of CD readers will be familiar.

The East Cliff Lodge to which I refer was situated about half a mile north east of Ramsgate (three miles from Kingsgate) and was the property of Sir Moses Montefiore. The property was built in 1794 by Benjamin Bond Hopkins to the design of Mr Boncey of Margate, an altogether local affair. It was situated above the cliffs and was pleasantly placed in its own extensive grounds. It was described at the time as a handsome marine villa which formed a quadrangle, the summit embattled and was considered a good specimen of modern Gothic. The grounds also included an Italian greenhouse, a stable block and at the entrance a gatehouse.

Sir Moses was a great philanthropist as well as being a considerable Jewish scholar. He was away from the Lodge quite often travelling around the world. He died in 1885 and it has been found very difficult to follow the history of the subsequent owners or residents through the years. The archive department of Ramsgate library were able to say that the house was put up for auction in 1936 but was not sold until 1938 when it was purchased by Ramsgate council. One thing is certain, however. During the period 1939/40 a caretaker was appointed to keep an eye on the house. It is also known that later in the war it was taken over as a hospital.

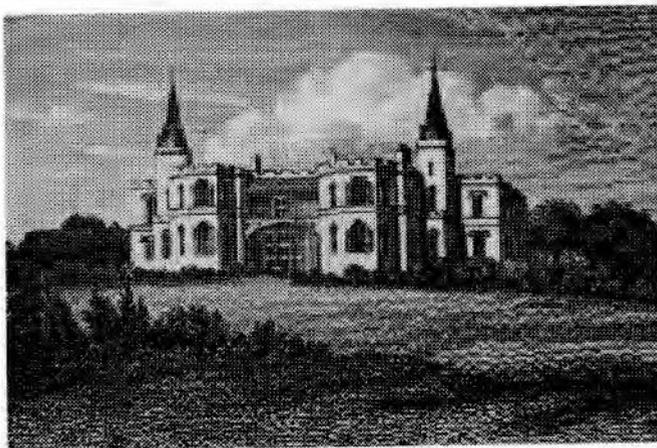
During the 1920s and '30s, generations of the Todd family had a concession to operate donkey and carriage rides in Ramsgate. During the winter months the owners of East Cliff Lodge allowed them to graze their ponies in the grounds. With the outbreak of the second world war all this came to an end. There is no doubt that the Todd family were on good terms with the people at the Lodge for they were given permission to have access to the grounds and gardens in order to pick some of the soft fruit which flourished in abundance in the gardens. In the event, Ivy and Ethel Todd were the two girls who gathered the crop. The caretaker at this point, a Mr Burr, asked the girls if they would like to look around the house which was full of beautiful furniture and paintings. During their tour of the house they heard Mr Burr's radio and realised that he was listening to a German broadcast. This in itself might not have meant a great deal. At that moment there was an air raid and the girls took shelter in the apple store. It must be realised that the house and land were situated high up on the cliffs, and German fighters and bombers were a common sight. While they were in the apple house the girls came across a pile of German newspapers and this, plus the broadcast which they had heard, made a singular impression on them. On their return home they told their mother about these facts. The information was then passed on to the local police who proceeded to

look into the matter.

The outcome was that Mr Burr was interviewed, and then interned for the duration of the war as Nazi sympathiser. The case was heard in camera and little or nothing appeared in the local press. It is interesting to note that one of the girls, Ethel Todd, (now Mrs Lupton) told me that she met Mr Burr after the war, purely by accident, and he said that he quite understood and would have done the same had the position been reversed!

Sad to say East Cliff Lodge was demolished by the council but the job was never completed, as two walls of the stable block still remain while the Gatehouse is now a listed building. The Italian greenhouse still stands though derelict. The main portion of the grounds have been converted into a public park known as King George VI Memorial Park.

At the bottom of the cliffs opposite the Lodge there were at one time a number of caves cut into the side. These caves came out on to the shore. The constant threat of war with



The original house East Cliff Lodge



The remaining two walls of the Stable Block as they appear today

France or Germany produced a great need for deep shelters being dug to protect the local population from shelling and bombs during two world wars (although I am informed that they were never used for this purpose during the wars).

From the 6th April until the 11th May 1940 the Magnet contained a six part serial story under the umbrella "The Mystery of Eastcliff Lodge" The weekly episodes were as follows:-

Magnet 1677, 6th April "The Mystery Man of Eastcliff Lodge"

Magnet 1678, 13th April "The Unseen Enemy"

Magnet 1679, 20th April "Billy Bunter's Hair Raid"

Magnet 1680, 27th April "The Man From Germany"

Magnet 1681, 4th May "The Spy of The Gestapo"

Magnet 1682, 11th May "The Nazi Spy's Secret"

The story concerns the Famous Five and Bunter who are staying at Eastcliff Lodge in Kent. This is situated we are told between Eastcliff Lane and the North Foreland. It was the home of Sir William Bird, a high ranking Civil Servant. During Sir William's absence on a secret mission Wibley impersonated him. I found the story a fitting end to the Magnet (with the exception of one more issue on the 18th May) as the plot was appropriate for the period in which it was written, and included not only perhaps the best loved of our Greyfriars characters but also Mr Brown - or more correctly Herr Braun - as well as the old adversary of the chums, James Soames. Needless to say it is Soames who turns the tables on Braun having lined his pockets with the cash the 'broker' was carrying with him, leaving the final turning over of the spy to the authorities to the schoolboys. The use of the cave cut into the cliff was of added interest. I feel strongly that the Eastcliff Lodge of the story and the East Cliff Lodge of the Montefiores have a great deal in common.

Why then should anyone really suggest that there is any mystery regarding the two houses, one fact and one fiction? There is no doubt that the whole thing is a strange coincidence. Frank wrote his story in April/May 1940 while the facts concerning Burr and the other East Cliff Lodge must, according to Ethel Lupton have been enacted about July/August. Had it been the other way round one might have assumed that it was a local 'crib'. However I feel that this was not Frank Richards' way of working, He was after all, possessed of a fertile imagination, and was one of those rare people able to sustain his own fictional world over a considerable period of time. There is no doubt that Frank knew of the existence of the caves along that coastline, although towards Kingsgate there are a number of sets of steps leading down to the sea rather than caves built into the cliffs.

There is also the story of a German spy who was captured at Broadstairs during the first world war. This was well documented by the local historian W.H.(Bill) Laphorne. Frank would no doubt been very much aware of this through his knowledge of local history. I am still convinced that the Eastcliff Lodge of Sir William Bird might well have been based on the Montefiore Lodge with which our author would have been well acquainted.

All considered, it is interesting to think of the overall similarity between fact and fiction. One up to Frank Richards who got in first!



SIX OF ONE by Derek Hinrich

Between April 2nd 1932 and 7th May 1932 *The Union Jack* carried in succession six stories by as many different authors where each story had to include the same scene stipulated by the editorial staff of the paper, and readers were invited to vote for their favourites in order, and the reader(s) whose list of preferences reflected most closely the overall result of the poll would win a prize.

The stipulated scene was:

"In the tram depot of the LCC in the (fictitious) North London district of Wood End, the men tram-cleaners discover, during their cleaning work in the night, the body of a stoutish, clean-shaven, elderly man. On the floor in front of him is lying Sexton Blake, unconscious from a blow on the head.

"The man is sitting on a seat on the top deck of the tram, right at the back (i.e. the curved seat over the conductor's platform). He has died of heart failure.

"At his feet, lying on the floor, is a rolled-up banner, such as is used for processions. The wording on the banner is: 'We Demand Justice for our Fellow Sufferers.'

"On the seat beside him, tied up roughly in brown paper, is a brass fireman's helmet with a dent in it. The helmet is tarnished. The window of the tram on the man's left is broken. Only a few fragments of glass - not enough to fill the hole - are inside the tram.

"The man's name proves to be Alfred Mowbray Pond, and his age is about 45. He is wearing an ordinary grey lounge suit, but there is no sign of hat or cap. The contents of his pockets are:

"COAT

- 1 pawnticket for a mandoline.
- 1 pawnticket for a carpet.
- A pipe and pouch of tobacco (shag).
- A penknife.
- A packet of postcards of London views, banded with a paper band, and obviously just bought at a shop. There are only eleven cards in the packet, one presumably having been extracted,
- A map of the London underground system.
- A map of the London tram system.
- A break-back mousetrap, wrapped in paper.

WAISTCOAT:

- An old silver watch.
- Two pencils: one HB, one blue.
- A packet of book matches.
- An electric torch in the shape of a fountain-pen.
- A wallet containing a 10s. note.

TROUSERS

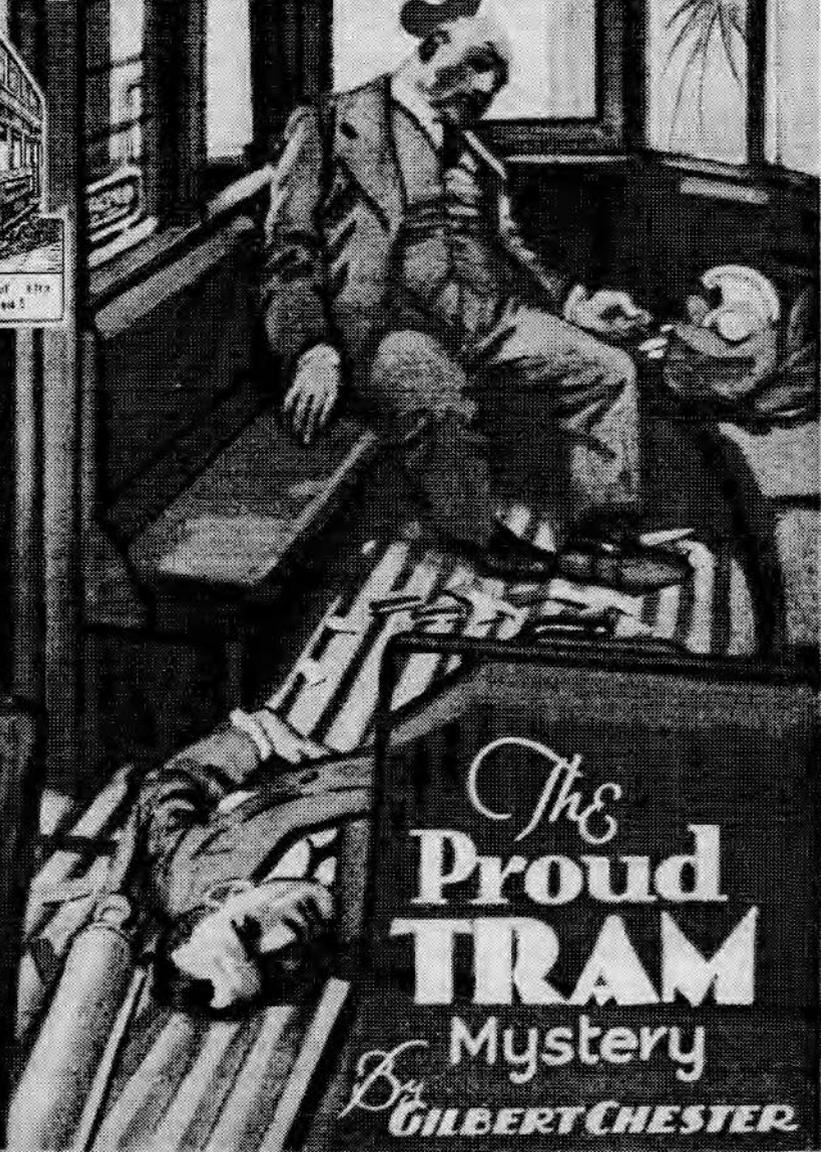
- 4s. 9d. in coins.
- A knuckle-duster."

One of the early cases of Chief Inspector Morse by Colin Dexter is entitled *Last Bus to Woodstock* and so I suppose these six could be called collectively *The Last Trams to Wood End*: though they are usually known as "The Proud Tram Series".

UNION JACK



the Story of the
Proud Tram Series!



The
Proud
TRAM
Mystery
By
GILBERT CHESTER

A Complete SEXTON BLAKE story—with a Prize Offer.

It is surely surprising that in 1932 a man of about 45 is considered "elderly": still, when Holmes and Watson seized Colonel Sebastian Moran in 1894 in *The Adventure of the Empty House*, Watson called Moran "a fierce old man", but Moran was only 54 at the time, Holmes 40, and Watson probably 45. Perhaps virtue has something to do with it or we just wear better these days

The six authors originally invited to take part in the competition were Gwyn Evans; Donald Stuart; Gilbert Chester; Anthony Skene; G.H. Teed; and Robert Murray, but Murray had to drop out because of ill-health and was replaced by Edwy Searles Brooks.

Brooks's story, *Blind Luke*, was eventually voted to be the best but I cannot but think that its being the last of the series to be published may have had something to do with the result. Whether anyone would re-read all the earlier stories before voting to form a final, balanced, view seems to me a little doubtful. It would certainly require dedication. After all, the editorial experiment inevitably involved a high degree of *déjà vu* as the series ran on.

Nevertheless the stories present quite a jolly read, though there is inevitably a certain sameness when one sits down and reads them one after another, which I have just done. This is not strictly true, as I omitted to read Gwyn Evans's offering, since this was also one of the "Onion Men" series, which I intend to deal with separately: still, five out of six is not bad.

The plots are very varied and several of the authors introduced their own series characters into their stories, so that we meet Gilbert and Eileen Hale (Chester); Monsieur Zenith (Skene) in the even more exotic than usual guise of a speedway motorcyclist; Mademoiselle Roxane Harfield (Teed); and Waldo the Wonder Man (Brooks), besides the afore-mentioned Onion Men (Evans).

Teed gives us a solidly convincing story of a carefully plotted mutiny in one of HM Prisons. Stuart has a tale of thieves falling out over buried treasure, the proceeds of several robberies. Skene provides a series of bank and Post Office robberies where the gang has the keys to the safes and carries out its crimes under cover of protest marches. Evans's Onion Men are, I assume, still bent on the overthrow of the Third Republic and the restoration of the Bourbons (but whether Legitimist or Orleanist is not clear). Chester started us off on the series with a complicated story of blackmail, kidnapping, and hijacking; and finally Brooks also dealt in kidnapping and murder, and the mystery of a long-lost heir, worthy of Miss Braddon or Mrs Henry Wood, though they would have taken three volumes to tell it!

Six times the trams rattle and clank and rumble their way north through Camden Town to the grisly *denouement* at the Wood End depot. I was not familiar with North London tramlines, but since all the authors agree that the way to Wood End ran through Camden Town, I suppose it must have been a focal point on that side of the Thames, just as the Harleyford Road was to the South (I still remember hearing them clanking behind John Arlott's voice from the Oval on Saturday afternoons in the late 'forties).

But finally there is poor Mr Proud, the Flying Dutchman of the London trams, eternally doomed to suffer six fatal heart attacks, one after another. Mark you, Mr Proud is generally agreed by most of the authors not to have been a very nice man - and on the only occasion when he appears harmless, in G.H. Teed's version, his brother is a scabrous villain. But it is the six heart attacks which stick in the mind.

It reminds me of a British film of 1939, which I saw as a schoolboy, called *I Killed the Count*. The count is found dead, apparently murdered. He, too, is an unsavoury character.

Four suspects each confess in turn to his murder when interrogated by the police (personified by Syd Walker), and four times in flashback their confessions are enacted and four times, after a struggle for a gun, the count drops dead in a heap on the floor. Must have been awfully wearing for him.



The High Lord by Mark Caldicott

Nelson Lee is baffled. In his battle against the Circle Of Terror, he has no idea of the identity of the High Lord, leader of this criminal organisation.

This state of affairs is about to change, however. The breakthrough comes when Nipper foils a plot by a Circle operative to turn Lee's telephone into a lethal instrument, there is a struggle during which the man drops his copy of the Circle's secret code manual. Lee and Nipper make a copy of the manual, leaving the original to be found where it was dropped so that the man will not guess that the secret is now shared. The cipher contained in the book is not made up of letters or symbols, but of fancy scrollwork. Lee and Nipper learn the cypher for themselves ('The Brass-Bound Box', *Nelson Lee Library*, OS 93, 17-Mar-17).

The Circle's next demand is to Lord Mount-Bevon, from whom they plan to extort the Mount-Bevon jewels. As before, Lee can only advise that the Circle's demands be met. Mount-Bevon is most reluctant to part with these family heirlooms, but agrees when Lee promises to help. When Mount-Bevon leaves the jewels in a leather case in a hollow tree on the Mount-Bevon estate, a disguised Lee is keeping watch from the branch of a giant oak nearby. To Lee's surprise, the Circle's method of picking up the jewels is to land an aeroplane near the hiding place. The plane's observer heads for the jewels, and meets with Lee holding a gun. Lee, dressed as the observer, returns to the plane with the jewels. Lee is unable to sustain the deception, after the plane reaches its destination, and is drugged into unconsciousness. As he regains consciousness he sees, by chance, the face of the High Lord, before that gentleman puts on his yellow mask. His readers did not, I imagine, share the shock that Nelson Lee experienced when he identified the High Lord as none other than Professor Cyrus Zingrave.

Lee ensures that Zingrave is not aware that he has identified him. Nevertheless, having made this discovery, it looks as if the secret will go with the detective to his very premature death. Lee learns from Zingrave the location of the jewels, and, certain of Lee's imminent death, the Professor rashly promises that if Lee can recover them the Circle will leave Mount-Bevon alone.

Meanwhile, Nipper, frustrated at being left at home, decides to visit friends. He is diverted, however, when he spots the telephone saboteur and follows him to the Cozy Cinema.



Nelson Lee looked on sharply. Dead overhead was the "Circle" acrobatine.

