STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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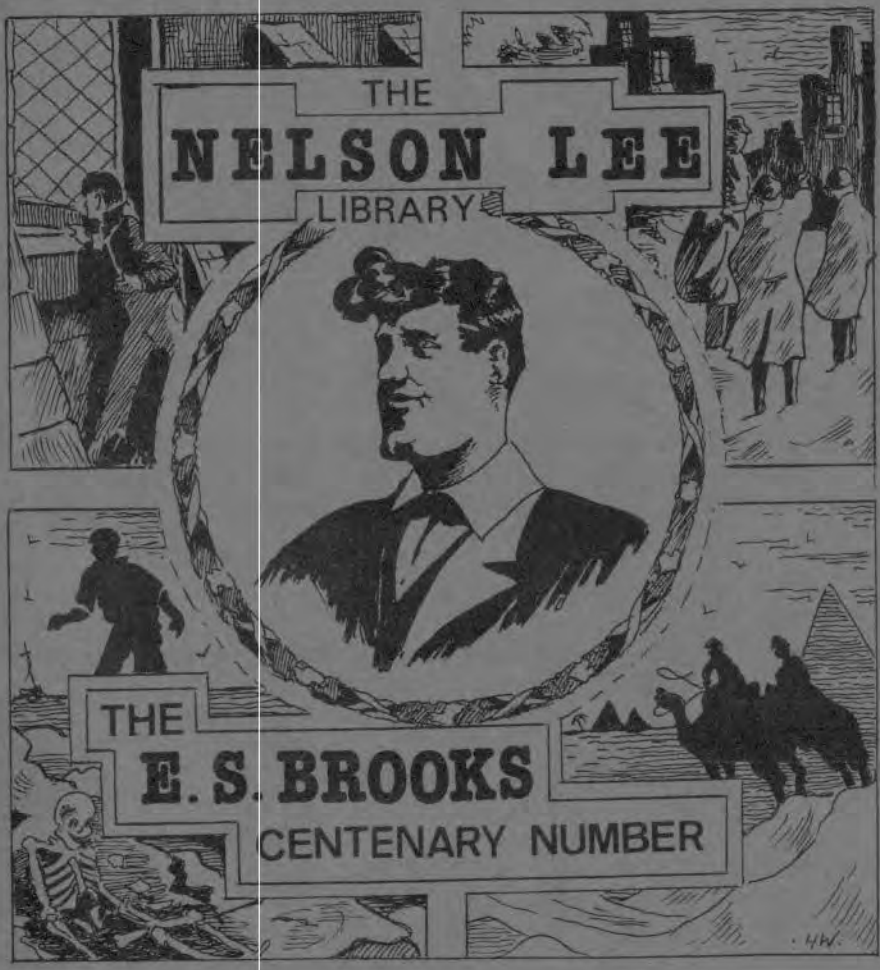

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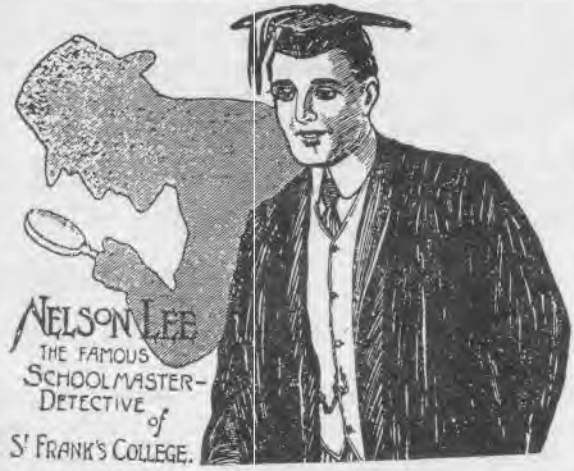
The Editor's Chat



E.S. BROOKS CENTENARY

As indicated by this month's splendid C.D. cover, drawn by Henry Webb, we are marking the centenary of the birth of E.S. Brooks. A giant among the boys' paper writers, he has given endless pleasure in his stories of school, detection, travel and adventure, not only to the children who read his stories hot from the press in the old papers but to many of us who have encountered his tales only in adult life. This issue contains tributes to him from stalwarts amongst the St. Frank's fans, E.B. Grant-McPherson, C.H. Churchill and Jim Sutcliffe, and Norman Wright has contributed some interesting comments on Norman Conquest's exploits in The Thriller. We are proud and glad that over the years the Nelson Lee flag has continued to wave in our pages, in a variety of intriguing articles by Jim Cook, the late R.J. Godsave, William Lister, Jack Greaves and many others.

