



The Greyfriars Gazette

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NEWSLETTER No. 49 1989



As we approach the last stages of the Great Endeavour – that being, to publish in faithful facsimile every Magnet from 1908 to 1940 – collectors now know that one of the two long-standing gaps in the programme is finally being filled, with the inclusion of issues for the first half year of 1913 in the new 1989 publishing schedule.

The very last notable gap, that of the first half of 1912, still remains to be closed, but as soon as Acquisitions has discovered these elusive 26 issues – Magnet Nos. 204 to 231 – we will have virtually completed the whole of the chronological sequence and it will only remain to join up a very few sections from 1916 to 1921 to finish the herculean task. Sighs of relief, paeans and joy all round – not least from your publisher!

And there are whisperings, though still faint at this stage, that the Bodleian Library at Oxford may prove to be able and willing to supply the missing 26 issues, through the good offices of Friar Ward of Rossall School. Nothing has yet been finalised, however.

Anent the 1913 gap, there is one tiny cloud on the horizon. Magnet No. 256 is missing from Maurice Hall's collection. It was our hope and belief, when compiling the current Catalogue, that this one odd issue would surface from some source or other before we actually went to press with Club Volume 86, but to our consternation and bitter disappointment, it has not! So, unless a near-miracle happens within the next few weeks, Club Volume 86, Fish's Fag Agency, will have to go out sans No. 256.

Rest assured, however, that this distressing omission will be put right at the very earliest opportunity, and No. 256 will appear – albeit unannounced, as an extra, in the first available future Club volume. Hopefully, in Volume Nos. 87, 88 or 89.

MORE O/P TITLES

Please note that the following titles are all just going out-of-print:

Magnet Vol. 41 – Billy Bunter's Hair Raid
Magnet Vol. 52 – Bunter the Hypnotist
Magnet Vol. 56 – Bunter's Funny Turn
Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1921

And also be warned that stocks are very low on the following:

Magnet Vol. 11 – Six Boys in a Boat
Magnet Vol. 44 – Billy Bunter in Brazil
Magnet Vol. 49 – Mystery Man of Greyfriars
Magnet Vol. 12 – The Greyfriars Adventurers

PRICES

Despite rising inflation, we are keeping book prices at par. The only small price increase applies to Club volumes 12–54, which will be brought into line with the standard £18 a volume.

All other Greyfriars Press volumes will remain static at £9.95 – or less in several cases. And all Special Reprint Edition prices also remain unchanged.

THE NEW BIOGRAPHY

Mary Cagodan's new book – FRANK RICHARDS, a Biography and Celebration (Viking/Penguin £14.95) – has received wide coverage in the national press and media. All the 'heavy' newspapers, Sundays and Daily's, have reviewed it at great length. The Times, for instance, gave it pride of first place in its book columns, and similar spreads appeared in the Sunday Telegraph, Observer, Sunday Times, Times Educational Supplement, New Statesman, Punch, Vogue and many others. It was also reviewed at length by the BBC.

Friars will find this entrancing volume listed in our new

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MEETINGS

Newcomers to the Hobby may be interested to know that convivial meetings of readers and collectors are held privately at Friars clubs in various parts of the country. Some of the contact names, with their addresses, are given below:

<p>LONDON & Home Counties: The Greyfriars Club Write to: Bob Acraman 35 Park View Broadwater Stevenage SG2 8PS</p>	<p>NORTHERN ENGLAND The Northern OBB Club Write to: Geoffrey Good Thornes Vicarage Wakefield Yorkshire</p>
<p>The Friars Club Write to: Maurice Hall 'Wharton Lodge' 72 Hilldale Road Sutton Surrey SM1 2JD</p>	<p>WEST COUNTRY Friars Club Write to: Tim Salisbury 20 Uphill Road South Uphill Weston Super Mare Avon</p>
<p>London OBB Club Write to: L. Rowley Flat 102 Enterprise House Kings Head Hill Chingford London E4 7NB</p>	
<p>MIDLANDS: Midland OBB Club Write to: Geoffrey Lardner Georgian House Broad Street Littledean Glos. GL14 3NH</p>	
<p>The Cambridge Club Write to: Keith Hodgkinson 49 Rampton Road Willingham Cambridge CB4 5JC</p>	



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Friar Terry V. Jones, of 43 Brooklands Park, Longlevens, Gloucester, wrote to tell us about his superb Christmas holiday, and waxed very congratulatory as well: "As 1989 gets under way I'd like to say thank you for the brilliant idea you had back in 1969 — yes, it really is over twenty years ago! — when you published the first Howard Baker facsimiles of the grand old Magnet and Gem.