It does not escape Nipper's attention that this is the same cinema to which he had previously followed a Circle operative. During the interval, Nipper suddenly realises that the scrollwork around the advertising slide makes sense to him. It is the Circle cipher, the means by which instructions are given to ordinary members. Nipper's triumphant feeling is short-lived when he reads the message that Lee has been taken and that a lorry is required to collect a large brass-bound box from Eltham. Recognising that his master is in mortal danger, Nipper immediately seeks the support of Inspector Lennard. With the help of Scotland Yard, the lorry is intercepted and Lee is rescued. He is able to recover the jewels, and Zingrave has then to

keep his promise.

Discovering the identity of the High Lord is one thing. Finding the Zingrave's secret headquarters is another matter. The Circle's next audacious demand is to Scotland Yard for the release of Edmund Cross, the Circle villain whom Lee initially thought to be the High Lord. ('Fangs of Steel', *Nelson Lee Library*, OS 98, 21-Apr-17). Three Scotland Yard men are kidnapped and their death threatened if the Yard does not comply. Nelson Lee steps in, and, disguised as Cross, is "released" to his Circle colleagues. Lee is taken by car to Zingrave's secret hideout. Unknown to the driver, Nipper has hidden in the tonneau. This move is foiled, however, when Lee as Cross is moved to a second car. Nipper's presence in the original car is soon discovered and the Circle member, Montague Todd, prepares to carry out his orders to kill the lad. Todd, at root a decent man, reluctantly tries to throw Nipper from a bridge to his death in a roaring torrent. As he struggles to resist, it is Todd himself who loses his balance and plunges into the water. Without a thought for his own safety, and hampered by his bonds, Nipper throws himself into the water and rescues Todd. The man is so grateful he decides then and there to pledge allegiance to Nipper.

The existence of an inside source of information is a recurrent theme. This is the third generation of such characters, following in the footsteps of Frazer of the Brotherhood of Iron and Martin Caine of the League of the Green Triangle. Of course, it is an extremely useful plot device to have an inside man to shortcut the problem of getting Nelson Lee in the right place at the right time.

Lee, meanwhile, is faring no better than Nipper. Zingrave only allows the location of his headquarters to be known to his most intimate advisers. This does not include Cross and, as a result, Lee is blindfolded before being taken to the final location. Zingrave wears the yellow mask to protect his identity from Cross. Lee carries the bluff well until Zingrave asks to see how "Cross's" injured arm is progressing. The deception is revealed and Lee is imprisoned in a steel room with spikes embedded in the ceiling. The spikes begin to descend and Lee is doomed.

The means of Lee's salvation is typical of boys' adventure stories - that is to say, at the beginning of the story we find that the hero has invented, purchased or been given a gadget. The story progresses and the reader forgets the gadget until the hero is at his last gasp without hope of survival when suddenly he whips the gadget out of his pocket and uses it to escape. In the present story, Lee has invented a brass plunger, which sprays powerful acid on metal and dissolves it. Lee uses it on the spikes to make a safe place as the ceiling descends. (Typically, however, after this adventure, Lee seems to have lost the gadget, for there are many later stories where this device would have been the means of Lee's escape, but it is never mentioned again.) As Zingrave opens the door, Lee uses the element of surprise to escape. In fleeing from the grounds, however, Lee plunges into water and is carried away in a dazed condition, the result being that he is still not able to locate the High Lord's hideout.

The First World War is in full swing at the time of these stories and, when Mellthorpe Grange, the country home of Horace Lippingill, a banker, is bombed from the air, the remarkable thing is that the aeroplane was not an enemy aeroplane. Lee, remembering the Circle's previous use of the aeroplane, guesses that this is more of their work, confirmed when Lippingill reveals that he has ignored a demand from the Circle for a payment of £24,000 by his bank. Lippingill agrees to pay, with Lee's assurance that he will do all in his power to defeat the Circle.

Lee is convinced that the Circle is turning increasingly to using aeroplanes in its operations. He decides to hone his flying skill by practising night flying. Thus it is that Lee and Nipper are in a position to witness a mystery aircraft, one which appears to hang in the sky, seemingly stationary. The craft was also capable of rising vertically and travelling at 150 mph.

"It is certainly not an aeroplane, Nipper," said Nelson Lee musingly. "Aeroplanes cannot hover in one fixed position as that thing is doing. And it is too small to be an airship; we should be able to recognise a gas-bag in an instant. It seemed to be a kind of kite - although a kite at that altitude as this is amazing. The thing must be fully seven thousand feet from the ground." ("The Secret of Melsey Island", Nelson Lee Library, OS 102, 19-May-17).

When Nelson Lee reports this to the Air Ministry, to Sir Reginald Medwin, Sir Reginald reveals that this is not a Circle aeroplane, but a top secret plane known as the Brigham Hovering Aeroplane out on a test flight. Lee is relieved that the aeroplane is "one of ours", but this relief is short-lived, for news soon arrives that the Circle have kidnapped Squadron Commander Brigham, the plane's inventor, and in return are demanding the plane itself. The detective realises that he cannot, in this instance, urge compliance, since this would be a threat to Britain's chances of defending itself, and could influence the outcome of the war. He returns to Gray's Inn Road to think things out, but on the way encounters a fellow who is apparently having an epileptic fit. When Lee goes to his aid, the man reveals he is Montague Todd, their new ally, who reveals where Brigham is being held and tells Lee to go there that night. Todd's loyalty has not yet been put to the test, and Lee wonders whether this may be a trick to lure him to the Suffolk countryside in the hours of darkness. Indeed, when Nelson Lee and Nipper arrive at the place indicated by Todd, they are set upon by Todd and two other Circle men. However, Todd is simply maintaining a front and he later releases them and gives them detailed instructions. They rescue Brigham and escape in a small car which Todd has organised. They only escape with seconds to spare, and, after a thrilling car chase, are able to board a motor boat (also courtesy of Todd) to reach freedom.

Unfortunately the Circle have a fall-back plan and, for all Lee's efforts, the Brigham Hovering Aeroplane is captured by a gang of Circle men, who raid Melsey Island, overpower the guards, and escape with the machine. They lose no time in putting the craft to use, for when a Captain Armstrong visits the Duke of Amberley, ostensibly as a fellow enthusiast viewing the Duke's treasures, the Duke is shocked when, at precisely 10.30, the Captain slips a pair of handcuffs on the Duke and fills a sack with the treasures. The thief escapes household staff by running up to the roof where, they believe, he is trapped. When they reach the roof, however, the Duke and his servants can find no sign of the Captain. Nelson Lee and Scotland Yard's Inspector Lennard investigate, and Lee immediately reaches the conclusion that the means of escape from the roof was via the Brigham Hovering Aeroplane. Incidentally, Brooks does not use the term "helicopter" to describe this craft because, in 1917, neither the word nor the aircraft it described existed. Brooks' concept was, at the time of writing, science fiction, albeit remarkably prescient as is the illustration of the craft on the cover of this edition of the *Nelson Lee Library* (OS 104, 19-May-17).

The Circle have not stolen the miniatures to dispose of them. Characteristically, the next step is the receipt of a demand for £50,000 for the return of the paintings, with their destruction as the threat if the demand is ignored. Lee seizes upon the fact that the Circle are

allowing four days before payment is expected, and vows to recover the paintings before the time arrives. Nipper visits the Cozy Cinema and learns that the Circle is planning a jewel raid at Megson and Grant's, Regent Street. Nos. 15 and 32 are instructed to convey the stuff to the skylight for 1 a.m. precisely. This infers that the Brigham craft is to be above Regent Street at that time. Lee, with Lennards help, captures the thieves and, hidden on the roof, grabs the rope as it descends from the plane. The pilot realises something is wrong and ascends immediately, but Lee is on the end of the rope. Lee is drawn towards the plane where Hampson, Zingrave's lieutenant, reveals where the plane is kept and where the miniatures are stored. He feels he can reveal all since the intention is to leave Lee hanging from the rope and that it would be fitting for Lee to be dropped from a height of two thousand feet onto Scotland Yard.

But Lee is able to save himself by risking death when, as the plane passes over a tall chimney surrounded by scaffolding. Lee leaps the twelve feet between to land on the scaffolding. Those in the plane believe Lee to have fallen from the rope to the ground, and to have perished, so they are not concerned about their revelations. This allows Lee, accompanied by Nipper, Lennard and Brigham to recover the Duke of Amberley's miniatures and then, when the plane returns, to use the element of surprise to capture Hampson and the Circle men and to recover the Brigham Hovering Aeroplane.

This is a significant blow for Professor Zingrave, and he begins to realise that once again his second great criminal organisation, just like the League of the Green Triangle, is being threatened by one man - Nelson Lee.

Morcove, Morcove Forever!

by Sylvia Reed

I eagerly await each SPCD, the first thing I look for is any reference to Morcove. Having read my first Morcove story a few years ago, I am now a fully blown addict of the series and as a true addict, I can never get enough! Every so often I have to pull myself up and say 'Sylvia, you are lucky you have what you have of Morcove, enjoy what you have'! That prompts me to re-read a particular story. One gets a heightened perception on re-reading a story. *Study Against Study* is one example of Horace Phillips' brilliance in creating plot, counter plot, interaction of characters against the so vividly described North Devon countryside.. It is also tremendous fun reading excerpts of stories from the *Schoolgirls' Own* that I do possess. The illustrations are just so superb, they bring the story to even more life than I have already envisaged in my head.

I will never understand why these stories have not attained the fame of the Chalet or Abbey Schools. I just cannot get into either, although my middle sister Margaret is a fanatic collector of both.

Some similarities in names I would like to know about - does anyone have the answers to these:

- was Mabel Denver (Cunliffe) in *The Scheming Mistress of Morcove* any relation to the insidious Edna and Fay Denver?
- was Helen *Turned Out of Morcove* the same maid as Ellen who featured in so many Morcove stories?

ON TRIAL AT MORCOVE!

A DRAMATIC BOOK-LENGTH STORY OF THE EARLY DAYS OF BETTY BARTON and Co: by **MARJORIE STANTON**

4^{1/2}^D

THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY No 730

TURNED OUT OF MORCOVE

A STORY OF THE EARLY ADVENTURES OF BETTY BARTON AND CO.

by **MARJORIE STANTON**

4^D

The Schoolgirls' Own Library

No 415
S. 10 33



I notice Horace Phillips was fond of certain names - as in Zilla Lupina and her sister Jose. They featured with their parents in *Turned Out of Morcove* who had a grudge to bear against Miss Somerfield's brother, but because he was 'out of the picture' the grudge manifested itself against Miss Somerfield. They managed to get Morcove School turned out, so the school was forced to set up in a broken down house called Sawnton House. Cora Grandways features in this story. Muriel also seems to be a popular name (featured in *The Morcove Peeress*, to name at least one story). Ursula Wade gets her comeuppance in more than one way in that story.

I don't know much about Zillah Raine of later Morcove stories, apart from a story in 1938 Schoolgirls' Own Annual, and SO 790 of 28.3.36.

It is interesting to note that most of these detestable scheming girls hid their personalities behind prettiness or exotic beauty. Lena Thurloe (*Morcove's River Holiday*) was a very pretty girl. Zilla and Jose Lupina had exotic, orchid-like beauty, Edna and Fay Denver were breathlessly pretty. Cora Grandways was 'handsome'. Ursula Wade seems to be the only one whose personality suited her looks.

Another thing which interests me is that Cora Grandways and Pat Lawrence own motor-bikes and side-cars. The description Horace Phillips gives when the motor is running 'tuf tuf tuf tuf' just kills me, it sounds so 1920s, which is, of course the era of the stories. Also careering through the countryside doing 18mph in these 'outfits' or 'combinations' as Horace Phillips describes them. Cora's motor bike was described as a 'notorious outfit' in *Turned Out of Morcove*. I just love it!!!!!!

Paula Creel is one of my favourite characters. She is so genteel and well mannered, even under the most adversely situations. I don't believe she is completely the duffer as portrayed. Paula is the only child of Colonel Creel J.P. and Mrs. Creel, and lives at Weir Hall, a beautiful Elizabethan manor house in Somerset. Her Grandmother also resides with the family. Paula is an absolutely loved and adored member of the Study 12 coterie, although in the beginning she wasn't. She is starting to see the good in Betty just before being saved during a very bad thunderstorm by Betty. Paula goes on a picnic to Cove Castle, accompanied by Cora, Ella, Judith, Ursula, to name a few, and is left behind when a huge thunderstorm interrupts their picnic. However, Betty chances to come on the scene after returning from a goodly errand. As a result of this rescue Betty becomes very ill, but of course recovers. From this time onwards, the friendship is cemented on both sides (*The Morcove Election*).

One of my favourite Paula stories is *Morcove's River Holiday*, featured in *Summer Holidays with Paula*, as told by Pam Willoughby in *Schoolgirls' Own Annual 1934*: I won't delve into the story here.

Paula cannot sound her R's. Young readers of today would find her way of speech absolutely unintelligible but I can relate to it because of my English background. (Editor's Note: Sylvia is from Australia.) Her 'Bai Jove's; and 'You Widious Cweature', 'I am a weck, a wuin', have me just enthralled, as does the brilliantly portrayed interaction between Paula, her best chum Naomer Nakara and Polly Linton. Paula's whole vocabulary to me, belies her 'duffer' image, as a duffer would not have any knowledge of big words such as Paula uses. Look at Bessie Bunter - she is another person I adore but her diction and vocabulary are not in Paula's league. Paula is also a member of Morcove's Guide Company, of which Miss Redgrave is Guide Captain. The Guide Company seems to disappear in later Morcove stories.

Mary Cadogan's and Tommy Keen's book *The Morcove Companion* is a valuable source of information, but then again, it only makes one want more...more information on characters, more illustrations.....

WANTED: Rover Book 1927. The Boys Holiday Book 1927, The Fun Book for boys 1938, The Speed Books for Boys 1938 and Dixon Hawke Casebooks Nos. 1,3,10,11,16,18. All published by D.C. Thomson. Your price paid. RAY MOORE, 15 Bradley Road, Prudhoe, Northumberland, NE42 5EG. Tel. 01661 834580.

PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS OF CLIFF HOUSE SCHOOL

by Frances M. Blake

I now know that Cliff House was always in *The Magnet* - although at first I only became aware of the Bessie Bunter book published by Skilton in 1949, after which I began to read nearly all the post-war Greyfriars books.

So my subject is Cliff House stories and characters, but not those by several different authors with their own different versions. I would like to discuss Cliff House as seen in *The Magnet*, written by the school's originator, the real Frank Richards.

It has been said, and more than once, that Frank Richards' Cliff House girls were simply female equivalents of his Greyfriars boys, but I disagree. I can see those girls as characters in their own rights, easily depicted in their natural roles.

As with Greyfriars, the general history of the school was a long saga - from 1908 to 1940 - beginning with gas light and pony-traps, and ending with 2nd World War air raids.

Although the number of Cliff House characters was very small in *The Magnet* compared to those later created by the other authors, these were quite adequate for Frank Richards' own purposes. The Fourth at Cliff House was made up of girls the same age as boys in the Greyfriars Remove.

Similarly, the Staff and the other forms are not at all large, but the numbers are sufficient as Cliff House only interacts with Greyfriars, and indeed Highcliffe.

Of the Staff the most important are Miss Primrose, Principal (Headmistress); Miss Bellew, form-mistress of the Fourth; the rather fearsome but gallant Miss Bullivant, games mistress - and not forgetting Stella Stone of the Sixth, The Head Prefect. Unlike her counterpart at Greyfriars, their captain George Wingate, Stella has no need to carry an ashplant. Her dominant cool composure and icy stare are sufficient to make even the most likely rebel - Clara Trevlyn - go quiet.

At the school the three main girls must be Marjorie Hazeldene, her best friend Clara and Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter, younger sister of Billy and older of brother Sammy.

Also included in the Fourth were Barbara Redfern and her chum Mabs. Barbara was made much of by the other later writers, although Frank Richards did start off his first few separate Cliff House tales in *The School Friend* by making Babs the Fourth's form captain. Was he intending another election and to put in Marjorie? Somehow I don't think so. I think even her author knew that she had a different role to play.

It would seem that most of the form fit into the age range of 14/15, with Bessie Bunter having to be around 14 because of her older brother.

I also think it quite likely that Marjorie was her brother Peter's twin sister, making them both 15. (But suppose we have to allow that girls are supposed to grow up more quickly than boys!)

Marjorie is surely her author's favourite girl, even if I myself would choose to be Clara. Yet while Marjorie is clearly defined almost from the beginning (in 1908), she also develops more 'gumption' in later years - along with all the other girls in the modern uniforms.

Then there's Clara, a tomboy even in Edwardian times, with her slangy speech, picked up, we are told, from her Greyfriars pals, and making Marjorie often murmur at times "Oh Clara!"



Clara and Marjorie in Edwardian times (with Bob Cherry) and in the 1930s (with Billy Bunter)

And of course Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter was always there. Personally I prefer the *Magnet* Bessie to the rather kindly silly little duffer she was turned into, by "the others", with only her appetite for food virtually remaining.

Unlike her brother Billy, one feels that Bessie really could and would carry out her threats and face up to villains - even if she is depending on the belief that no rotter would actually hit a girl! Even the evil Pon of Highcliffe will only knock her hat off into a tree or throw her toffee over a forbidden fence. (Though he puts his own life before hers when in 1940 a bombing raid threatens, but Bessie screams away and is chivalrously rescued by Lord Mauleverer.)

On another subject, it's tempting, though not really feasible, to fantasise on the girls' futures after school. It's possible indeed that Marjorie would marry either Harry Wharton or Bob Cherry, with the general consensus, and mine, to be Bob certainly bringing problems with her dear brother Peter, but again who can tell?

In one *Collectors' Digest* it was suggested that it might only have been "puppy love" on Bob's part, but no, surely theirs was the closest to a deeper feeling, see *Magnet* 1535 (1937). And I am sure that Wharton would make a name and choose a wife for himself.

I can see Clara marrying a top diplomat and getting involved in foreign affairs (make of that what you will). (Her love for pets came with the other authors, but none the worse for that.)