This is also a time to remember the late Bob Blythe, a co-founder of the London Old Boys' Book Club, who did so much to keep the Nelson

Lee and our memories of the St. Frank's author evergreen. Bob ran the Club's wonderfully comprehensive Nelson Lee Library for several decades (a task now ably carried out by Bill Bradford), wrote - and inspired others to write - about Brooks's stories for the C.D., and produced the excellent *St. Frank's Jubilee Companion* in 1977. In the latter, he described Brooks as 'an extremely competent writer with a seemingly inexhaustible flow of ideas', and I am sure that none of us would disagree with this. The vivid atmosphere and sheer guts of Brooks's stories swept all before them. His son, Lionel Searles Brooks, wrote in the *Companion* that Edwy was 'quite the most exciting father any boy could hope to have... For me, this is the permanent inheritance of the St. Frank's stories, and I am happy that you can equally share it with me'.

This is perhaps also an appropriate time to remind C.D. leaders of the London O.B.B.C.'s Nelson Lee lending library, details of which can be obtained from Bill Bradford (see advertisement in this issue).

THE C.D. ANNUAL

Our Annual proceeds apace, and, as promised, I now give some further appetite whetters: Eric Fayne shares some memories with us, Roger Jenkins writes on *Foreigners at the Hamilton Schools*, E. Baldock provides more of his Greyfriars vignettes, Ernest Holman guides us around the wonderful world of Wodehouse, and Ray Hopkins dips again into his first *Pip and Squeak Annual*. Sexton Blake, Tiger Tim and other heroes are represented, and there are a great many more delights in both texts and pictures. Orders for the Annual can still be accepted (£7.00 to any address in the British Islea or £8.50 for anywhere overseas, post and packet included).

MARY CADOGAN

* *

HAMILTONIA ALL TYPES: Swops, sales and purchases; or maybe just a jolly good chat about the hobby. Lots of Holiday Annuals for my Holiday Annual Hospital wanted in 1989/90. Generous prices paid. Contact: COLIN CREWE, 12b Westwood Road, Canvey Island, Essex, Tel. 0268 693735, Evenings 7.15 - 9.30 p.m. and weekends.

* *

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* *

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS IS 100 by E.B. Grant-McPherson

On the 11th of November, 1889, Edwy Searles Brooks was born. It could hardly be realised then what pleasure he would bring to thousands, nay, probably millions of boys and girls (and adults) the majority as yet unborn.

Most probably, nearly all those readers connected him with St. Franks. I know I did. Of all the weeklies the Nelson Lee was always my favourite, the boys of St. Francis College were as real to my friends and myself as if we actually attended that famous seat of learning.

I was a member of the St. Frank's League; unfortunately the Certificate disappeared during the war, but I still have the autographed photo that he sent me in exchange for one of mine, which is one of my most prized possessions.

I enjoyed all the stories in the Nelson Lee in both the Old and New series. I think that my own favourite stories were the First Northestrian series, but I must confess, that by the start of the Second New series the stories were really poor, and the Lee went through a very bad patch. I discovered later that this was an editorial blunder, and not Edwy's fault. The stories improved, but never seemed to regain quite their original hold.

But to return to E.S.B.! Whilst perhaps not quite so prolific as Charles Hamilton, I thought he wrote with more feeling; his boys were, for me, much more realistic, his girls most certainly so. Perhaps some of the holiday situations that the boys and girls found themselves in were a little far fetched, but, after all, they were written to thrill the reader which they most certainly did, and, with the aid of Nelson Lee, and of course Lord Dorrimore, the juniors always came through in the end.

After the demise of the poor old 'Lee' two main characters carried on the tradition; Norman Conquest, a sort of Saint type of adventurer, and Inspector Cromwell or "Ironsides", a really first class detective series.

These characters were Brooks' own creations, as were the St. Frank's folk, unlike Nelson Lee and Nipper, whom he more or less took over from a Mr. Maxwell Scott.

At about the same time, he developed two more schools, Whitelands and Westchester, cleverly written yarns mxing the traits of several of his St. Frank's boys into one character. These stories were written under pen names as were his Conquest and Cromwell novels.

In addition to his St. Frank's saga, and possibly not so well known, Edwy has quite an impressive lineup to his credit. He wrote 20 Greyfriars stories for the Magnet, as 'Frank Richards', and over 40 as 'Martin Clifford' in the Gem, and a story in each of the 36 issues of the pre-war Buzzer. In the Boys' Magazine he wrote over 50 yarns, many of these featuring the Monocled Manhunter, Falcon Swift, and nearly 30 Dixon Hawke tales. Of Sexton Blake, his output was well over the century, appearing in the Union Jack, Detective Library and of course the Sexton Blake itself. He also contributed to the Thriller and many other boys papers. He even wrote stories for Comic Cuts; the list seems endless. 21 different pen-names were used in accomplishing this Herculean task.