"What very happy hours your volumes have given my brother and I over the years. We are now old 'old boys' of

65 and 60, but we never forget our schooldays back in the 1930s when the appearance of the Magnet and the Gem were twin highlights of our week.

"Home really is Greyfriars and St Jim's as far as I am concerned, with Howard Baker volumes and original issues of Magnet, Gem, and Schoolboys' Own everywhere in evidence in all three bedrooms and lounge. And we mustn't forget Sexton Blake, either. He has a good look in, alongside Tiger Tim Annuals, Holiday Annuals, Modern Boy Annuals, Hotspurs and Funny Wonders, etc., etc.

"You will probably gather from this that I'm single. I don't think any wife would put up with all this — particularly as any space left over from my story-paper and comic collections is filled to overflowing with hundreds of records of dance bands and singers of the 30's and 40's.

"Oh, yes — that superb Christmas holiday I mentioned. It was at Mauleverer Towers, would you believe? I had an extremely enjoyable time. It was very 1931-ish . . . and all thanks to the Howard Baker Greyfriars Holiday Annual for 1974!"



Novice Friar Stuart Maxwell (aged 16) of 165 Old Church Road, Chingford, London E4 6RD comments on our ". . . Excellent service and quick returns. It seems no sooner have I posted an order form than I am opening a bulky parcel full of your superb books."



Whilst Friar W.O.G. Lofts has the following recondite information to impart for all who have long puzzled over who precisely occupied which study at Greyfriars in the very early days: "In the beginning, Study No. 1 contained Wharton, Nugent, Bulstrode and Bunter. At a later date, Bulstrode moved out, and was replaced by Hurree Singh.

"In Magnet No. 141, dated October 22nd 1910 and entitled 'The New Firm', it is recorded that a new study has been created, to take in some of the overflow from earlier, overcrowded studies. Bunter, Wun Lung and Alonzo Todd were therefore allocated to Study No. 14. Seemingly, neither Wun Lung nor Alonzo could stand Bunter for long and soon moved out. Fisher T. Fish, who arrived at Greyfriars in Magnet No. 159 entitled 'The Yankee Schoolboy' was, apparently, placed at first in the study held by Billy Bunter.

"In Magnet No. 271 of 1913, however, Peter Todd arrived, and Bunter, Todd and his cousin Alonzo, plus Tom Dutton are all to be found in Study 7, which — in a series of odd stories — Peter Todd tried to make top dog of the Remove.

"Clearly, there was a lot of moving around in the early days, and not all of the moves were either chronicled or explained by Frank Richards."

On the subject of slipcases for our Club volumes, opinion is forthright. Sister Ann Clarke, of 105 Geraldine Road, Wandsworth, London SW18 2NJ says flatly: "I certainly prefer the books without slipcases. Particularly if it means a faster service (and also affects the price)."

And Friar C. Diamanti, of 318 Waterloo Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 4DJ says: "My own verdict is that the slip-

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cated Community for your prompt and kind dispatch of my order (received today) and Gazettes (received some days ago). My cup, indeed, is overflowing. The Irish Customs must have heard your prayers as there is nothing horrendous to report. Long may it be so.

(The Republic of Ireland is the last country we know of in the western world to subject openly declared and labelled parcels of books to sometimes rigorous Customs inspection — Ed.

“Since my first introduction to The Magnet in 1932, shortly before I became a teenager” — *the Friar goes on* — “it seemed impossible to satisfy my appetite for it, until you — Deo Gratias — solved the problem. Long may you and your Community be spared to do so.

“My favourite Magnet period is the early thirties (like many others of our Venerable Order). But it’s great to be able to enjoy all the other stories as well — especially the Christmas Numbers.