As for Bessie, well I once read a good suggestion that she would be running a successful chain of dress shops for oversized ladies. Either that or restaurants. And I'm sure she would never fail to collect debts of more than five shillings!

I do think that the illustrations for the Cliff House girls were much more noticeable over the years than for the Greyfriars boys. Those pictures make a jump from the so very old fashioned ones of Edwardian days to what eventually became the modern 1930s, to which I could relate even in the 1950s!

There were always sports at Cliff House, as befitted a girls' public school, such as hockey and tennis and netball. And when on holidays with the Famous Five, etc., Marjorie and Clara excel at ice-skating, swimming, riding, and sledging in the snow. Marjorie and Clara are often visitors to Greyfriars to watch the Remove at cricket, and sitting in their deckchairs they know all about how the game is played. Of course they are expert dancers as well, managing to avoid or excuse Bob Cherry's feet on those wonderful Christmas holidays.

It is interesting that the boys, who are almost always the Famous Five, can never come up and see the girls in their studies at Cliff House, although the girls often come up to the Remove when they visit. However, Miss Primrose always allows them all to meet in the school's Junior Common Room, where there is always a special cake!

Only Smithy, the Bounder, ever penetrated the upper landing into Marjorie's and Clara's study during the "Skip" series of late 1937, when he is trying to find a photograph of a women's hockey team. (However, Hazel, being a brother, *is* permitted to go upstairs.)

An unexpected number of Cliff House School stories are told in *The Magnet*, either as singles or somewhat involved series out of the total 1683. Holidays also featured, where the girls were always the honoured guests, especially during the festive Christmas season - the dances wouldn't be the same without them!

To mention a few examples from the earlier days:
MAGNET 5 (1908): Marjorie is introduced by being melodramatically kidnapped by gypsies and rescued by Harry Wharton & Co. "What a ripping girl!" is their verdict, and so it always

was. (Soon afterwards Cliff House was formally written into *The Magnet* as the local girls' school.)

MAGNET 59 (early 1909): Ionides, the new Greyfriars Sixth Former, the Greek dandy, is furious at being taken for a waiter at the Cliff House dance.

MAGNETS 68-70 (1909): The Cliff House Fourth are moved into the Greyfriars Remove for a while. This was a well-renowned and most amusing short series, especially with Clara versus 'Mr. Squelch'.

MAGNETS 862-869 (1024): "The Sahara Holiday" was the only time that Marjorie and Clara went abroad with Harry Wharton and the rest of the Famous Five, when the two girls are captured by a wicked Sheikh of the Desert. No, *not* a fate worse than death – although actually a more horrible fate was being planned! Both girls were buried up to their shoulders in a cave, and then a savage hyena was to be let loose into the cave. Marjorie and Clara were rescued just in time, of course, but they never went abroad in *Magnet* stories again!

From all the later stories I would like to recommend one of my favourite reading choices dealing with one of the most prominent Cliff House members - Bessie Bunter herself. Appropriately it occurs in one of the last MAGNET series, in the "Mr. Lamb" of 1940. (No.1672/Howard Baker Volume 30). One chapter entitled "Beauty in Distress" splendidly reveals the typical reactions of Bessie and Lord Mauleverer and Ponsonby of Highcliffe during the stress of a sudden air-raid warning.

A brief extract from *Magnet* 1414 (early 1935) shows a 'heroic performance' by Frank Richards' favourite Cliff House girl, Marjorie, as well as showing her kind heart. The Bounder, in revenge, has stranded poor Bunter miles and miles away from Greyfriars, making him have to walk all the way back, and Bunter is truly absolutely exhausted when Marjorie Hazeldene meets him on the road, riding her bicycle.

"Have you lost your way?" asked Marjorie.

She was quite surprised to see Bunter so far abroad on his own.

"Eh! No! That beast Smithy stranded me!" moaned Bunter. "I say, I-I've got to walk to the school – Oh lor'! I Say! Are you sure I can't get a lift in old Joyce's cart?"

"Quite sure!" answered Marjorie. "Mr. Joyce is at Woodend with his cart."

Groan!

"Are you very tired?"

Groan!

Marjorie looked at him compassionately. Bunter was not popular at Cliff House. His treatment of girls varied between ill-mannered indifference and impertinent familiarity. Miss Clara, indeed, had described him as an odious little beast!

But in his present doleful state Marjorie forgot that he was a little beast! She had arranged to get back to Cliff House for tea – she did not want long absences to be remarked on. But it was clear that the suffering Owl was in need of first aid!

"Get on my bike," she said kindly; "I'll walk."

Bunter brightened up.

"I-I-I say! Mean it?" he gasped.

Marjorie smiled.

"Yes; get on.

Bunter got on. He was too tired to drive the pedals, if it came to that but cycling was easier than walking. He plugged along on Marjorie's machine, the girl waking by his side with springy steps.

"I had better see you to Greyfriars!" said Marjorie, half-laughing.

Groan!

"Hold on!"

Groan!

Bunter tried to hold on, but failed, and Marjorie had all her work cut out to save him from falling.

"Oooooooh!" groaned the fat Removite. "I-I-I can't move another step! Maybe if I sit on the carrier of your bike, you-you--"

"What!" Marjorie almost gasped. "The carrier won't hold you; it's--"

"I'll try it, anyway," said Bunter.

"No, no, Bunter," cried Marjorie anxiously. "We're almost at the gates of Greyfriars now. I'll go and get help!"

Marjorie mounted the bicycle and was about to pedal off when Bunter fairly collapsed and slumped into the carrier of the bicycle.

There was no help for it now, and Marjorie did her best to carry the fat junior the few remaining yards to the school gates.

There was an ominous creak, as the carrier gave way with the strain, but somehow or other, Bunter managed to cling on.

Skinner and Snoop met them near the gates and shrieked.

But Bunter was past caring for trifles like that! Utterly spent, the fat Owl was just able to cling on.

Marjorie's face was pink when she arrived at the school gateway and found a swarm of fellows there looking out. Bunter did not care! Bunter cared for nothing, but to get in and sit down.

"What the thump--" yelled Peter Todd.

"What the dooce--" shrieked Temple of the fourth.

"Home they brought the warrior dead!" recited Skinner.

"Beauty and the beast!" chuckled Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Bunter!"

"Marjorie!" Hazel rushed out, "What the thump--"

"Bunter was tired," said Marjorie. "Help him in, Hazel!"

"The fat idiot--"

Six or seven fellows rushed to relieve Marjorie of her burden. Roars of laughter awoke the echoes, as Bunter sagged heavily in the hands of his helpers.

Marjorie remounted the bike and rode away.

After the Second World War years Cliff House returned in a hardback form when "Bessie Bunter of Cliff House School" was published by Skilton in 1949. Its 38 chapters definitely contain quite a lot of Greyfriars, but at last, so much more time can be given to the girls on their own. Here there is room, for instance, for a deeper examination of that friendship between Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn, as well as details of the school's internal life.

I wish we could have had more Cliff House books, not just the one, and yet the School lives on, alongside Greyfriars itself, in the issues of *The Magnet*.

WANTED: C.D. monthlies. Will pay 25 to 50p. C.D. Annuals £3 to £5. Modern Boy Annuals, books about the radio, radio comedy, radio personalities, radio and TV fun. PAUL GALVIN, 2 The Lindales, Pogmoor, Barnsley, S. Yorks. (01226) 295613.

WANTED: A large number of Schoolgirls, Schoolgirls Own and Nelson Lee required. Price and particulars to: D.D. BALL, 9 Brookfield Rise, Middle Lane, Whitley, Melksham, Wilts., SN12 8QP.

A RETURN VISIT by Harry Wharton (*Ted Baldock*)

Across the fields of yesterday
He sometimes comes to me
A little lad just back from play
The lad I used to be. (T.S. Jones)

How many are there among us I wonder who at some point in our lives have experienced a strong desire to step aside for a moment from the on-rush of life, to pause and cast a look back over the long road over which we have travelled.

Such a desire made me revisit the scenes of the happiest period of my life, my schooldays at Greyfriars in the county of Kent.

Now, strolling slowly down Friardale lane in the direction of the school, with bosky woods on one side and the breezy heights of Courtfield common on the other, with great expectations within me I was on the threshold of achieving just such a dream.

I have clearly defined in my memory a vision of the dim old formroom, the scene of so many long hours spent under the eye of Henry Samuel Quelch, M.A., imbibing – often with no small difficulty – the wisdom which was designed to stand us in good stead in the years to come.

I see the ancient black beams which support the ceiling, they are festooned with darts constructed with folded paper and defunct pen nibs. The high windows, the rows of battered and scarred desks, the surfaces of which have formed the practice ground for many generations of would-be carvers. The floor severely scarred by the scraping of many feet over the years.

And there under a white-faced old clock standing in solemn majesty is the high desk of the Remove master, raised upon its little platform to enable him to observe with his celebrated 'gimlet eye' the activities in the distant row of desks at the back of the formroom, these desks being a favourite haunt for slackers.

I see the familiar blackboard upon which so many (seemingly) unsolvable problems have been chalked. I hear the impatient tapping of the pointer as Mr. Quelch attempts to elucidate to his pupils, who, with the exception of a studious few headed by Mark Linley, are somewhat bemused.

In the silence of a warm summer afternoon, although only a faint echo, I hear the acid tones – slightly modified – of the Remove master intoning in his usual meticulous manner a passage from the deathless 'Aeneid' of P. Vergilius Maro to a less than attentive form. And can that be a low gentle snore from the area where Lord Mauleverer is reclining rather than sitting at his desk?

I did not fail to traverse once more that well known – indeed – famous passage where the Removites had their studies. It seemed the same well scarred thoroughfare as in former days when it was the scene of so much activity. I peeped into one or two rooms, now empty of all signs of habitation. Glancing into that formerly shared by Peter Todd, Billy Bunter, and Tom Dutton I saw, lying on the floor by the window, an instrument which over the years had performed much sterling work of a corrective nature – Peter Todd's Fives bat, well-known but by no means appreciated by the Owl of the Remove.

In an odd way, which I cannot adequately convey, it appeared rather pathetic, lying there forgotten by its owner after so many years of service in a good cause. It gave rise to old and cherished thoughts of jolly battles long ago, of rapid scuttles down the passage and roars of

'Beast' and stentorian demands: "Silence, less noise there you fags" from the Fifth form landing.

Gazing through the window of the landing in the Remove passage I see the immemorial quadrangle, another scene of many battles, japes and 'rags'. Now it is empty of humanity, and silent. The ancient elms still stand with their massive trunks surrounded by seats so welcome on warm summer days. The lofty branches sheltered that most popular venue, the tuck-shop, where Mrs. Mimble spent the greater part of her life trying to assuage the apparently bottomless appetites of the school at large. It's a modest little building but to William George Bunter it was a palace of delights.



Was my imagination playing tricks or did I glimpse the back of a fat familiar figure disappearing into Mrs. Mimble's establishment? I moved forward, perhaps to meet once again the Owl of the Remove. But the shadows beneath the elms which over-looked the tuck-shop prove illusory. It was closed, and the window displayed no tuck of any kind.

In the distance stretches the wide green expanses of Big side, deserted now under the warm June sun. This is the battlefield of many well-fought games. Here it is that George Wingate, our popular Captain, on so many occasions 'saved the day' for Greyfriars. Little side too has not been without its moments of high drama and 'last minute escapes' in fierce tussles with St. Jim's and Rookwood. Looking closely I see a tiny figure pulling a heavy roller over the turf close by the pavilion. Could this possibly be our ancient Gosling, keeper of the keys, and advocate that all boys should be 'drowned at birth'?

Turning my steps towards the low wall which divides the Headmaster's garden from the quadrangle, I glimpsed the figure of an old fellow pruning of the bushes in the rose bed which formed a large and attractive feature of the garden. It was a bent old figure. Could it be ...? I wondered. At that moment the figure straightened itself up, and yes, I was sure. It was none other than Mr. Mimble who, almost as ancient as Gosling himself, was still attending to the chores after so many years. We welcomed each other. "Yes, it's young Mr. Wharton" he said "I would recognise you anywhere". "And you are Mrs. Mimble's right hand 'Man'", I replied. We chatted amiably for a while, then shaking hands we parted, one more memory from the past.

Returning to the house I made my way towards that rather sacred domain – Masters passage. Here are situated the studies occupied by members of Dr. Locke's teaching staff, where they permit themselves to relax and – be it said – 'let off steam' upon occasion. Mr. Quelch has been known to 'sport his oak', especially when his next door neighbour, Paul Pontefex Prout, Master of the fifth form, happens to be in one of his extra gregarious moods which, to the dismay of his colleagues, occurs only too frequently.

An elephantine step is heard in the passage, followed by a rap on the Remove master's door, and a mellow boom, "Are you within, Quelch, my dear fellow...", followed by a silence which, in its way is proof that Mr. Quelch, like most of us, is only human and subject to all the little failings of that condition.

But what is that noise? The strident ringing of a bell and the clatter of hurrying feet. It is the summons to third school. I shall have to hurry, where are my books. "Have you seen my Latin dic., Bob old man?", "I say you fellows...", "Not now old fat man, Quelch is waiting."

The great world continues to turn, carrying Greyfriars along with its many activities with it – life goes on. It is time for me to be moving also and with feelings of regret I finally turn my back on those dear familiar scenes, the backdrop of so many happy items among so many good fellows.

As I made my way down Friardale lane to the village, and subsequently a train to the outside world, I paused and looked back one last time. There stood the old tower of Greyfriars glimpsed over the trees. A still point standing dignified in a rapidly changing world. There was something inexpressibly comforting in the sight. It seemed to signify a base to which one could return, safe in the knowledge that it would be there unchanged whatever might be the upheavals in the universe beyond.

SHADY INTERLUDE by Ted Baldock

Give me another horse, bind up my wounds.

(Richard III)

Jerry Hawke reclined at each ease
His oily visage smug
Outside the 'Cross Keys' 'neath the trees
Beside him stood a jug.
'Pink Folly' had just made the grade
And Joe had backed a winner,
Loder, with ill grace had paid,
So had the wretched Skinner.
Both were sore and stony broke,
To win they had been certain,
Now they couldn't even smoke
Behind the 'Cross Keys' curtains.
Yet transgressors seldom learn
They always have a hope,
It requires a will power stern
Outside the racing scope.
If they studied Sykes and Gwynne
Those great men of the sixth,
They might yet stand a chance to win
And with the giants mix.
Greyfriars has its shady set
Who like to force the pace
Kindred fellows quite ill met
Who'll never win the race.

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YESTERDAY'S HEROES

In the 13th article in his series, BRIAN DOYLE spotlights two characters – a boy and a girl, so this time it's a hero and a heroine. Both were made famous in a novel (a huge best-seller in its day), in three films and in theatre productions. Considered to be 'daringly naughty' in its time, it all seems strangely innocent today. But the setting is gorgeous and the story attractive and quite moving – think 'Robinson Crusoe Meets Romeo and Juliet on a Romantic Island Paradise' and you'll get the idea...

The book is 'The Blue Lagoon' by H. De Vere Stacpoole, first published in 1908, and we first meet Emmeline and Dick when they are both eight years old and on a sea voyage with Arthur LeStrange, Dick's father and Emmeline's uncle. They are sailing from Boston to San Francisco on the 'Northumberland', LeStrange is a sick man and hopes the Californian sunshine might make a pleasant and beneficial change for him and, indeed, for the children.

But the ship catches fire, the crew is lost and the children are shipwrecked upon the shores of a South Sea island, together with a likeable, but often drunken sailor named Paddy Button ('who liked his rum'). Stacpoole describes the island: 'An island upon which all was sharply outlined – burning, coloured, arrogant yet tender – heart-breakingly beautiful, for the spirit of eternal morning was here, eternal happiness, eternal youth.' The old sailor and the children live contentedly in harmony for a while, then Button dies and the youngsters are left alone to fend for themselves, which they do pretty well. For food, there is fishing in the lagoon, birds, crabs, coconuts and breadfruit. They play together, look after one another and, luckily, danger and sickness pass them by.

The years pass and suddenly, it seems, they are 16 and attractive, he well-built, strong and handsome, she pretty and curvaceous. They have been oblivious to these facts until one day... well, they *notice* one another...! As Stacpoole succinctly puts it: 'It wasn't too long before their lips met in an endless kiss.' The pair were happier than ever now and enjoyed one another, as well as their island paradise. Who was it who said: 'In youth we clothe ourselves with rainbows...' (it was, I think, the American poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson); Dick and Emmeline could find no fault with each other, were as close as two people could be and met such occasional hazards as a dangerous shark, a ditto octopus, a brief but frightening invasion by passing ruffians and a hurricane with calm equanimity.

One day, Emmeline disappears into the woods and later emerges with a baby boy. The couple are bewildered and know nothing about babies and how they arrive in the world. 'Where did you get it?' asks Dick in astonishment. 'I found it in the woods' answers Emmeline simply. 'It's a baby!' explains Dick, who is no fool. 'I know,' says Emmeline calmly. 'What are we going to call it?' asks Dick, quickly getting down to the important practicalities of the matter. 'Hannah,' states Emmeline firmly, remembering a name she once heard as a child and liked, and not realising that her little lad will not thank her for the inspiration in later life.

Despite this unexpected 'bolt from the blue lagoon', life goes on. Dick has now built a little house, of sorts, the island is hot and sunny and beautiful and Dick and Emmeline's favourite place is the lagoon, that stretch of blue salt water divided from the sea itself by a low hand-bank and a coral reef. They swim in their lagoon, make friends with the wild creatures

(or some of them) and enjoy life as they know it. It is perhaps a combination of 'Treasure Island' and 'Pleasure Island'. There is nothing sleepy about *this* lagoon...