Edwy was nothing if not versatile, in addition to the foregoing he also wrote the scripts for three films, and in the late 1930s a radio serial running for 12 episodes. Finally, for the statistically minded, his first published story appeared in 1906, and his last, in 1966, curiously enough entitled, "Curtains for Conquest".

For 60 years of pleasure, Edwy Searles Brooks I am sure you will always be remembered.

* *

"THANK YOU, MR. BROOKS" **by C.H. Churchill**

As this month of November 1989 marks the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Edwy Searles Brooks I would like to add my tribute to him for his marvellous gift of story telling over the years. Although other writers produced many hundreds of school stories in the same period I feel that E.S.B. outshone them all because, when the Nelson Lee Library finished, he had great success in the adult market for many years with his stories of Norman Conquest and Inspector Cromwell.

Sixty years of story writing is a very long time and, when one looks through the Bibliography of E.S.B.'s writings compiled by our late friend, Bob Blythe, one's mind boggles at the vast number of stories shewn therein. How anyone could go on, year after year, producing all these stories, most of them excellent, makes the mind reel. Apart from the hard work of writing the stories, how he thought of all the plots is simply amazing.

His early series about Zingrave, Jim the Penman, Eileen Dare, etc., were all first class stories, and when the idea of School/Detective stories was mooted he came up with St. Frank's, and went to town as the saying goes. He had, of course, to invent a school very different from Greyfriars, St. Jim's and so on in order to offer readers a choice. That is why he made St. Frank's stories so different in style, more exciting and adventurous.

I think he was unlucky with the Conquest tales as they were too early to catch on with the film makers. Ian Fleming came a little later with his James Bond ones, just at the time when spies were in the news, so to

speak, and so was taken up by the Film moguls. I do feel, however, that the Conquest stories would have made as much impact as the Bond ones had they been used.

To my great regret, I never corresponded with Mr. Brooks but, if I could, I would say to him "Many, many thanks for giving me so many hundreds of hours of truly excellent reading material".

* *

EDWY'S CENTENARY

by Jim Sutcliffe

Our beloved Edwy Searles Brooks was born on the 11th November, 1889. What a pity he was only granted six years over his allotted span.

However during his lifetime he brought happiness to many thousands who followed the adventures of the boys of St. Frank's in the Nelson Lee Library where they could be transported from the depression years of the 1920s and early 30s into the exciting events of public school life, and on far away summer holiday series, and to ancestral homes with their Christmas festivities. Among my treasured letters from Edwy is one actually typed on Christmas Day 1931 when most people would be relaxing, thanking me for my Christmas card sent to his Halstead address, the Essex town immortalised for me as the place where all the St. Frank's stories were written. No doubt, had he been spared, Edwy would have carried on writing his Norman Conquest and Ironsides Cromwell novels for some years, for as a writer of detective thrillers he excelled.

Long may he be remembered, and his stories enjoyed

* *

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NEXT TIME ROUND

by Ernest Holman

William Lister's "Nine of the Best" in February C.D. reopened a thought of my own regarding 'Sexton Blake Wins'. After reading the Volume, I have to confess to disappointment that (for me) a **truer** representative selection had not been offered. Of course, these things are always matters of personal choice and I would be quick to admit that my knowledge of Sexton Blake lore occurs mostly in the memory. "One man's meat..." applies, obviously, I will say that I enjoyed reading those nine offerings; I just felt that, good as they were, there was scope (in the near future, perhaps, Messrs. Dent?) for a more considered choice of yarns.

Having said that, I must therefore present my own views on stories that could be included in a new Volume. Ready to be shot at and/or learn of YOUR individual selection - well, why not? Blakiana has been running a long while in C.D. - thank goodness that such a Column offers all Blakians an opportunity to express views. So, for the second Volume of Blake ("Sexton Blake Triumphs?"), here goes.

Gwyn Evans again, definitely, this time, however, with a Splash Page event, perhaps one of those cosy Christmas packages; for instance, the two-week series of 'The Masque of Time', with the blood-coloured milk, etc.

George Hamilton Teed also to appear again - but surely with Roxane? One of the most-likely remembered stories - the compelling situation created by Felix Dupont and Roxane, with its 'revealing' photograph. (Being only 16 at the time I read it, no doubt the memory lingers on: I am, of course, speaking of the days when one could correctly state **ONLY** sixteen!)

Robert Murray justifies a further inclusion, undoubtedly a Mr. Reece/Criminals' Confederation episode. Rex Hardinge would have to be represented by a Losely adventure.