“I was unaware that Eire had opted out of the very favourable postal connection with the UK — which now makes us pay more in postage. Beasts! (Er . . . sorry. Apologies to F.R. Will perform the usual penance — this time with peas soft boiled). Le gach deagh-ghuidhe.”

cases — unlike the books they contained — were somewhat fragile and had to be handled with care. None of my slipcases have survived to date — whereas the books were, and are, robust in the extreme. So I think your decision was wise.

“As a (forcibly) retired print compositor, I find the circumstances surrounding the difficulties you are daily experiencing with book production entirely understandable. I hope that, in the end, everything will work out for the best.

“While saying this, I have to acknowledge that — as a craftsman — it makes me a bit sad to walk down the street where I was once employed as a comp. A busy street then — bustling with five printing establishments — now filled with almost twice that number of Chinese Restaurants and Takeaways.

“Old readers of The Boys Magazine will recall the Yellow Peril invasion serials which appeared regularly in that paper. Positively no racism intended — but I wonder if this is what the writers really meant. J-O-K-E Joke.

Still on the subject of slipcases, Friar Keith Atkinson, of 20 Carlisle Terrace, Bradford says: “It is good to see you keeping the Greyfriars flag flying against mounting odds. More power to your elbow.

“Having just taken early retirement, I hope to have more time now for reading, especially Greyfriars volumes. And don’t worry about the slipcases. They only took up valuable space.”

Friar D. Twomey, of Dun Mhuire, Ballinlough Road, Cork, Eire, writes in jocular mood — Dear Father Abbot — “The Blessings of all the Saints of Ireland on you and your dedic-

Friar Mark Ford, of 2 Fairfax Close, Leicester LE4 7FS has a question. Can anyone out there come up with the answer? :

“Thank you for all the pleasure your books have given me,” *Fr . . . Ford writes.* “My first introduction to them was when my mother brought me a library book when I was ill. It was one of the hardback ‘Bunter story’ types, about Collins size. This was all of ten years ago, but I’ll never forget the sheer delight that book gave me.

“I presume that book must have been compiled from a collection of earlier Magnets, and for the past ten years I have been trying to identify the book so that I could re-read it. If I write down what I remember of the plot here, you might be able to help me in my quest.

“The story was that a new master came to Greyfriars. He was some sort of crook. Bunter found out, and the master got him expelled. But, instead of leaving, Bunter hid in the old tower at Greyfriars and raided the studies at night for food. He hoped to somehow prove that he was telling the truth and that the new master was a wrong ’un, but no-one would believe him at first. I think The Bounder came to believe him in the end, though why that was I’m not sure. But the crooked master is eventually shown up in his true colours and attempts to escape on Bunter’s bike!

“I clearly remember Bunter running round the Remove, trying to get someone to give chase, saying his Pater had paid so-and-so for the bike — and each time he spoke the price went up, and up, and up. But finally the crooked master was caught, and all was well.

“Does that remind anyone of a Magnet series? If so, I’d be delighted to know of it. If not . . . well . . . don’t worry, I’ll just keep on searching. Sorry if I’ve gone on a bit, but it would mean a lot to me if I could trace that very first story.”

Can anyone help Friar Ford?

Feb 26th, 1989. From N. Haque, 17 Scotland Road, Agincourt, Ontario M1S 1L5 Canada. I would like to take the opportunity here, to briefly comment on Mary Cadogan's biography of Frank Richards, which I thought was very well presented. It certainly had the effect of making the 'master' a less shadowy figure in my mind! The book was very interesting — especially because Mrs. Cadogan used excerpts from the Magnet and Gem papers. Perhaps she should have used more, but then I suppose it was meant to be Frank Richards' biography, and not Bunter's.

Unfortunately one of the intriguing questions I ask myself remain unanswered (satisfactorily). I always wonder, who (or what?) precisely inspired Bunters characterization? Frank himself is highly reticent on naming the inspiration(s) behind the fat owl of the Remove, and it seems that previous speculations have been over-reached. Oh well, so long as he continues to live on, in your excellent fascimiles, it remains an interesting but inconsequential question.