One day, Dick, Emmeline and Hannah leave their island and drift out to sea on a home-made boat, clutching a bunch of poisonous berries (which they can eat if the worse comes to the worse). After a long, long time, a ship picks them up. 'Are they dead?' asks someone. 'They are asleep,' comes the reply. And that is the last line of the book...

'The Blue Lagoon' caught the public imagination at once when it appeared in 1908 and was reprinted six times in its first year of publication and 23 times over its first 12 years, selling well over a million copies in hard-back. A 'luxury' edition appeared in 1910, with 13 coloured illustrations by Willy Pogany. There were 'Blue Lagoon' swimming-pools, canoe lakes, bathing beaches, inns, crockery ware, and a new specially-created perfume. There was even a 'Blue Lagoon' Rest Home for convalescing soldiers during and after the First World War.

And the book itself was considered daring, controversial and even erotic in its period. An attractive boy and girl, wearing next to nothing, making love on a deserted island, with a baby, and not even married! Edwardian society was deliciously shocked – but they still bought and read the book. 'Dash it all, Carruthers, old boy, it's hardly British is it? Pass the port and I'll just read another chapter before turning in, what...!'

And the curious thing was that 'The Blue Lagoon' was hardly an original story. As far back as 1788, one Jacques-Henri Bernadine de Saint Pierre ('Jack Peters' to his friends, no doubt) had written a French novel 'Paul and Virginie' about a young boy and girl who grew up alone on the then-deserted island of Mauritius. It was a huge best-seller even then, going into hundreds of French editions and over eighty in English translations. Paul and Virginie were the French equivalents of Dick and Emmeline.

Another novel of the same type was 'The Child of Ocean' by Ronald Ross and published in 1889. A boy castaway grows to manhood on a deserted island, but is apparently a rather nasty piece of work. The later arrival of a girl castaway civilizes him and shows him the error of his ways. Stacpoole later wrote a sequel to 'The Blue Lagoon', 'The Garden of God', originally serialized in the 'Strand Magazine' and published in book-form that same year, 1923.

Who was Henry De Vere Stacpoole? We don't hear much of either him or his books today, seemingly the fate of so many one-time best-selling authors of yesterday and the day before.



From 'The Wayfarer's Library' edition (Dent)
artist unknown

He was born in 1863 in Kingstown, Co. Dublin, Eire, the son of a clergyman. He was educated at Malvern College and travelled widely as a boy. He studied medicine at St. George's and St. Mary's Hospitals in London and qualified as a doctor in 1891. Stacpoole went on several voyages as a ship's doctor, during which period he travelled all over the world and developed his love for the sea. He also took part in several deep-sea expeditions, one of which led to his writing a scientific monograph, 'The Floor of the Sea', in 1903. He later practised as a doctor in England for a while.

His first novel was 'The Intended' in 1894, followed by further books, none very successful. This changed when he wrote novels with tropical and exotic settings – 'The Crimson Azeleas' (1907) and then 'The Blue Lagoon' (1908). The latter's astonishing success prompted him to write more novels with romantic and tropical appeal, many of which had such evocative words as coral, blue, pearls, reef and beach in their titles. Stacpoole knew a good thing when he saw it.

His books (numbering over 60 in total) included 'The Pools of Silence' (1909), 'The Ship of Coral' (1912), 'The Pearl Fishers' (1915), 'The Reef of Stars' (1916), 'Men, Women and Beasts' (1922), 'Pacific Gold' (1931), 'Green Coral' (1933), 'The Naked Soul' (1933), 'Harley Street' (1946) and his last novel 'High Yaller' (1948). He also wrote several books of verse and two autobiographies.

His superb boys adventure novel 'Bird Cay' (almost in the 'Treasure Island' class) ran as a serial in 'Chatterbox Magazine' in 1913, being published in book-form later that same year. It told of a 15-year-old boy-stowaway's adventures in search of buried gold on a tropical 'cay' (or reef or key) and his exploits when he comes up against rival and double-crossing sea-captains. In 1906 he had collaborated with a fellow-doctor, William A. Bryce to write the boys' adventure story 'The Golden Astrolabe'; the pair also wrote another boys' adventure serial, 'The Reavers' for the 'Boys Own Paper' in 1907 (the title meant 'the ravagers or plunderers' and was set on the Scottish Moors). It is thought that the two writing medics wrote other boys' stories for magazines, including some, possibly, for the 'B.O.P.'

Stacpoole also wrote much crime fiction under his own name and under pseudonyms, including that of 'Tyler De Saix'. As the latter he wrote 'The Man Without a Head' (1908), and 'The Vulture's Prey' (1909). As Stacpoole he wrote 'The Cottage on the Fells' (1908), 'Golden Ballast' (1924), 'The House of Crimson Shadows' (1925) and others. Several of his novels were made into silent films, including 'Garryowen' (1920), 'Satan's Sister' (1925) and 'Eileen of the Trees', which became 'Glorious Youth' (1929).

Stacpoole was married twice, but had no children. He lived for several years in Stebbing, near Chelmsford, in Essex and was a J.P. during this period. He settled for several more years in Bonchurch, on the Isle of Wight, where he died in 1951. His 'The Blue Lagoon Omnibus' appeared in 1933; he wrote only one children's book 'Poppyland' (for which I have no date, but publication was probably in the 1920s or 1930s).

'The Blue Lagoon' became a successful stage play in 1920, when it was produced by Basil Dean at the St. Martin's Theatre, London. Dick and Emmeline as children were played by two pupils at London's Italia Conti Stage School, and as adolescents by Harold French (who appeared in several productions of 'Where the Rainbow Ends' and went on to become a busy and successful actor, and later still a theatre producer and director of many well-known British films) and Faith Celli (who was past 30 and rather too old for the role of 16-year-old Emmeline, but who had nevertheless recently scored a hit as the 'Dream-Child' in Barrie's

play 'Dear Brutus' in London).

The production boasted several eye-catching (for the time) 'special effects' for the sea-wreck, fire and typhoon, etc. and was an enormous success with critics and public alike. 'The Blue Lagoon is unlike anything we have had in the London theatres before,' said 'The Times'.

The play was produced in New York in 1921, with French repeating his 'Dick' and an actress named Frances Carson as Emmeline. But the opening night was a complete shambles, apparently, and everything went wrong, including the special effects. Something went wrong with the reviews too and the show came off after a few short weeks.

But some years later (with the book still selling merrily) the silver screen beckoned and, in 1938, it was announced that Michael Redgrave and Margaret Lockwood would star in the film version of 'The Blue Lagoon', to be directed by a young up-and-coming director named Carol Reed (later Sir Carol, of course, and the director of such films as 'Odd Man Out', 'The Third Man' and 'Oliver!'). But sadly the project came to nothing due to the international situation and with World War Two looming. It was then announced that the film would start shooting in the summer of 1939 (despite the war still looming), this time with a new leading man, Richard Greene starring opposite the still-faithful Margaret Lockwood. Unsurprisingly, the film was abandoned yet again when September (and the war) dawned, and the inviting blue celluloid waters of 'The Blue Lagoon' were muddied until 1948...

In that year, veteran British film-makers Frank Launder and Sudney Gilliat made a major colour Rank film of 'The Blue Lagoon' starring Jean Simmons and a new Welsh-born actor, Donald Houston, with little Emmeline played by Susan Stranks (daughter of Alan Stranks, write of 'P.C.49' of BBC radio fame) and young Dick portrayed by Peter Jones (not *that* one!). Noel Purcell was a glorious Paddy Button. 23-year old Houston, an ex-miner from Tonypany in Wales, was chosen from 4,000 young men who applied to play 'Dick' (or 'Michael' as he was mysteriously re-christened for the film). (I was one of the hopeful applicants, by the way, but when the film people saw the photograph of the skinny, 17-year-old youth with the pale skin and anxious expression, which was me at the time, they didn't invite me to the studios for a screen test...!) Jean Simmons, of course, was one of Britain's prettiest and most talented young actresses.

The film was made two-thirds on authentic locations in the Fiji Islands (mainly on Suva and the then uncharted islands lying to the north of Viti Levu, the chief island of the Fijis.) Authentic hazards including sharks, reefs, foot-cutting live coral, marauding insets and a near-tornado didn't make location shooting easy. Houston, funnily enough, survived all these, plus dangerous rocks, high-diving, swimming and other natural dangers, only to damage his foot badly while filming in a studio-manufactured 'hurricane' back at Pinewood Studios...! Jean Simmons survived it all cheerfully and like a trouper but, as she told me years later, found the oppressive heat, day-in, day-out, often hard to take.

When the film was released in 1949 it proved to be Rank's biggest box-office success to date (with the exception of the wonderful 'The Red Shoes') and was shown successfully all over the world. In fact, it came 6th in the list of the most successful British films of that year.

With the cinema's love of re-makes, Columbia Pictures decided to produce a new version of 'The Blue Lagoon' and it was released in 1980, starring Brooke Shields and Christopher Atkins, with Leo McKern as Paddy Button. It was produced and directed by Randal Kleiser, whose previous 'hit' had been the teenage musical 'Grease'. '...the boy grows tall and the

girl beautiful... love as nature intended it to be...!' screamed the colour posters, adding by way of explanation 'a sensuous story of natural love...' But it was all to no avail' the film received terrible reviews and was a gigantic flop (though it did receive an Academy Award Nomination for 'Best Cinematography'.

Columbia, apparently not having learnt its lesson, struck again with 'Return to the Blue Lagoon' in 1991. Based on 'The Garden of God' by H. De Vere Stacpoole, it may have been, but Stacpoole received neither screen nor poster credit; the nearest they came to a writing credit was 'Screenplay by Leslie Steven'. Brian Krause starred as Richard (not Dick or even Michael this time around!) with Mila Jovovich as Lilli (whatever happened to Emmeline?). In fact (or rather fiction) Krause played the son of the original Emmeline and Miss J. was an entirely different girl – confused? So was I. The director was William A. Graham

So there it all is – 'The Blue Lagoon' in all its glories. One of the most widely-read books of the last century, a play, three films (there was talk of a silent version, but I haven't been able to trace it), an unusual story (well, it was originally) and a likeable young hero and heroine (yesterday's, of course). They're remembered by many who still perhaps have dreams of their own 'Blue Lagoon...'

The Shape of Things to Come

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

Part 9: Adventure 1953-1954

by Ray Moore

Firstly may I just point out a couple of silly errors I made in last issue's instalment of this article. There I stated that neither of the two 'Adventure' picture strips 'Brand of the Hammer' and 'Strang-the King's Champion' had had 'a firm textual precedent' on which they were based, but this wasn't true in either case. The former having originally appeared in prose in 'Adventure' in 1945 (1136-1147) and the latter 'Strang - the King's Champion' under the title 'Six Grim Tasks for Strang the Terrible' having first seen the light of day in the paper in 1940 (963-985). Apologies for any confusion that may have caused, and now on to 1953.

When Nick Swift of the Planet Patrol had made his debut in 'Adventure' in 1952 he had heralded the arrival of the paper's new standard two page cover strip spread in full colour over both front and back pages, and in a second cover series it was the cosmic lawman who starred in the first new 'Adventure' cover strip for 1953 (1466-1476) drawn, as previously, by **James Malcolm**. Nick's travels this time included a trip to the so called 'peril planet', a place of climatic extremes inhabited by an exotic array of savage creatures and a race of dwarves intent on sending a fleet of rockets against Earth.

Following quickly on the heels of Nick Swift the first new strip to appear inside the paper in 1953 was 'Johnny Bull's Broadway Boys' (1468-1481) which graced the paper's centre pages and had the bonus of having red colour detail added to the basic black and white artwork, making it the first of a run of internal strips presented in this manner.

In this strip, drawn by **Calder Jamieson**, the hero of the title is a 15 year old English schoolboy who becomes the epicentre of an eclectic gang of young New Yorkers when he is

taken to live in the U.S. for a few months by his father. A gang of do-gooding rascals not too far removed from the 'Dead End Kids' or 'The Bowery Boys' of film fame although actually pre-dating both. The Broadway Boys had first appeared in a text story in 'Adventure' as far back as 1930 (440-451) and then again, with a few minor modifications to the script, in 1937 (816-827) before the publication of the edited picture strip version presented here.

In 1952 'Adventure' had published a black and white picture strip featuring the revival of one of its star villains of yesteryear, the Electric Shadow, and at that story's end the arch criminal had succumbed in the conflagration that had engulfed his flying saucer-like craft. Now, with the villain no more, attention was turned to 'The Son of the Electric Shadow' (1477-1494) in a full colour strip drawn by **James 'Peem' Walker** and based on the 'Adventure' text story with the same title that had appeared in 1934 (645-655).

In this strip Jack Hardy, a 16 year old schoolboy of unknown parentage, is shocked to discover that he may be the son of the master criminal, a possibility that seems to be confirmed when he is given the key to a safety deposit box that not only contains the rubber floating suit that his 'father' wore to commit his crimes but also an envelope revealing the whereabouts of all of his ill gotten gains. Nothing is quite as it seems, however, and the lad runs into trouble with another crook named Jasper Flint when he tries to return his supposed parent's loot to its rightful owners.

After Johnny Bull had said his farewells to his friends in New York his place in the 'Adventure' red/black centre spread was taken by 'Thunderflash' (1482-1496) illustrated by **Ron Smith**. The title of this strip refers to an experimental jet plane housed at the Parkington Experimental Establishment where the 14 year old son of the resident pilot takes on the task of protecting the plane from saboteurs and hi-jackers. This strip, unusually, transferred to the paper's full colour for its final two instalments.

Subsequent to its last ditch fortnight of cover fame 'Thunderflash' was replaced by more full colour exploits of 'Adventure's resident western hero 'Solo Solomon' (1497-1513) with the artwork for the strip now having a much more up to date feel than that of any previous Solo strips, thanks once again to **Ron Smith**. Accompanied by his old pals Doc Milligan and Windy Waters this tale sees Solo encounter the cold blooded murderer Killer Craik en route to also bringing to justice a bandit leader, with a penchant for wearing gaudy Mexican-style dress, named Silver King. Despite a rigorous search no earlier prose story on which this strip might have been based has been found.

For three consecutive weeks (1495-1497), including the fortnight in which 'Thunderflash' had been transferred to the front cover, 'Adventure' deigned not to include a second picture strip in its centre pages and then, when the three weeks were up, 'The Marching Menace' (1498-1512) drawn by **Jock McCail** stomped into view.

Designed by Chung Kun, a Chinese mandarin with a fierce hatred of the British, the eponymous robotic device comprised a large egg-shaped body set upon a pair of long metal legs, making it not too dissimilar in appearance, sans a third limb, to the Martian walking machines in **H G Wells'** 'War of the Worlds'.

Kun's mission for his machine was to use it to disrupt Britain's oil pipeline in Saudi Arabia by targeting the Matan pumping station in particular. The wholesale vandalism of Kun and his machine then quickly drawing the attention of the British Secret Service, at which point agent Brent Hood is sent in to investigate. Both the title of this strip and the design of the 'menace' itself were a direct crib from a story that 'Adventure' had published some twenty years earlier

Adventure

EVERY TUESDAY 3¢

No. 1524—APRIL 3, 1954.

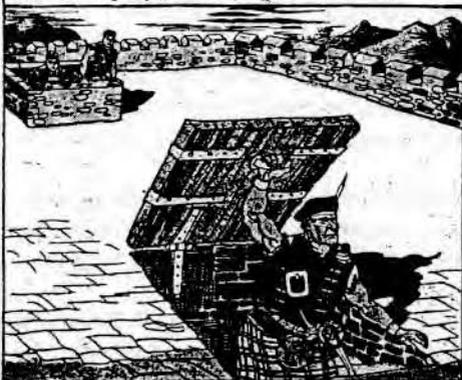
THE KING'S RING



1—Ian MacGregor stood on the battlements of Black Donald's loch-bound castle gazing up at the pillar of rock which overlooked the stone parapet. With Dick Montfort the young Scot had at last reached his goal. Here Dick was to receive the 50,000 marks needed to ransom King James of Scotland and put an end to Regent Albany's cruel reign. Tensely Ian watched the English page as he leapt towards the battlements.



2—The page-boy landed safely on the flat stonework, but at the same moment a wooden trapdoor set in the roof creaked open. "We must hide," Ian hissed. "It may be one of the guards coming to check on that boat!" Far out in Cranreuch Loch a long boat was rapidly approaching the castle. In it was Alistair Macrae, one of the leaders from the clan which had sided with the tyrant in Scotland's throne.



3—In Alistair's possession was the one thing which could identify Dick Montfort as the rightful messenger for King James of Scotland—the ruler's personal ring. Albany meant to bluff his way into Donald's castle then seize the chieftain's treasure vaults after slaying all his men. Now, as Black Donald's sentinel stepped out of the trapdoor on to the battlements, Dick and Ian swiftly climbed into the wide mouth of a stone chimney.



4—Soundlessly Ian MacGregor pointed downward, and the two friends began the dangerous climb down the soot-blackened sides of the old chimney. Their only footholds were jutting stones, but at last they reached a massive beam that spanned the fireplace below. From here they looked into the main hall of the castle, where Black Donald sat at a long oaken table. A second later the crafty Alistair marched in, bearing a white flag.

in 1933 (585-602) even if little else of positive comparison had crossed the decades.

Immediately following in the rather large footsteps of 'The Marching Menace' in the centre spread came 'The Phantom Flyer' (1513-1529), yet another strip drawn by **Ron Smith** and the first new strip to appear in 'Adventure' in 1954. The plot of this strip concerned itself with a young R.A.F pilot's personal battle with the Nazis in WWII and began when the young pilot in question, Pete Hardy, was suspended from flying duties while awaiting a court martial for insubordination. While grounded he learnt the tragic news that his only brother, also a pilot, had been killed on a bombing mission and, feeling the need to hit back at the enemy in the only way he knew how, he stole a Spitfire and headed off to fight the foe, a course of action that ultimately saw him joining forces with members of the French Resistance after being forced to crash-land in occupied France. There was no earlier tale on which this strip was based, even though a story with the same title but set during the Great War had previously appeared in 'Rover' in 1950 (1313-1327).