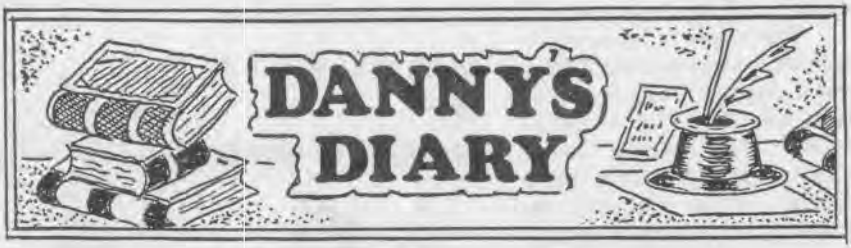
So far, then, four authors already in 'Wins', making five full-length yarns. Not much room for other writers, maybe, but one popular addition would have to be a Waldo skirmish (why on earth Edwy Searles Brooks was not considered worthy of inclusion first time out beats me!).

Room for two more, then; how about one of Gilbert Chester's stirring tales, together with one of the more modern versions by W. Howard Baker? This would pretty well bring the Volume up to the size of the first Volume. A final touch of genuineness would be to include some Eric Parker illustrations.

Come on, you Blakians. Let's show Messrs. Dent that we are eager for more, that there are so many suggestions to choose from; the final selection to be made by the Sexton Blake Librarian and/or a CD vote sometime.

It's all very well worth a try, isn't it?

* *



DANNY'S DIARY

NOVEMBER 1939

There was some talk about extending Summer Time permanently for the duration of the war. They thought it would save fuel. I can't see how it would do that. You would turn on the lights all over the house in the morning an hour earlier instead of in the evening. Besides, it's nice to pull the blackouts, turn on the light, and sit beside the fire with the Magnet in your paw. As it happened, the clocks went back eventually on 19th November, and thank goodness they did. There's no fun in going to school in the dark on a freezing, foggy morning.

A good month in the monthlies. First of all, in the Schoolboys' Own Library, there is "The Schoolboy Samson". He is, of all people, Bunter. He has managed to pinch the fluid which Alonzo Todd had from Professor Sparkinson, and so we had Bunter, instead of Alonzo, throwing his weight about. This "Strong Bunter" story ended before the end of the book, and it was finished up with some entertaining chapters about Guy Fawkes Day at Greyfriars.

The second S.O.L. is also about Guy Fawkes Day, and it is called "Rival Guys at Rookwood". Lots of fun and games, all centred on November the Fifth and jolly good. The third S.O.L. is "War in the New World" with Nipper & Co. enjoying themselves in the new world they have discovered in the Antarctic. But then war breaks out between two countries in that region, and fun turns to peril. Lovely before the fire.

A great treat in the Boys' Friend Library. A Rio Kid tale entitled "The Outlaw Kid". It's quite a while since we had a Rio Kid tale, and this one is absolutely great.

I had two Sexton Blake Libraries. One is "The Rubber Smugglers" which introduces the criminal George Marsden Plummer with his assistant Vali Mata-Vali. This is by G.H. Teed. The other S.B.L. I bought is "The Gun-Boar Mystery", introducing R.S.V. Purvale, by John G. Brandon. Both are good reading.

In real life we go back to WAR. The Dutch liner "Simon Bolivar" has been sunk by striking a German mine. Over 120 people died in this awful affair.

A month of good fun in the wonderful Magnet. The first story is a single one. It is "The Tuck Hoarder". This is the first one in which the war is a fact. In earlier months, when there were just rumours of war there was mention of gas masks and A.R.P., but now war is a fact. Fishy is the tuck hoarder, breaking the new law about getting in a lot of food against emergencies. Fishy gets a load in hand, but, unfortunately for him, his hoard is discovered by Bunter - and Bunter gives a party. In this jolly tale Fishy also loses a fiver. It was hidden in a newspaper, and Mr. Quelch used the newspaper to block up a broken window.

This single is followed by a 3-story series starring Coker, and I enjoyed it muchly. The tales are "Run Out of Greyfriars", "The Remove Detectives", and "The Wanderer's Return". Coker is expelled on suspicion of putting fireworks in Mr. Prout's grate. When Prouty lit his fire he thought there was an air raid. Coker, though expelled, refuses to go home. He gets a job as the assistant of Mr. Clegg, the Friardale grocer - and continues to haunt Mr. Prout and Greyfriars. And Aunt Judy turns up and adds to the fun. She calls Bob Cherry "Plummy". In the third and final story, Price admits to Mr. Prout that it was he, Price, who did the deed with the fireworks. And so Coker comes back to school, and Price, because he confessed so honourably, is let off with a flogging. A nice series, packed with fun.