Naveed Haque

And, finally, a ghostly touch of approbation from the shadowy Friar who resides at 35 Testlands Avenue, Nursling, Southampton, Hants, but who doesn't tell us his name . . .

"These volumes have given me enormous pleasure over the years and, among many others, I will always be grateful to you for taking a very considerable financial risk and publishing them in the first place."

We regret that many letters have had to be held over due to shortage of space in this edition. They will appear in the next issue of the Gazette.

We expect to be back with a larger [8-page] Gazette later in the year, but we hope that Friars will understand that the amount of time that we can devote to the Greyfriars Press section of our general publishing programme is governed by the very small business generated by this particular division of the company's enterprises. Do bear in mind that we produce and sell a very small number of each new BOOK CLUB title: today, two hundred copies of each, in total.

And the cost to us of film and plate origination plus printing two hundred is almost as much as if it were two thousand copies. But the demand does not, nowadays, exceed the former figure. Added to that is the swingeing cost of warehousing the backstock volumes. Altogether, sobering reflections! Ones which we trust all Friars will read, mark, learn and inwardly digest. Here endeth the lesson . . .

Such are the harsh economics of this arcane branch of publishing life.



Howard Baker

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The Greyfriars Gazette

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Sales and Wants

SALES and WANTS

FOR SALE: Greyfriars Press and Book Club volumes—in print and scarce out-of-print titles. Enquiries to: Mr J.T. Hayes, 29 Northway Wallington, Surrey SM6 8DH. Send s.a.e. for full list.

FOR SALE: O/P Magnet volumes £15 each—Vol. 2 Rebellion of Harry Wharton; Vol. 5 Billy Bunter and the Courtfield Crackman; Vol. 8 The Mystery of Wharton Lodge; Vol. 25 Billy Bunter in China; Vol. 34 Bunter's Seaside Capers // Out-of-print Magnet volume £7—Vol. 14 My Lord Bunter // In-print Magnet volumes £5 each—Vol. 4 Billy Bunter & The Terror of the Form; Vol. 12 The Greyfriars Adventurers; Vol. 59 Bunter's Rich Relation // In-print Annuals £5 each—GHA 1973, HB Holiday Annual 1974, GHA 1977 GHA 1978, GHA 1979, GHA 1982, GHA 1983, GHA 1986 // In-print GEM volumes £4 each—Vol. 4 Tom Merry & The Night Raiders; Vol. 7 The Spectre of St Jim's // In-print NELSON LEE volumes £4 each—Vol. 1 The Barrington at St Franks; Vol. 2 Expelled // All volumes Mint with Dust Wrapper. Part postage £1 a volume (books sent registered). Write to: Mr J. Hardy, 22 Rue des Asters, CH-1202 GENEVA, Switzerland.

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FOR SALE: Box of Greyfriars goodies comprising: 12 Cassell hardbacks; 9 Armada softbacks; Bookclub Vol. 3 in softback; Gem Vols. 8, 9, 10; McCall's Greyfriars Guide; Greyfriars for Grown-ups; Greyfriars Map; Cassette-tape copy of Floreat Greyfriars LP—All in one lot at £50—Phone: Mr Church at London (01) 527 3966.

WANTED: BILLY BUNTER THE BOLD and BILLY BUNTER'S BEANFEAST (both published by Cassell). Must be VG condition in VG dustwrapper. Tel: Gary Childs: 0245 33585.

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WANTED: Greyfriars Press and Annual volumes. Also Book Club volumes particularly wanted. Phone after 6pm 051-734 1093. Or write: Anthony Boner, 39 Truro Road, Wavertree, Liverpool, Merseyside L15 9HW.

WANTED TO PURCHASE: Bunter hardbacks. Contact: David Conn, 99 Abercrombie Road, Fleetwood, Lancashire FY7 7AY.

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WANTED: Magnet volumes, Holiday Annuals, Book Club Editions, Cassell/Skilton hardbacks, Hamilton biographies etc. Please quote in packages of three (3) volumes including postage. Write to: Mr D. Raeside, 9 Dante Avenue, Nepean, Ontario K2H 5Z9, Canada.

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