The first new cover strip published by 'Adventure' in 1954 followed a week after 'The Phantom Flyer' and this was 'The King's Ring' with artwork by **James Malcolm**. This was a historical adventure set in the 15th century and told how a 16 year old page named Dick Montfort was entrusted with a ring belonging, to King James of Scotland following a shipwreck. The dying captain of the ship entrusted the ring to the boy and told him that he must safely deliver it into the hands of James' loyal followers who would use it to generate the 50,000 marks ransom needed to pay the king's ransom to his English captors. All in all this strip ranged across very familiar partisan Thomson historical territory while not being based on any earlier specific prose tale.

Nor does there seem to have been any precedent for the next 'Adventure' cover strip 'Doom Crater' (1526-1541) with artwork provided yet again by **Ron Smith**, the crater of the title being that of an extinct volcano in the forests of West Africa where two prospectors detect valuable uranium deposits, the mining of which is complicated because the whole region lies within the domain of a tyrannical tribal chieftain.

There was precedent aplenty however for the paper's next centre page effort 'The Head-Hunter of St. Hals' (1530-1541) with pictures supplied by **James 'Peem' Walker**. Based fairly faithfully on a story that had appeared in the paper 1937 'The Fateful Forty Days at St. Franks' (797-805), but lacking the depth of plotting and the aura of menace of the original, this was the tale of Juma, a native prince from Borneo, newly arrived as a pupil at an English public school. Not that Juma was interested in furthering his education, this simply being a smokescreen to hide his true purpose in coming to the school, namely to retrieve an idol sacred to his tribe that had been sent to the school's headmaster Dr Garfield by his twin brother, a noted explorer. The headmaster is unaware that his sibling has already paid the ultimate price for stealing the idol in the first place and that he is doomed to follow suit unless fourth form captain Dick Donovan and senior master Mr Davison can foil the native prince's plans.

Next, it was time for the swan song of Congo King who had been 'Adventure's first cover strip hero way back in 1946. His final battle shows him combat 'The Midget Menace' (1541-1553) a strip that also sees the artist **James Malcolm**, who had drawn the first Congo King strip eight years earlier and much else since, bid adieu to the paper. In this final foray for King and his native companion Umtala they come up against the Malis, a tribe of super intelligent midgets from a remote valley in Africa whose superior technical expertise is being manipulated by a megalomaniac scientist. As with most of the Congo King oeuvre this strip had no earlier

The sheriff who turned kidnapper—to prevent the law being broken!

THE OUTLAW SHERIFF



1—"WHERE'S everybody gone?" muttered Pegleg Pete Carter, Sandy Creek's one-legged sheriff, gazing along the town's deserted main street with a puzzled frown on his face. The sheriff had returned from Findlay City to find Sandy Creek like a ghost town.



2—"A tense brooding silence seemed to have the town in its grip, and as Pegleg tethered his horse a cowboy dashed out of the saloon to explain what was going on. "Rancher Harrison an' young Ben Logan 'are gunnin' for each other!" blurted out the 'puncher.



3—Harrison and Logan, two of the most powerful cattlemen in the district, had accused each other of "brand-blotting," and had decided to settle the argument with six-guns. Swiftly Pegleg made for his office, where he operated the control panel in his wooden leg.



4—The control panel would summon the Outlaw Sheriff, Pegleg's steel-built robot deputy, to the scene. Pegleg could have broken up the duel and arrested the cattlemen—but the sheriff would have been breaking the unwritten law of the West which allows no one to interfere with a private quarrel.



5—Only a few yards separated the cattlemen, and Logan's hand was already straining towards his holster, when a lone rider galloped up the street. It was the Outlaw Sheriff, answering Pegleg's summons. The cattlemen took no heed of the newcomer until a six-gun spat flame and a bullet kicked up the dust.



6—Their own quarrel forgotten, the ranchers swung round to face the masked horseman, anger blazing on both their faces. Anger gave way to fear as the Outlaw Sheriff's guns roared into life again, then Harrison and Logan raced for cover, bullets thudding into the ground at their heels.



7—The puzzled and angry cattlemen stared after the Outlaw Sheriff. "Who the heck was that?" rasped Harrison. "An' what was he tryin' to do?" "That's just what I aim to find out," broke in Pegleg. "An' I need some help. I'm makin' you two my deputies. Get your hosses!"



8—Eager to avenge themselves on the masked rider, who had gained a large lead over them by this time, Pegleg's two "deputies" soon drew ahead of Sandy Creek's wily little sheriff. Grimacing broadly, for this was exactly what he had hoped would happen, Pegleg followed the chase out of the town.



9—Once clear of Sandy Creek, Pegleg increased his speed and closed in on the two ranchers. Drawing his guns, Pegleg ordered the men riding in front of him to rein in their horses. "The Code of the West prevents me from arrestin' you galsots," Pegleg said, "so I'm gonna kidnap you instead!"

fixed plot reference point although it may have owed its title to an 'Adventure' story from 1933 with an entirely different plotline, 'The Menace of the Demon Dwarfs' (621-644).

The Napoleonic Wars provided the backdrop for the next centre page strip 'The Flag of the Fighting Fifth' (1541-1549) drawn again by **Ron Smith** who was now becoming firmly established as 'Adventure's picture strip illustrator of choice. Set during the Peninsular War campaign of 1813 and seeming to have no direct connection with anything previously published, it told how two members of the British Fifth Regiment of Foot entered French held territory to retrieve their regimental colours that had been lost in a previous battle.

Since the publication of 'Johnny Bull's Broadway Boys' in early 1953 all of 'Adventure's internal strips had been published in red/black across the paper's centre spread but after the conclusion of 'The Flag of the Fighting Fifth' the publication of a single centre spread strip was suspended in favour of two single page, black and white strips printed elsewhere in the paper, the two strips in question being 'The Outlaw Sheriff (1550-1561) and 'Spinner Quinn' (1550-1561).

In the first of these 'The Outlaw Sheriff, illustrated by **James Peem Walker**, Peg-leg Pete Carter the one-legged sheriff of Sandy Creek is aided by a radio controlled robot deputy built and controlled by Professor John Sawyer, a local scientist. Duded up like any other deputy save for his mask this 'outlaw sheriff owed his inspiration and the plotting of several of his cases to the earlier 'Adventure' tale 'Peg-leg's Pal - the Iron Outlaw' (1160-1171), the use of the word outlaw being odd in both titles as in neither instance was the robot in any sense an outlaw. It should also be pointed out that, despite using the same title, this strip had no connection with the strip that had appeared in 'Adventure' in 1950 (1343-1358) (see SPCD Sept 2002 No 655) which for the most part had itself been a reprint of a **Dudley Watkins'** strip from the 'Beano' in 1942 titled originally 'Lone Wolfe'.

The second of these one-pagers 'Spinner Quinn' was drawn in part by both **Calder Jamieson** (1550-1551) and **Ron Smith** (1552-1561) and was again inspired by an earlier 'Adventure' story, this time from 1937, titled 'The Deep-Sea Dares of Spinnaker Quinn' (787-796), with both text tale and strip versions sharing the basic premise of a fisherman travelling the ocean in a motor-boat in a single-minded quest for the world's biggest fish. In the picture strip Spinner Quinn has a half share in a boat 'The Blue Arrow' with his friend Skip McGuire, a craft in which the pair have run-ins with a variety of sea-borne threats including a killer shark sacred to a native tribe and a ghost ship in the Sargasso Sea.

The final two picture strips to begin in 'Adventure' in 1954 were both again drawn by **Ron Smith** giving the artist, who had only begun working for Thomson's some two years previously, seven full, or part artistic credits for the year. The last cover strip to appear in 1954 being 'Ryan of the Redcoats' (1554-1567) and then, in Xmas week, the start of the final internal strip for the year, now restored to the red/black centre spread of the paper 'The Fighting Falcons' (1562-1584).

'Ryan of the Redcoats' was the story of Bob Ryan from the small Canadian township of Rudville who carried on his family's proud tradition of membership in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Bob Ryan travelled through much of wild open territory that 'Adventure' readers had come to know decades earlier when that other lawman of the icy wastes Lionheart Logan had made his debut, while 'The Fighting Falcons' were the pilots and crew of the aircraft carrier H.M.S Falcon who did their fighting against the Japanese in the Pacific in 1944 with the main focus of the strip revolving around Navy Pilot Lieutenant Dave Halliday and his

navigator Mike Dewar in their torpedo toting single engined Albacore. Neither 'Ryan of the Redcoats', despite its similarity to innumerable series featuring Lionheart Logan, nor 'The Fighting Falcons' were been derived from any earlier direct story source.

In the next issue we will chart the 'Adventure' picture strip through the years 1955,1956 and 1957 and encounter a search for Inca gold, and travel with Nick Swift of the Planet Patrol for the third and final time.

Finally, in closing, thanks as always to Derek Marsden for his invaluable help in tracking down the textual taproots of many of the strips featured in this article.

(Illustrations copyright D.C. Thomson)

CHOOSING A SCHOOL

by Arthur F.G. Edwards

I am by no means the first of the hobbyists to select their ideal Hamilton type school. However, I suggest that they generally focus not on the school, but the form they would like to join. The possibility of being put in the wrong house is overlooked, and it is assumed that they, like our heroes, they will never get older, and so be promoted to a higher form.

I propose to survey the scene in greater, but not unlimited, depth. I will look beyond the obvious first choices, but confine myself to those schools featured in publications of The Amalgamated Press Limited, that I read, to a greater or lesser extent, years ago. Thus I will look at:

MAJOR ESTABLISHMENTS.

Greyfriars School.
St. James Collegiate School.(St. Jim's).
Rookwood School.
St Frank's College.

LESSER ESTABLISHMENTS.

Highcliffe School.
Rylcombe Grammar School.
Bagshot College.
River House School.

I accept that my list can be challenged. There may be those who think Courtfield Grammar School aka Courtfield County Council School (or even Courtfield School) should have been given precedence over Highcliffe, and Bannington Grammar over River House, that St-Sam's might have been included. Others that have been occasionally mentioned are Abbotsford, St.Winifred's, St.Bede's, St.Jude's, St. Kit's, St Olaf's, but the field had to be limited/Thus for one reason or another both Bendover and Narkover, which might have been in the Major Establishments list, are excluded. Neither would have been my first choice, Bendover because the Headmaster was too easy going, Narkover, which admittedly prepares pupils for a fruitful adult life, because it plays the wrong code of football for me.

In looking at the short-listed eight, I would take an overall realistic view, I would enter the school in the second or third form, and progress through to the sixth, I would be a 'scholarship' boy. My first decision is to reject Bagshot, to me that is only a name I read somewhere, I know nothing about it. I know little more about Rookwood, I can name the principal characters and their characteristics, but little of the school or of relevant adventures so that goes out.

I wish I could say St. Frank's was my first choice but I know myself too well. I enjoy

reading of boys (and girls) progressing from one perilous situation to another, but if I were with them I would show myself up. I would not be as courageous a Nipper *et al*, and could not hide my fear. The boys would be disgusted, the girls amused. I would be too ashamed to stay. I do not see River House as a happy school. I would certainly not be happy there. It is too small, too divided. Perhaps I know too much about Greyfriars to wish to go there. When I got to the Remove, I would resent Wharton playing Hazeldene in goal instead of me, just to please his sister. Whatever form I found myself in, I would not wish to be in the same school as Bunter. No decent school would fail to expel him, permanently, as soon as they were able to assess his character. Having said that, I cannot see myself preferring Highcliffe to Greyfriars, so that school too is rejected.

There is much about St Jim's I find attractive. I could survive in the Third form and enjoy life in the Fourth and Shell. I can see myself admitting that Wynn was the better goalkeeper and a better all-round cricketer. If I could be certain of being placed in the School House I would be happy but that cannot be guaranteed. There is a real risk that I would be in the New House. I think I could live with Ratcliffe but, whatever form I was in, could not tolerate Figgins. Being big-headed is not his only unfavourable characteristic. To me he is only a short step behind Bunter as the most disliked, by me, of the characters created by Charles Hamilton.

That leaves Rylcombe Grammar School. I did say earlier that I would attempt to be realistic. I would be as likely to win a scholarship to that Grammar School, as the one I did win, I would not be the only 'day boy' and so 'sticking out like a sore thumb'. I am aware that not every master is outstanding either as a scholar, or as a mentor, that there would be 'bad eggs' among the boys. In other words it would be a more normal school than any of the other seven scrutinised and I am sure I would be happy there.

I accept that my reasoning may seem irrational to others, but I am not asking anyone to agree with my choice or how I arrived at it.

SEEKING: Schoolboys' Own Library No. 138 "The Ghost of the Priory" - Dec 1938. Can someone possibly help me? Call JOHN GIBBS, tel. 01823 432998, Wells Cottage, East Combe, Bishops Lydeard, Taunton, Somerset, TA4 3HU.

WANTED: Billy Bunter's Own Annual, the first of the Five Oxenhoath issues, red cover with picture of Bunter at cooking stove. If anyone has this available for sale please notify total cost to: ERNEST HOLMAN, 10 Glenbervie Drive, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, SS9 3JU.

FOR SALE: School Friend, 11 issues 1919-1921. Sparky Comic, 9 issues 1966-1968. Gem, 2 issues 1919. Dandy & Beezer Annuals 1964. Frank Richards, W.E. Johns, P.C. Wren, H. Rider Haggard, R.M. Ballantyne. S.a.e. for full list to G. PAN CZYSZYN, 25 Poplar Avenue, Spondon, Derby, DE21 7FJ.

FEUDIN' WITH THE HEAD!

by Ray Hopkins

Sensation! The Rookwood Classical Fourth are stunned to hear that Morny, sacked, by the Head and sent home in disgrace accompanied by Sir Rupert Stacpoole, has defied his uncle, jumped from the cab taking them to Coombe Station, and disappeared into the woods.

Since Valentine Mornington had lost his position as inheritor of the Mornington millions, the attitude of his uncle/guardian and his three sons had changed toward the Rookwood Junior. They were bound to do their duty to him as his nearest relatives, but that duty didn't stop them being very unpleasant at every opportunity. Hence Morny's plan to leave the ancestral home and make his own way in the world. The Fourth wonder what Morny will do in the great big world of work. As Lovell remarked, Morny's Latin verses were good but he didn't think the orders would roll in if he advertised their availability at a bob a time!

To the Fourth, Morny's crimes didn't warrant the extreme punishment of expulsion. In the Head's words, "he absented himself from school against strict orders; and when he was sentenced to be flogged, he ran away and remained in hiding for several days ... He is defiant and unrepentant ... if I allowed such conduct to pass, there would be no discipline at all in the school."

Mornington is determined to let Dr. Chisholm see that he is not to be hustled away from the environs of Rookwood but his appearance at the gates of the school, where he is made much of by his fellow fourth-formers, always conclude by his being summarily ordered to go home by the Head or his form master, Mr. Bootles. They also finish up with the juniors being forbidden to speak to Mornington if they happen to see him in Coombe. Luckily, Jimmy Silver and Co. decline to obey, so that Morny is still able to stay in touch with his old form-mates and they, in fact, back him up to the extent that he is able to take several large orders for groceries to Mr. Bandy who, not being the official grocer to Rookwood, is pleased to employ as delivery boy and helper behind the counter someone with a large group of acquaintances who is able to supply him with unexpectedly large orders.



Mr. Bandy brandished a fat fist at Mornington. "I'll learn you!" he stammered. "I'm going for a policeman now. I'll learn you!" He backed out of the shop doorway and, as he went, a couple of eggs fizzed across and caught him on the nose and ear.

Mornington duly turns up at the school with his grocery basket filled with the juniors' orders. Unfortunately, he is intercepted by Dr. Chisholm who commandeers the contents of the basket, discovers by the names on the bills who the groceries are destined for, confiscates the items and tells Jimmy Silver and Co. he will pay the bills himself and deduct the amount from their allowances. Mr. Bandy's shop is placed out of bounds and Jimmy, as the apparent ringleader, is ordered to deliver five hundred lines to the Head!

Sir Rupert, advised telephonically by Dr. Chisholm of Morny's latest exploit and urged to remove his erring nephew, states that, when Mornington returns home under his own steam and apologises, he will be "given shelter," but not before. The Head, full steams it to Coombe and demands that Mr. Bandy dispense with his new boy's services. "His presence, sir, in this village, is most annoying to me personally" remarks Dr. Chisholm. Mr. Bandy, under the amused eye of Mornington, ripostes that, as Dr. Chisholm has not entered his establishment with the intention of purchasing any of the delightful and nutritious contents, he can only indicate that the shop door is standing open for his imminent departure and he is, in fact, nothing more than an "an interfering old codger, sir."

Smiley, whose name reflects his sunny disposition, a young person in fact in the mould of cheerful Jimmy Silver, is the next one to lend a hand to Mornington. He works for the chemist and is also the captain of Coombe village junior cricket team. A word to the new grocer's boy results in Mornington's being asked to become a team member. Smiley can't believe his luck when Mornington gives the amateur team lots of useful tips during practice. He feels that, for the first time, his team might be able to beat Rookwood in the match to be played on the following Wednesday half day. When Jimmy hears this he becomes momentarily sober as he realises that problems will occur when Morny turns up with the Coombe cricketers to play a match. He fears the expelled Junior is using this as an excuse to further annoy Dr. Chisholm by ignoring his order that Mornington must not be allowed into the environs of Rookwood.

Morny is fifty not out at the end of the village team innings before the storm clouds begin to gather. Dr. Chisholm, bombastically interrupting the match, is told by Smiley, with all due deference, that it is unfair of him to expect him to send his best player off the field. "Stoppin' a match when we're winnin' ain't fair play," says Smiley. The Head, not wishing to appear a spoil-sport to the visiting team, allows the match to continue with Mornington but informs Jimmy Silver that, in future, Rookwood is not "to play a match with any club of which Mornington is a member." In the event, Smiley's team did not win. Rookwood is the victor by ten runs.

Dr. Chisholm's next ploy to rid himself of the troublesome junior is to send for Morny's employer and make an offer to him to become purveyor of groceries for the school. His shop will also become in bounds for the Rookwood fellows. All this promise of limitless coinage passing into the hands of Mr. Bandy will come to pass if he will dispense with the services of his boy helper. Upon his return to the shop, Mr. Bandy wonders how he is going to tell his new assistant to leave, Mornington having done everything he has been asked and, in general, has given satisfaction to his employer, despite the "hard work, early rising and short commons." Mornington, however, was a little disenchanted by the fact that Mr. Bandy urged him to give some customers short weight. This aggravated the junior's honesty. He especially didn't like Mr. Bandy's order that stale eggs should be mixed in with new laid ones and sold as fresh. Mornington calmly informs Mr. Bandy that this is nothing but swindling. The

grocer, insulted and angry, orders him out of the shop, throwing some shillings on the counter and telling him he's sacked. Mornington refuses to go and says he's entitled to a week's notice. Mr. Bandy makes warlike movements saying he's going to throw the junior out. Mornington counters by defending himself with a ham which gives the grocer a nasty blow on the head, followed by a large chunk of cheese which knocks the grocer to the floor. "I'll learn yer!" he shouts. "I'm going for a perliceman!" Mornington speeds him on his way with a shower of eggs.

P.C. Boggs returns with the enraged grocer but insists that Mornington is entitled to a week's wages in lieu of notice. Mr. Bandy demurs but finally flings more coins on the counter and orders the P.O. to remove his assistant. Immediately, P.C. Boggs says Mornington is entitled to pack his personal possessions and waits while he does so. When Mornington is ready to leave he apologises to the grocer, in front of the constable, for not putting the stale eggs in with the new-laid ones or having time to mix the sawdust in the oatmeal or the sand in the sugar. As a final parting shot he tells Mr. Bandy that perhaps P.C. Boggs "would be interested in the weight fastened under the scales." And on this heroic note Mornington leaves Mr. Bandy in the state of a collapsed balloon. He will have to stay at the Bird-in-Hand at which awful pub he might gain employment as "a billiards-marker or a pot-boy." Not too pleasing an outlook, but at least he'll still be independent.

The next round of Morny's battle with Dr. Chisholm finds him outside the gates of Rookwood in charge of a barrel-organ. A poster in large print is fixed to the side of the machine to catch the eye of any interested observer:

"I AM A PUBLIC SCHOOLBOY REDUCED TO THIS METHOD
OF EARNING AN HONEST LIVING! MY NAME IS
MORNINGTON. I BELONG TO ROOKWOOD SCHOOL!
SPARE A COPPER!"

Old Mack the porter and an agitated Mr. Bootles are quickly followed by Dr. Chisholm. The juniors, rushing pell-mell to the gates at the sound of the tinny music, had thrown coppers, sixpences and shillings into a battered old hat the musician had placed beside the barrel-organ. Mornington lifts the handles and returns to Coombe as soon as Dr. Chisholm commands him to stop but says he will return for another concert the following day.

And he does, coming right into the quad this time and playing beneath the windows of the Fourth Form classroom. The strains of "Bill Bailey, won't you please come home," percolate through the open windows and Mornington is quickly surrounded by Mr. Bootles, Mr. Greely of the Fifth and Mr. Bohun of the Third, but he plays on regardless of their gasps, booms and roars of protest. The Head storms out and orders Old Mack to wheel the barrel-organ off the school precincts. Mornington asks Dr. Chisholm to spare a copper for an old Rookwooder down on his luck. The Head, bright red with anger, points in fury to the gates and Mornington smiles to himself, feeling that he has won this round with a vengeance. But the Head still has the upper hand. After paying a call on the landlord of the Bird-in-Hand where Mornington is lodging, some money passes hands. The landlord tells the junior he needs his room.

From public land along the river and very close to the Rookwood boat-house, Jimmy Silver and Co. observe a thin column of smoke through the trees. Gypsies? No, it is Mornington, making his latest stand against the Head's efforts to eject him from the environs of the school. The expelled Junior invites them to share his coffee, cake and sandwiches after

which Mornington prepares to bed down for the night wrapped in a couple of rugs together with a handy cudgel in case tramps might come across him during the night. But a peaceful night is not ahead. Mornington's next visitor is an irate Dr. Chisholm who, armed with a cane, orders him to leave, the inevitable refusal being followed by a sharp cut around the shoulders. The head manages to clutch the junior by the collar but in tearing himself away from the grasp and the cane that is raining blows upon him, Mornington causes the furious headmaster to lose his footing and fall into the river.

The Head, not a strong swimmer, is immediately carried out into the middle of the river and swept away by the current. He is beginning to weaken and slide beneath the surface of the water when Mornington, aghast at that which he has caused, runs along the bank, dives in and catches up with the old gentleman. But the current will not allow them to return to the bank. Mornington is terrified now that his scheme to get the Head's goat is going to end in his death for Dr. Chisholm can do nothing but allow his rescuer to support him, he has no energy left to help himself. A bend in the river affords the opportunity for the Junior to steer himself and his helpless burden beneath a weeping willow and he manages to clutch at a strong branch that dangles right into the river. But it cracks under their combined weight. Mornington urges the Head to grasp the branch and keep a strong hold while he swims on with the hope of finding help. "My dear, brave boy," the Head whispers but Mornington has been swept away.

The Head is rescued by a farmer whose dog has alerted him that someone is in peril. He regains consciousness in the farmhouse but his rescuer knows nothing of a boy in the river. Dr. Chisholm is too heartbroken to do more than close his eyes and let his painful thoughts show in deep creases on his face. "Had the wilful, headstrong, but true-hearted boy gone to his death in the depths of the river, gone to his death in the effort to save the headmaster who had expelled him?"

But the water-soaked Junior, almost unconscious but managing to keep his head above the surface of the river, is plucked in time from the water by a gentleman in a punt who, when his brain clears and his eyes focus, he recognises as the village policeman, P.C. Boggs. Mr. Boggs, recognising him, drives him to the school in a trap. But, by that time, Mornington has sunk into real unconsciousness and he doesn't awaken until the following day.

When he opens his eyes, it is Dr. Chisholm's concerned visage that he sees gazing down at him. He tells the junior that he is in the sanatorium at Rookwood. Mornington's eyes close. He must get away and leave the Head in peace. But he is too weak to get out of bed and falls into unconsciousness again.

After a week in sunny, Kit Erroll, Mornington's closest friend, is thrilled to be able to tell him, "Don't you understand that the whole school's proud of you, you duffer, about your rescuing the Head. After what you've done, do you think he would let you go? You're going to make a fresh start at Rookwood, Morny." Mornington breathes a deep sigh of relief, thankful that his defiant quarrel with Dr. Chisholm is happily over at last.

(The above series appeared in the weekly BOYS' FRIEND, Second Series Nos. 996 to 999, July 1920. It was reprinted in SOL 60, September 1927, entitled "The Scapegrace of Rookwood".)



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Reviews

by MARYCADOGAN

THE UNKNOWN QUANTITY by Captain W.E. Johns (published by Norman Wright: see displayed panel for details of how to order)

This is a worthy addition to the list of W.E. Johns limited editions published by Norman Wright. THE UNKNOWN QUANTITY is an Edgar-Wallace-type thriller which, as Norman says in his Introduction, contains enough 'mayhem and murder ... to put even the most lurid American 'pulp' to shame!' However, because Johns is the creator, we come across frequent reminders throughout the text that in the end the goodies will triumph over the baddies.

For a start, the fight-to-the-death-with-evil which the book's two heroes undertake begins reassuringly 'outside the Royal Air Force Club in Piccadilly'. We know that whatever hazards confront the leading characters they, and we readers, are ultimately in Johns's safe hands and under the protective umbrella of his stalwart values.

There is no flying in this book: all the thrills and chills are solidly earthed. The main protagonists are two brothers, 'Gunga' and Guy Deane, who swear to avenge the murder of their brother, Peter. He had been struck down when on the trail of a large clandestine international criminal organization. Gunga and Guy are determined to complete his investigative work and his efforts to bring the criminals to justice.

Their only weapons are their service revolvers (one brother is in the R.A.F. and the other is in the army) and a 1904 penny which their brother Peter had discovered was an *entrée* to some of the society's nefarious activities. As well as being unafraid to kill when necessary, Guy and Gunga have to abandon their real identities and to fight 'as a will-o'the wisp' or 'a Jack the Ripper'.

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Still in print in the same format and at the same price:

Desert Adventures (only 35 copies remaining)

The Spyflyers (only 27 copies left)

They are aided in their intrepid task by the fact that, however complicated their plans become, they can always rely on the regularity of the Royal Mail deliveries ('If it's posted within the next hour or two it should be delivered this afternoon') and also that most of the clandestine villains wear the badge of evil fairly prominently; their complexions are unhealthy, they have heavy eyes, faint suspicions of a foreign accent, and so on. When Gunga says of someone at a race meeting 'He looks a nasty piece of work', the man in question surely *is*.

Nevertheless there is some ingenious sleuthing on the part of the brothers, as well as a great deal of grit and derring-do.

Read - and enjoy!

BUNTER DOES HIS BEST by Frank Richards: Read on cassette by Martin Jarvis

This is the fourth of Martin Jarvis's readings of the Bunter books and, in my opinion, one of the best. It focuses on a feud between Wharton and Smithy which has been triggered by the Bounder's cavalier neglect of Remove football, when it suits his occasionally shifty purposes.

There is plenty of drama as the Bounder's efforts to supplant Wharton as junior captain unfold. As well as Wharton and Smithy, Skinner and Bunter are leading characters. Martin Jarvis's reading makes the most of both the drama and the humour of the story, and his characterizations, particularly of Skinner and the Bounder, are extremely strong and convincing. It is great for Greyfriars adventures to be read aloud to us in this way. The producers, C.S.A. Tell Tapes, would be happy to have recommendations from C.D. readers for other Bunter books which they feel would make good cassette readings by Martin Jarvis. Do let them know which you favour (details of how to write CSA Tell Tapes and to order from them are shown in their displayed page).

ICAPTURE THE CASTLE by Dodie Smith. Read on cassette or C.D. by Emilia Fox.

CSA Tell Tapes also offer this reading by Emilia Fox of a Dodie Smith book (currently on release as a film). This is a warm and by turns touching and humorous story of a family who live in the decaying splendour of an old castle. Set between the two world wars, it is evocative of its leisurely period, and, to modern eyes, affectionately nostalgic. Cassandra, the heroine and narrator, is very young, but nevertheless witty and perceptive. Her chronicles of the family's hopes, fears and vicissitudes make easy listening, and Emilia Fox deftly puts across the twists and nuances of the plot, and the relationships. (From CSA TE11 Tapes, £15.99, CD or £13.99 cassette).

EXTRA CURRICULUM ACTIVITIES

by Ted Baldock

It's good to see the School we knew,
The land of youth and dream,
To greet again the rule we knew
Before we took the stream.
Though long we've missed the sight of her,
Our hearts may not forget;
We've lost the old delight of her,
We keep her honour yet.

Henry Newbolt

Closeted in his study with the curtains drawn and the fire burning brightly, Mr. Quelch, Master of the Remove form at Greyfriars was an exceedingly contented gentleman. Many and various were the duties which befell him in his official capacity and not a few outside that sphere of authority. It may be safely stated that at such moments - which occurred less frequently than he could have wished - he was in his element surrounded by his books and piles of old manuscripts, enjoying peace to pursue his studies.

Now came this welcome period of relaxation from the daily round. Not un-naturally it was being utilised in that favourite task of pressing forward with the great work of his life which he intended to be the ultimate history of the foundation in which he had spent so many happy years.

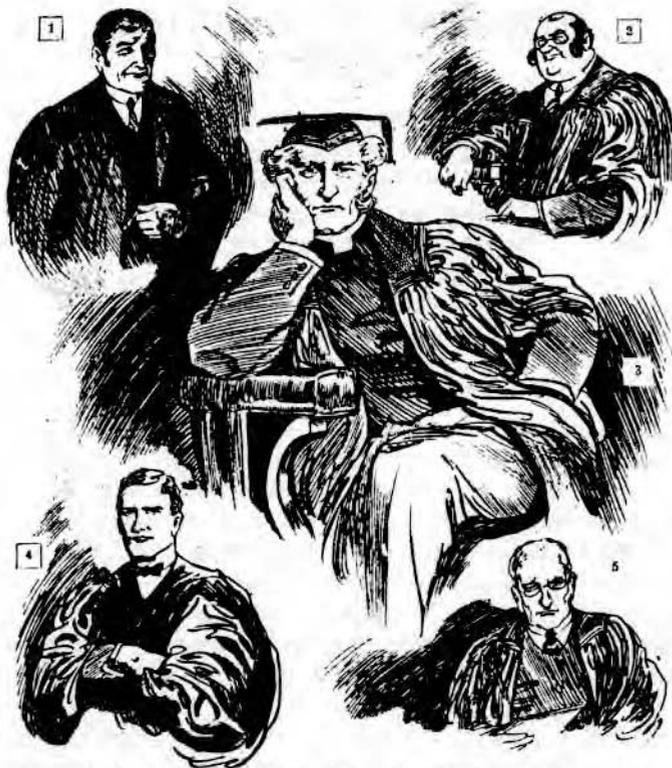
The ancient building had begun its existence as a monastery many centuries ago and had continued as such until the Reformation, when a certain avaricious king became much interested in such foundations, not in their best interests. As a result, a school was created and Greyfriars came into being. Where once the tread of sandalled feet was heard there now resounded the merry laughter of boys.

The studies of today, formally known as 'cells', and the passages of the school, once so quiet, now re-echo to the pulsating life 'of a great seat of learning'. All this, and so much more was grist to Henry Samuel Quelch's mill.

If only he were left in peace. Steps were heard in the corridor with the opening and closing of doors, followed by blessed silence. If only Prout would decide to remain in his own study or retire to Masters common room there to boom at a distance! Only then would all be well. But would it? Mr Prout had an unhappy (so thought the Remove master) habit of 'dropping in' for a chat at most inconvenient times, and such 'chats' were long and always one-sided affairs.

There had been occasions when Mr. Quelch had actually turned the key of his study door, thereby giving the impression that he was not at home. He did not like resorting to such tactics. There was something about them which sat uneasily upon his mind. It was an un-Quelch like procedure, but there were times when necessity drove better instincts a little astray.

Mr. Prout was one of those gentlemen, of whom there are not a few, who derived much pleasure and satisfaction in listening to the resonant tones of his own voice - and opinions. These he was wont to inflict upon his colleagues at all times and seasons, and upon anyone



No. 1. Mr. Quelch, the Remove Form Master. No. 2. Mr. Prout, master of the Fifth Form. No. 3. Dr. Locke, the Headmaster. No. 4. Mr. Lascelles, Mathematics Master. No. 5. Mr. Hacker, Master of the Shell Form.

else who had the misfortune of falling victim. When he was in full voice, sherry glasses standing on the sideboard in Masters common room had been known and actually seen to vibrate. Such incursions were not conducive to quiet study or research, and the Remove Master felt compelled to take evasive action often against his better instincts.

Yet 'old pompous' was not a bad old fellow, a bore of course but a tolerable old ass. Such was the opinion of the majority of fellows and, strangely enough, of the masters also - not excluding Mr Quelch. 'An old ass, but a decent old ass' was the general opinion often heard bandied about in the various form common rooms.

Horace James Coker, an ornament of Prout's own form, was loud in his assertions that any derogatory statements made in his hearing about his form master would meet with dire consequences. Particularly for the Junior elements, for these he had a very 'short way', the success of which was a little confusing to evaluate as usually Coker himself came off upon these occasions very much 'second best'. But old Horace, whatever his shortcomings - which were legion - was in this particular case perfectly sincere.

On this occasion fortune favoured Mr. Quelch. Nobody disturbed the peace of his private domain. He was able to immerse himself in the realms of the past wherein he discovered, much to his satisfaction, fresh facts in the by-ways of history relevant to his great pursuit. The

fire crackled quietly at intervals seeming to remind the form master poring over his manuscripts that all was well.

Mr. Prout was less fortunate. Arousing himself from a nap by his fireside he felt in the mood for a spot of intellectual conversation. In short he felt the need to propound one or two of his well reasoned theories to his colleagues, quite overlooking the fact that they may not be feeling in a receptive frame of mind for such privileges.

They were not. Mr Hacker was definitely not, and he made the Fifth form master abundantly clear on the fact with a series of remarks, the acidity of which could have been likened to quite a large number of unripe lemons. Mr. Hacker did not mince his words, and poor Prout was for once rendered quite speechless. "Bless my soul", he boomed faintly, "whatever has upset Hacker?" Then sinking into an armchair he disappeared behind the voluminous pages of the 'Times', from behind which at short intervals came grunts and restless movements plainly indicative of much dissatisfaction. The Fifth form master was in the process of absorbing this rebuff with a distinctly ill grace.

Thus were two senior members of Dr. Locke's staff accommodated on a certain evening during the Winter term. Life can be outrageous at times in not serving up that for which we have a desire. The Remove master was well pleased and contented. Mr Prout was dismayed and disgruntled. It has been said that all things conspire for the best in this best of all possible worlds. Upon this point at this particular time Mr Quelch was in complete agreement, the Fifth form master was not, emphatically not.

He made this very clear to Trotter, the page when that youth entered the common room to collect the used coffee cups and sherry glasses, this being one of his usual 'chores'. On this occasion he was unfortunate enough to trip over Mr. Prout's out-stretched legs, with disastrous results to his tray of cups and glasses, and to Prout's trouser ends and slippers. He exploded, and for a few exciting moments chaos reigned in the usually sedate atmosphere of the common room. It was a storm and like most natural upheavals it raged for a while and then subsided. It was short-lived. But the incident had a sequel which annoyed Mr. Prout intensely and to an equal degree caused much amusement among his colleagues.

The Fifth form master was the only member of Dr. Locke's staff who habitually wore carpet slippers in the common room, other members were always more formally shod. This caused much comment and not a little amusement among the younger members. Prout's slippers were of a garish, not to say florid aspect. Being vivid blue in colour, liberally garnished with red roses, they certainly had a warm and comfortable appearance. They may be said to be an article of indoor footwear to cause a second glance and, in the common room the raising of eyebrows. Undoubtedly they were comfortable, if bizarre, articles of footwear.

When the unfortunate Trotter, laden with his tray of cups and glasses performed his stumbling act over Prout's legs, the concentrated dregs of coffee and sherry cascaded not only over the lower parts of the Fifth form masters trousers. They liberally showered his carpet-slippers also with the result that for an appreciable time afterwards they exuded a strong aroma of these two liquids, much to Prout's annoyance, and his colleagues' overt amusement.

Recorded above is but one episode in the ongoing saga of Greyfriars. A brief happening, among so many which arose and caused laughter or concern according to their gravity. Situations arise, wax for a period, then are soon forgotten and life assumes once more the even tenor of its way.



AN ODEFUL POEM ON GREYFRIARS SCHOOL!

By HURREE SINGH.

Magnificent and stately pile,
Mighty and towering spireful-
ness,

I'll sing thy praises for awhile
With the divine inspirefulness.
Oh, how I love thy noble sights,
Thy Closefulness and Cryptful-
ness :

Thy passages, where on dark nights
Our feet perform the slipfulness !

Thy cricket-field, on which we play,
Is covered with the greenful-
ness :

We flock to it on summer day,
Terrific is our keenfulness.

Thy box-room, from whose window
wile

The fellows slip out nightfully,
Claims my affection and my pride.
I worship it delightfully.

Thy hall, it is a mighty place,
So also is thy gymfulness,
Where boxers oft stand face to face
And exercise their limbfulness.

Thy tuckshop is an oasis
Where thirsty souls halt stop-
fully,
To masticate the bun of bliss
And gurgle ginger-popfully !

Thy praises I will neatly tell
In smart and skilful rhymeful-
ness,

Sweet school that I admire so well,
And where I spend my timeful-
ness.

The time for prep has now arrived
So I must finish tersefully :
I'm proud to think that I've con-
trived
To sing thy praises versefully !

Mr. Quelch and Mr. Prout, two senior masters are, and have been for decades, good and steadfast friends, each finding in the other that which appeals to his particular sentiments. Greyfriars School is the stage upon which they have played their roles over many years. Rather like an old painting, they may be visited again and again, and always they project facets ever fresh and appealing.

It has been said that there is a destiny which shapes our ends rough hew them as we may. On this premise, Mr Quelch would seem to be 'landed', (for want of a more suitable term) with a lively remove form, with William George Bunter, and Paul Pontifex Prout. A formidable, yet perhaps by no means disastrous destiny which has afforded much pleasure over the years

to so many people.

So does the sun rise and set over the old rooftops of Greyfriars School as it has from time immemorial, as it - ill continue into the unknown future. The shadows cast by the elms in the quadrangle will shorten and lengthen, obeying the natural rhythm of nature. Except for the occasional ripple nothing changes in the world of Greyfriars. Like a bee in amber, time has been arrested, and the school with all its associations and the wide diversity of its characters and history remains - happily for us.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

by Andrew Pitt

Charles Hamilton tells us in his *Autobiography* that it was Juliet who asked that question and the answer is Romeo, not he notes, Tim or Mike. Robert Louis Stevenson wrote an essay called *A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured*. He knew something about names: he was born Robert 'Lewis' Stevenson but changed it to 'Louis'. And did not Stevenson manage to summarise the whole plot of the book *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in the title? In his essay, Stevenson recalls with considerable nostalgia his love of the cardboard cut-out theatres he played with as a child. You cut out the pieces, fold them, slot them together and you have created a theatre with built-in scenery; the characters also are cut out from cardboard (probably the origin of the expression 'cardboard character'); and the script of a play is provided. If the theatre was printed in black and white, it cost a penny; if coloured twopence. The names of the plays available to Stevenson were *Blackbeard the Pirate, The Blind Boy, The Old Oak Chest, The Wreck Ashore, The Smuggler, Three-fingered Jack, and the Terror of Jamaica* 'and was there not a character called 'Long Tom Coffin'?' he asks. Who knows where our childhood reading will lead? Stevenson says that a Mr Skelt made the best theatres and he asks 'What am I?' but 'what Skelt has made..... He stamped himself on my immaturity. The world was plain before I knew him.... but soon it was all coloured with romance.' Stevenson goes on to wish that he had a collection of those old toy theatres, but he says only the British Museum or Mr Ionides would have a full collection. Who was Ionides except the sixth form Greek dandy at Greyfriars in the early Magnet? Alexander Constantine Ionides was the most famous Greek in London in Victorian times, the Victorian equivalent of John Paul Getty- he was that rich. His father had founded a shipping and trading concern in the right place, at me right time. We can never know for certain how Charles Hamilton thought of his names, but if you have heard of John Paul Getty, then Charles Hamilton would have heard of Ionides, and it is not a bad comparison because as Getty spent his millions on Art, so did Ionides. Ionides collected things on a massive scale, including antiquities and even contemporary art. Perhaps it was this interest in Art that gave Charles Hamilton the idea of making Ionides a dandy. Incidentally, the Ionides in classical mythology are 4 water nymphs who if one swims in a particular river soothe away all one's aches and pains. It is a rare name in the UK: there are 22 Ionides on the present voters' roll in the UK, all with English forenames, so they are probably his descendants.

Let us consider Hamilton's names. This is not easy as we are so familiar with them and

familiarity lends credence to particular names. Though we know now that Charles Hamilton's world successfully realised itself in the minds of several generations, it needed at the beginning to establish itself. Names are more common than most people realise. There are thousands of Whartons and Nugents. Hamilton was on the whole extremely sure-footed about his names: he might have a little joke for some unimportant character but for the real characters he had a sure touch. There's a brightness about Merry or Cherry. Bull is exactly right for that character. Vernon Smith is exactly right for a parvenu. It was said, and I cannot remember where, that some of Hamilton's names came from the late Victorian county cricket sides and that may well be so. It is not a bad idea because, even if people do not know why, they already seem to know the name, so it is credible. The skill is to find names which are credible but not too bland. Of course if you want a character that *is* bland you can call him Bland.

It is curious that Hamilton should add the name Gerald to Loder. Gerald Loder was elected Conservative MP for Brighton in 1889 and almost immediately gained ministerial office. In 1905 he was ennobled as the first Baron Wakehurst of Wakehurst Place. There are 520 Loders on the present voters' roll, of which 2 are Gerald. Can I say that anything below 2000 is an uncommon name, in that at that level there is a good chance that the average person might not come across that name in his lifetime. There are also 1053 Carnes. Walkers are too common to mention.

There are presently only 46 hyphenated Vernon-Smiths in the UK, and 1 without the hyphen and which I might have thought was a mistake but for something else. We get a clue to this in Magnet 882 from 1925; it is in a conversation between Vernon Smith and Wharton. Wharton says 'It isn't that. It's the injustice!'. To which Smithy replies, "The jolly old universe is simply stacked with injustice.....Old man, we're told in the Good Book to take the beam out of our own eye before we worry about the mote in the other fellow's. That's a tip.' The Bounder quoting the Good Book? What is Hamilton up to? But indeed it is a tip. The Reverend Vernon Smith double-barrelled but without a hyphen was chaplain to the Bishop of London during the First World War; he actually wrote a number of books, and he became Rt Rev Bishop of Leicester during the Second World War. I always knew Smithy would come good in the end.

Tony Potts told us sometime ago that Bunter referred to a 'low class' of woman, who took furnished lodgings and absconded without paying the rent. Tom Hopperton in the 1961 CD Annual considers Hamilton's names-a very interesting article- but he believed that no-one was actually called Bunter. I knew that it was a real name because I have met a Mr Bunter when we were both working for George Wimpey the Builders about 25 years ago. He was podgy, wore glasses and had a fat face. But now I must disappoint you, he was tall with it and his name was Ken, not William. I can guess that he probably had a hard time at school. There are presently only 119 Bunters on the voters' roll-with only one William Bunter and he lives in Temple Combe Somerset.

Some names Hamilton invented. I guessed that there was no such name as Snoop. But there is no-one called Redwing; it is simply the name of a bird. There are no Mimbles. There are however innumerable Goslings. Reasonably rare Hamilton names are Levison 221, Bulstrode 50 (there is a nasty character in *Middlemarch* called Bulstrode), Figgins 364, Kipps 156, Wibley only 25, Cardew 360, Popper 93, Kebble 81, and De Courcy 133. Coker is extremely common- there is a Coker in *Vice Versa* by the way- but there can be only one Horace Coker

and he lives in Pinner. Lazarus numbers nearly 1000 but only one Solomon Lazarus exists and he lives in Bourne-mouth. Moving on aristocratic lines there are 1943 D'Arcys, still comparatively uncommon but not as rare as only 12 Mauleverers, concentrated not in Hampshire but SE3. That name is genuinely aristocratic: a Mauleverer did come over with the Conqueror. Their tombs and ruined manor house are near Knaresborough in West Yorkshire.

I cannot find a Red Earl as in the 1931 Christmas series, but a Sir Robert Mauleverer fought for Richard III at Bosworth and in the 1922 Christmas series we are told that the first ghost of the Towers was Sir Fulke Mauleverer who according to the legend could find no peace after being slain by his brother Sir Gilbert. Tom Hopperton in his article also tells us that Sir Thomas Mauleverer signed Charles I's death warrant; a pity because Mauly could be nothing but a Cavalier. Tom Hopperton also points out that there is a Lord Mauleverer in the novel *Paul Clifford* by Bulwer Lytton, which Hamilton himself mentions as the source for 'Clifford' in the name 'Martin Clifford'. Continuing with the upper crust, there are only 36 Morningtons. The first Duke of Wellington's father was the Earl of Mornington.

Tom Hopperton also points out that there is a Skimpole in *Bleak House*, a Prout in *Stalky & Co*, a D'Arcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, a Silver in *Treasure Island* and a Miss Primrose in *The Vicar of Wakefield* but he also says that these are simply names; there is no suggestion that the characters are the same. Quelch has 758 entries on the voters' roll but only one Henry, living in Cranleigh. Unfortunately there are more Hackers at 937. There are about 1100 Railtons and just over 1000 Prouts but only 3 Paul Prouts. 16 people in the UK have the forename Alonzo and 5 Ferrers. Inspector Skeat at St Jims would today be one of only 67.

I have not quite finished with Stevenson who put me on this exploration with his mention of Ionides. He says that Skelt is long gone but there is hope yet: a Mr Pollock of London now makes those cardboard theatres and says 'If you love art, folly or the bright eyes of children, speed to Pollocks.' Pollock's toyshop still exists over 120 years later in Covent Garden and there is their Toy Museum off the Tottenham Court Road and if you want an old fashioned toy, speed to Pollocks. I gave one of Mr Pollock's theatres to a little girl last Christmas and it went down very well.

Tom Hopperton concludes that though the names in a story may not be of the highest importance- they may be a trifle- he says that it is such trifles that make perfection. For my part, I never cease to marvel that these stories were turned out on a pulp fiction timetable, yet are still read today. In every aspect Hamilton has found the right formula. Was it accident or design? I think neither. It is a quality on an altogether different plane. It is why the stories have a life that is real.

Editor's Note: I apologise for the lateness of this issue of the C.D. The delay has been caused by holidays - both mine and the staff of the printers. I hope that our next issue, scheduled for September, will come out on time.

FORUM

BRIAN DOYLE writes:

Congratulations upon another fine issue of the 'SPCD'.

Mark Taha, in his excellent review of Ian Anstruther's 'Eric, or Little By Little, does not mention that its author, F.W. Farrar, was the grandfather of the late Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery, a fact that has always rather fascinated me (Farrar also fathered five sons and five daughters - perhaps a case of quality *and* quantity...)

In his reminiscences of Bransby Williams, Derek Hinrich may like to be reminded that the best-selling thriller-writer, Peter Cheyney, began his writing career around 1913 by contributing material to Williams for his popular music hall act, chiefly monologues of the melodramatic variety, one of which 'The Last Bottle' was a staple part of his performances for years, as I describe in my detailed article on Cheyney in the 'Collectors Digest' (March/April, 1999).

Ron Hibbert's fascinating article on 'Bullseye' and 'Fun and Fiction' brought back a few memories, not least of all those strangely dissolute heroines (and indeed non-heroines!) so graphically illustrated by George W. Wakefield. 'The Phantom of Cursitor Fields' was written by Alfred Edgar who, following a prolific career in old boys' papers, (including Sexton Blake stories and editing the 'Nelson Lee Library', 1928-30), wrote several successful stage plays under the name 'Barré Lyndon', including 'The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse' and 'The Man in Half-Moon Street', also working in Hollywood on several screenplays. For a full article on his career, see my feature, 'The Mysterious Case of the Indestructible Author' in the 1963 'Collectors' Digest Annual'.

From ARTHUR F.G. EDWARDS:

Your readers may be fed up with my saying, more than once, that I have become a devotee of ESB and Nelson Lee Library, also that there are many gaps in my collection. It follows that I cannot read the magazines systematically and that there are gaps in most series.

In spite of that I seek their help. When reading the Singleton Spendthrift series, I learned that Fullwood was a rogue and utter rotter. In the El Dorado series ingratitude and cowardice were added to his 'qualities'. Yet in the School Train series he is seen as an outstanding sportsman with an agreeable personality. Can any of the hobbyists point out when the amazing conversion took place, so that I may see if the relevant issues are in my collection. It is static at the moment but I still hope to add to it.

From MARK TAHA:

(In these comments on the March CD page numbers are shown in brackets.)

(16) Surprised they never filmed "The Green Eye of the Little Yellow God". I'd have thought that Errol Flynn would have been the obvious choice as Mad Carew.

(39) Difference, Coker was an original character, Browne, like most of Brooks' characters, derived from another one. Horace Coker was the obvious inspiration for Hamilton's Grundy of St. Jim's and Gunner of Rookwood and Brooks' St. Franks characters Handforth of the Remove and (to some extent) Chambers of the Fifth. William Napoleon Browne was obviously derived from P.G. Wodehouse's Psmith, sharing his extensive vocabulary, concealed sporting prowess, embellished name (wasn't "Napoleon" an assumed addition?), and ability to talk

people round. Where Psmith called people "Comrade", Browne called them "Brother".
(56) The Easter vacation occurred in the middle of the Smedley series, not at the end of it.
And George Cook was Bunter's cousin, not his uncle.

(61) Alfred and Herbert Mible? Where did Terry get those names from? I've seen Mr. Mible's christian name given as both Joe and George, his son's as Reginald (pre-first world war) and Johnny (Mrs. Mible, "My Own Page", 1939). He was referred to as "Small Mible" in the Tuckshop Rebellion series of 1937. I found the idea of the Mibles having a schoolboy son unconvincing: wouldn't grandson have been more realistic? And I thought Uncle Clegg's christian name was Charles (Greyfriars Herald in 1930s) - where did Terry get George from?

From PETER COOPER:

In the early 1960s I used to read a series of children's books featuring the families of The Pringles and The Cherries (or Cherrys). I thoroughly enjoyed them. I would like to re-read them but I do not remember the author, the publisher or the books' titles. I wonder if any reader of the C.D. could kindly help me out?

From RAY HOPKINS:

I was so interested to come across the name JUDITH HATE in Ron Hibbert's article in the March C.D. This charming (I have my doubts about this description) lady appeared in FUN AND FICTION, a paper which was before my time (an expression used by people who want to give the impression that theirs is a much more recent generation than it is in reality!). But I do recall her appearing (in what my memory may be mistakenly telling me) in the KINEMA COMIC (or possibly FILM FUN) which I saw rarely in my youth (whenever that was). Whether her name was the title of the serial or whether she was the leading character I don't now recall but I remember thinking at the time that she (and what she got up to) were rather odd subjects to appear as reading matter in a paper filled with comic strips of silent film comedians, which later were aimed at children under 10 or 12 years of age. The serials must have been intended for an older readership. I must have come across more than one issue containing Judith's story and the illustrations that I am seeing now in my mind I feel were drawn by Leonard Shields. An article on KINEMA COMIC with info on the serials and their authors would be welcome.

From TERRY JONES:

I was interested in *The Bullseye* article by R. Hibbert. What a ghastly magazine that was. The dark green cover gave it a creepy look and the picture covers were really frightening. I used to pick it up and glance through it at the newsagents and put it down quickly. It seemed to exude evil. It was a comfort to be back safe at Greyfriars in the *Magnet*.

How strange that you have sorted out the Bunter Books for your bedtime reading because I did the very same thing now that my old eyes are not too good. For the very same reasons as you, I also find the easy-going story lines just the thing for relaxation at a late hour. I purchased four of the Hawk books last year as well, so I will have plenty to read.

From DES O'LEARY:

Lovely to get the 'March' CD.

I was sorry to learn of Eric Lawrence's passing. I only met him once at Bill Bradford's, but I retain a pleasant memory of that occasion.

I enjoyed reading Derek Hinrich's "Blakiana" contribution and heard myself unwittingly starting to recite 'There's a one-eyed yellow idol...' I wonder whether we're the last generation who still recall it?

Bill Bradford: article on "The Boys' Herald" was also to my taste, as all Bill's informative writings are. And R. Hibbert's information on "Fun and Fiction" and "Bullseye" filled in a gap in very slight knowledge of those two interesting publications.

I always appreciate, as you know, your book and tape reviews, and must check whether Audrey would agree with your recommendation of the audio-tapes. The thought of Martin Jarvis reading TRENTS LAST CASE makes my mouth water, and we are both watching the 'Linley' TV detective - so Nathaniel Parker sounds like an interesting choice.

Part 8 of Ray Moore's (and Derek Marsden's) history of the picture strip in the 'Big 5' story papers continue to fascinate, and is usually my top choice of articles in the C.D.

But in this issue I find Laurence Price's superb study of one of the most evocative and gripping films Hollywood ever made, 'Lost Horizon', must be one of the few films to introduce a mood (and concept) to the English language. 'Shangri-La' must be one of the most entrancing ideas ever. The changes made in turning the excellent book into the excellent film, as Mr. Price notes, are always inevitable in the process, and it is good (for me) to learn that James Hilton could appreciate this so sensibly.

By the way, Mary, didn't you write, not long since, that in California you had seen the location or locating of some at least of the setting?

(Editor's note: Yes, indeed. The entrance to the Ojai Valley in Southern California was used in the film as the first glimpse of Shangri-La (in full and wonderful bloom after the stark snow-bound country that had first to be traversed. It is still lovely, and a plaque marks the spot. I usually go and gaze at it whenever I am in California.)

**It helps the CD if readers advertise their
"Wants" and "For Sales" items in it.**

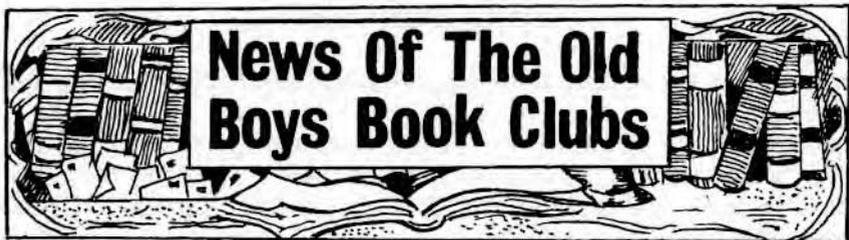
The rates are

£20 - whole page,

£10 - half page

£5 - quarter page

or small ads 4p a word



SOUTH WEST O.B.B.C.

Our Spring Meeting on 27th April was graced by 10 members and commenced with Tim Salisbury playing another excerpt from a BBC programme "The Myth of Greyfriars" - recorded when Charles Hamilton was 85 years old and shortly before he died on 24th December 1961. This was of great interest to all present. Afterwards Una Hamilton Wright answered a few questions regarding her late uncle. Copy of the tape was given by Terry Jones.

Laurence Price then read a short extract from James Hilton's "Goodbye Mr Chips", which character many of us had only met via the well known film of several decades ago. He then went on to read from a couple of Conan Doyle's novels including "The Sign of Four". The opening and closing paragraphs contained some very descriptive passages concerning Sherlock Holmes' drug-taking habits and there were doubts cast as to whether these would have been published today. As a complete contrast the next offering was "The Case of the Lame Snail" from Charles Hamilton's "Complete Book of Herlock Sholmes" - a character which most of us were first introduced to in the Magnet.

Tim passed round a much treasured original note to Mr. Parkhouse (a former member) from the late C.H. Chapman.

Andrew Pitt reported that at the recent Just William meeting many tributes were paid to the late Darrell Swift.

When we returned from our most excellent tea in the Study, Andrew gave us a fascinating talk entitled "What's in a Name", and the research he had done when looking up the number of names used by Charles Hamilton, which are still in existence today according to the latest Electoral Rolls. It was interesting to hear how many people called Quelch, Loder, Wharton, etc. are still about, also a William Bunter! Only one Vernon Smith (there are quite a few Vernon-Smith's, note the hyphen, but apparently only 1 Bounder!!). Alas, it would appear there is no Mimble on the Roll today - does anyone know if there ever was?

After a discussion on the various topics and a short reading from "Grey Owl" by Laurence (which is obviously another very interesting 'read') the meeting ended at about 6.30 p.m.

The S.W. Club would welcome any enthusiasts in the S.W. area to attend our meetings. Please ring 01934- 626032 for information.

REG AND MAUREEN ANDREWS

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

Nine members gathered at the Great Staughton village home of Clive O'Dell for our April 2003 meeting.

Clive gave his talk on the Tarzan stories from the American writer Edgar Rice Burroughs.

There were twenty four Tarzan novels and Clive gave us a summary of the first one 'Tarzan Of The Apes'. This had appeared in 1912 in the 'Old Story Magazine' and this and all those that followed became top sellers.

Clive felt that the stories were probably based on a real character and attempted to prove this through various published theories and studies - particularly through a 1971 book entitled 'Tarzan Alive'.

In contrast our next talk was John Kubylecky on 'Charting Popular Music'. This was a history of the written record of the Hit Parade and copyrighting of songs over centuries past.

In Britain this seems to start in 1691 when a court case resulted in a man being imprisoned for selling forgeries of sheet music - though it was the selling rather than the forging that was the offence... In 1899 a Kipling poem was set to music with the sheet music being sold with a percentage of the proceeds given to a war fund. Forgeries resulted in a lot of the monies not getting through to the fund, consequently in 1902 strict copyright laws were introduced. Later in the twentieth century there was a reluctance from record companies and sheet music publishers to reveal details of which songs or music were most popular. We were then taken on a tour of the various attempts to get round those, especially by the weekly magazine 'Melody Maker'. We perused the chart tables for 1948 where the main revelation was that a song recorded by many artists was counted in a grand total for positioning purposes! This finally changed only in the 1960s.

ADRIAN PERKINS

LONDON O.B.B.C.

It was a blustery day: wind and rain one minute, blazing sunshine the next. Typically reliable English June weather, as members gathered for the meeting at Yateley W.I. Hall. Here they were welcomed by some suitably evocative vintage songs of the 1930s. Chairman Andrew Pitt welcomed the following members: Derek and Jessie Hinrich, Brian Doyle, Mary Cadogan, Roger Jenkins, Larry Morley, Graham Bruton, Norman Wright, Frances-Mary Blake, Roy and Gwen Parsons, Andy Boot, Ray Hopkins, Mark Taha, Bill Bradford, Len Cooper, Alan and Vic Pratt, not forgetting our hosts, Roger Coombes and Ann Knott.

Bill Bradford was congratulated on recently celebrating his eightieth birthday. "I expect a little bit of respect now," he commented. A couple of notes about forthcoming meetings: the October meeting will now be held in Yateley; the August meeting at John Wernham's clinic in Maidstone will include a finger buffet, and will commence at 12.00. Incidentally, John celebrated his 96th birthday in May this year, though, by all accounts, he looks twenty years younger! Must be the restorative powers of the old papers.

Frances-Mary Blake got things started with a reading from Magnet 1616, published in 1939. One of Hamilton's dramatic verbal sparring matches between Quelch and Vernon-

Smith, it was an involving and entertaining sequence. Those late Magnets really were top quality stuff.

Andrew Pitt was next with the results of some unusual research. In an item entitled "What's In A Name?", he shared the fruits of his investigations into the electoral roll, from which he had uncovered the real life namesakes of Hamilton's fictional creations. He revealed that though there are 1,943 D'Arcys listed there are only 12 Mauleverers; also that of the 119 Bunters on the roll, William Bunter resides in Temple Coombe, Somerset. And Horace Coker lives in Pinner. An intriguing and decidedly odd presentation, which was followed by discussion of the numerous Bunters and Quelchs that members have known!

This was followed by Memory Lane. Bill Bradford read from newsletter 368, which covered the July 1983 meeting.

Derek Hinrich had news from CADS magazine about the recent discovery of another rare crime novelette by Charles Hamilton: "Death In The Dark", written under the name Michael Blake, and published by Merrick around 1946. What a prolific chap he was, eh?

A splendid tea followed. I had to dive in quick to get a bowlful of Ann's legendary trifle. A crowd of eager beavers appeared the moment that the spoons and dishes hit the table. As you would expect it didn't last long.

The programme continued with an enjoyable quiz from Roy Parsons. We were presented with a list of place names. Some were real; others were used in fiction; some were made up by Roy. Members had to decide which were which. This was no easy undertaking, except for Roger Jenkins, who did exceptionally well. Next best were Mark, my Paw, Ray, and Jessie.

Roger Coombes and Ann Knott proved to be a fine double act, joining forces to read a "sub" story from the 1920 Holiday Annual, perhaps written by Pentelow. Roger and Ann gave spirited performances, bringing to life a cricket match between the boys of Greyfriars and the girls of Cliff House, in which Mr. Prout and Remove chaps in drag were unlikely participants!

Norman Wright displayed another "Collector's Item": a Halfpenny Marvel, published on September 18th 1894. This aged publication contains what may well be the very first appearance of Maxwell Scott's famous creation, the legendary Nelson Lee, in a story entitled "Dead Man's Secret". Certainly it predates that which was previously thought to be the first. Further investigation might prove tricky: the pages are brittle and crumbly! An exciting discovery.

The meeting ended with our chairman expressing warm thanks to our hosts, Roger and Ann.

VIC PRATT

LEO BRUCE 1903-1980

by Roger Jenkins

Leo Bruce was the pen-name of Rupert Croft-Davies, but I shall continue to call him by the name he used for his publications. Like a number of writers of detective stories, he used two different detectives. With H.C. Bailey I am not fond of his Joshua Clunk stories: so with Leo Bruce I do not particularly like the Sergeant Beef stories, which in fact represent only a small fraction of his output. I have traced seven Beef stories, though I have not read many. He was a retired policeman with a wife who shared his plebeian tastes. Oddly enough, the stories were written in the first person. The narrator claimed to be sophisticated, and often criticised Beef's mannerisms, while Beef on the other hand told the narrator that he did not do Beef justice. This was certainly not a Holmes-Watson partnership but a duo who engaged in a bit of niggling on both sides. The American critic Haycraft used to say that the plots of the Clunk stories were superior to those seen in the Fortune stories, and in the case of Leo Bruce I do sometimes think that the plots of the Beef stories were well-constructed, but this may be because there were only two characters involved in detecting.

Leo Bruce wrote more than twenty Carolus Deane stories, and these contained a large cast of permanent background characters. Carolus Deane had won a half-blue for boxing at university, and during the war he had fought in a parachute regiment though later this was altered to Commandos, but yet, despite this impressive list of achievements, he seemed rather a mild-mannered person. He was a widower whose wife had been killed in an air-raid. He was senior History Master at the Queen's School, Newminster, some three dozen miles from London. He had written a book called "Who Killed William Rufus?" and this no doubt explained how his detective instincts were aroused. He was not a great disciplinarian in class: he was satisfied if those who were interested continued to listen. He possessed private means and taught as a hobby, driving to school in a Bentley Continental car, which the other masters tended to resent.

A number of people called on him to solve murder cases, and this aspect of his life was frowned upon by the headmaster, Mr. Gorringer, who used to shake his pale face with its pendulous hairy ears and say that he hoped Carolus Deane would not besmirch the good name of the Queen's School. Nevertheless, Mr. Gorringer was often present at the denouement. Despite Mr. Gorringer's pompous ways, he and his wife enjoyed the most modest holidays - usually a small family hotel in Ostend, though - as he hastened to add - with day trips to Bruges. At school he insisted that the porter Muggeridge should wear a proper uniform with a top hat, and the porter resented this often seeking sympathy from Carolus. To quote:

"At what time is the evening paper on sale?" Mr. Gorringer enquired.

"It's out now," said the porter. "But I can tell you who won the 2.30."

"Do not be impertinent," said Mr. Gorringer.

Of course, the Headmaster was hoping that there were no unsolved murders that might attract Carolus Deane. One or two other masters were mentioned, and Mrs. Gorringer was famous for her punning remarks.

It was originally stated that Carolus lived in a house in the cathedral close, though this point was never repeated. He was looked after by the Sticks. Mrs. Stick was cook/housekeeper. She was an excellent cook and was famous for mispronouncing the French names of her

dishes. Her husband was the gardener, and she sometimes retailed his comments to Carolus, though he did have the occasional speaking part. Mrs. Stick frowned upon Carolus's investigations, and said they would all be murdered in their beds. This was not so far-fetched as it may seem, because in "Death of a Commuter" a murderer came to the front door, dressed in motor-cycling clothes with goggles. Mr. Gorringer, who happened to be there opened the door despite Carolus's instructions not to do so. After this, the Sticks went to stay with his sister in Battersea, whose husband was a perfectly respectable undertaker. The cast was completed by Rupert Priggley, a precocious young man who was a boarder at the Queen's School. His parents had separated and were both too busy pursuing other amours to have any time for him. He often attached himself to Carolus's investigations, sometimes queering his pitch. Oddly enough, Mrs. Stick had a soft spot for him. Even more odd is the fact the author, whose real name as you know was Rupert Croft-Davies, bestowed his own Christian name on this precocious young man.

Despite a large number of permanent characters, Carolus's investigations were always varied. The one I am dubious about is "Death in Albert Park" which reminds me of Agatha Christie's "ABC Murders". As Poirot said, "Where do you hide a murder? In a sequence of murders," and this was in fact the case here. Another link with Agatha Christie is "Such is Death". In the first chapter of "Towards Zero", Agatha Christie describes how an anonymous murderer plots the crime, of which we were given no details. "Such is Death" is in fact an improvement. The anonymous murderer decides to kill a perfect stranger who may be happening to sit on his own in a promenade shelter on some dark evening. The lack of motivation will ensure that the perfect crime will have been committed. Unfortunately, he murders a long-lost relative, and so both the murderer and the members of his many family relatives in the area all come under suspicion.

Sometimes Carolus went abroad. "Dead Man's Shoes" took place on a boat, in Tangier, in Gibraltar, and finally in England. A prep. school setting was "Death at St. Asprey's School" where he took a temporary post to track down a mischief-maker and then a murderer". Another closed community was a high-class private hotel in "Nothing Like Blood". The brooding atmosphere in this hotel called "Cat's Cradle", built on a headland with all rooms overlooking the sea, was very well contrived. Another fairly closed community was a Kent village called Clibburn, situated on a peninsula. "Death on Allhallowe'en" dealt with witchcraft and devil worship. The vicar called on Carolus for help, and he soon realised that murder was far from supernatural.

One of the oddest stories was "A Bone and a Hank of Hair". Mr. Rathbone had lived in three different towns, and in each town his wife seemed to be a different person. As Carolus traced back his movements, a most surprising result ensued. Another story with a vicar in it was "Furious Old Women." One woman was High Church, the other Low Church, and the vicar was in the middle, trying to please both and in fact pleasing neither. Both the women met untimely ends, and a sister of one asked Carolus to investigate. "Death with a Blue Ribbon" dealt with the idiosyncrasies of chefs and gourmets, but there was the underlying menace of a protection racket which Carolus exposed with a good deal of courage - to say nothing of two murders. Sometimes Leo Bruce would start with an amazing or bizarre episode. In "Our Jubilee is Death" a murdered woman was buried in the sand with only her head visible, and the tide had washed over her. Obviously, it was a question of who had done it and why the body was put in such a position. Incidentally, the murdered woman was a writer of detective

stories, and I wonder whom Leo Bruce had in mind. The publisher said "We've had her for 23 years and it seems like a prison sentence." Carolus was further informed that Mr. Gorringer had just written a book called "The Wayward Mortar-Board or Thirty Years on the Slopes of Parnassus." As you will appreciate, little touches of humour leavened the horrors of the situation.

A frequently-mentioned member of staff at the Queen's School was Mr. Hollingbourne, noted for filling in wrong answers to the crossword puzzle in the Staff copy of the Times. He had a large family and was happy to have Rupert Priggley for the holidays because of the large allowance that went with the boy, but Rupert found that rounders on the beach was not his idea of fun, and so the Head asked Carolus to look after the boy in "Death of a Commuter". To quote:

Carolus said miserably, "Aren't you ever going to be too old for the Queen's School?"
"I don't see why, sir. Billy Bunter was 57 years at school."

"Oh shut up and leave that decanter alone. You're not getting whisky in this house."

"Not even what the headmaster calls a suspicion?" Of course Priggley had helped himself to Carolus's Highland Malt and raised his glass in a toast to crime.

The last Carolus Deane story I have been able to trace is "Death by the Lake." It seems that he had retired from teaching and was living in a lakeside house in a village called Millgrove Water. The Sticks were looking after him but none of the other regular characters were mentioned apart from a passing visit by Mr. Gorringer, who did not stay for the denouement. The first chapter was a conversation in a pub about a five-year old murder, and Carolus was interested. "I suppose you've started," said Mrs. Stick, and we shall have murderers popping up again, like we've had before." As the book progressed new characters were introduced in series so that the last one was the murderer. In his prime, Leo Bruce introduced the whole cast quite quickly, and I feel that this 1971 book shows Leo Bruce's powers on the wane. The fact that Carolus Deane had retired suggests that this was a kind of postscript, a one-off.

What are the advantages of the Carolus Deane stories? I enjoy the large cast of permanent characters with their idiosyncratic viewpoints. The settings of the murders are always different, and the types of murder vary considerably. Whilst Carolus usually ensured that the police were able to arrest a murderer, there might be an occasion when he would keep the knowledge to himself, especially in "Furious Old Women" when the murderer was accidentally killed and Carolus did not want to upset relatives. I also enjoy the occasional ironic or humorous comments, and I admit I like the precocious Rupert Priggley who was not an eager assistant but more of a detached critic, with views of his own that he sometimes acted upon, and he had been known take the Bentley Continental car and drive it without permission. As you might expect, Leo Bruce's books are now out of print in this country, but they have been reprinted by an American Publisher, Academy, Chicago. Among the blurbs quoted are one from the New York Times, which called the Carolus Deane mysteries altogether beguiling, and Noel Coward who said "What a witty writer Leo Bruce is." There are still a number of titles left in Murder One. You might like to try some for yourself.

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