It isn't only periodicals which amalgamate, it seems. Two very famous Yorkshire newspapers - "The Yorkshire Post" and "The Leeds Mercury" have amalgamated.

I haven't let the beastly war interfere with my picturegoing. At first, Mum was a bit worried that there might be an air-raid while we were there, but the visits have been uneventful. My first film this month was "Serenade" starring Jeanette Macdonald and Lew Ayres. A bit dull for me. About a married couple, the husband being a composer and his wife a warbler - and their careers clash. The next one was "Ice Follies of 1939" with a load of stars including Joan Crawford, James Stewart, and Lew Ayres. No story much in this one, but a variety of good ice turns.

Gracie Fields was good in "Shipyard Sally", and another good British film was "The Spy in Black", starring Conrad Veidt, set in that earlier war and about German

spies who are suspicious of one another. Wow! Also in the time of that other war is "The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle", and once again about a husband and wife team who, this time, are dancers. This stars Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. Bang up to the minute is "The Confessions of a Nazi Spy". It stars Edward G. Robinson, George Sanders, and Paul Lukas. All about how in the United States they set about winkling out the Nazis from plum positions. I enjoyed it though it was a bit like a lesson in modern history. Finally we saw "The Sun Never Sets" with Basil Rathbone and Douglas Fairbanks Jnr. Rather stodgy, this one.

I miss the Cedar Creek stories in the Gem, and am not too happy about Cedar Creek being replaced with Biggles. Still, the St. Jim's story is always the main attraction in the Gem (even though they had Biggles on the front cover one week this month, which makes me wonder whether the Editor is daft).

The series has continued about Silverson, the new master of the Fourth at St. Jim's, and his efforts to get Tom Merry disgraced and expelled so that Silverson can become Miss Fawcett's heir. The month's opening tale is "Tom Merry Hits Back", when Tom, fed-up with the persecution of the crook schoolmaster, becomes a rebel and gets his own back on the man. Next came "The Masked Avengers" which is delicious, with various small groups of boys going for Silverson. They wear masks, and the ones whom Silverson suspects can always prove an alibi. I believe I remember a tale on these lines in the Magnet once. It's great.

Next comes "Gussy Gets Away With It" (this is the issue with Biggles taking over the cover picture). Gussy goes on the warpath against Silverson, and, for once, Gussy is successful. Finally comes "The Boy With a Bad Name". Tom Merry is once again the victim of the schemer, and is suspected of theft. I am enjoying this series. Though it is a bit repetitive, it's grand reading. It continues next month.

The first Greyfriars tale in the Gem this month is "Jack Drake's Hat-Trick". Wharton is furious when Drake makes a fool of him. And Drake accepts a challenge to fight Wharton. Next is "From Foes to Friends" and the tale tells delightfully how the trouble between Wharton and Drake blows over. Next "Pulling Bunter's Leg" in which, surprise, surprise, Bunter's postal-order arrives. Finally - and it seems I mean "finally" - came "Skinner's Revenge". And Skinner's scheme is foiled by Wun Lung. Great!

And now a blow. This is the last of the Drake at Greyfriars tales it seems. Next month they are to be replaced with a new series of "Told in the Tuckshop" by G.E. Rochester. This was a series which ran in Modern Boy, though I never cared much for them. As this is advertised as a NEW series, I suppose it was originally written for Modern Boy, and the Gem has become a dumping ground for what was left over from that paper. Can you hear me sighing?

And now a bit of war news. On the last day of the month Russia invaded Finland.

ERIC FAYNE Comments on This Month's DANNY'S DIARY

S.O.L. No. 388 "The Schoolboy Samson" comprised the last 2 stories of the 5-story Professor Sparkinson series in the Magnet of late autumn 1933. The issue was completed with the November 5th story which had appeared in the Magnet a few weeks earlier.

S.O.L. No. 389 "Rival Guys at Rookwood" comprised 5 stories which had appeared in the Boys' Friend round about October and November in the year 1925.

The Jeanette Macdonald film "Serenade" was released in the States under the title "Broadway Serenade". The film "The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle" which Danny saw in November 1939 was the last of the main series of dancing and singing films from Astaire and Rogers which had brought sunshine to the later Thirties. There had been 10 in all of them.

The Jack Drake at Greyfriars stories (published under the name of Frank Richards in the Gem) had appeared anonymously in the Greyfriars Herald, though they were all by the genuine Frank. The four that Danny mentions from the 1939 November Gem had appeared, almost consecutively, in the Greyfriars Herald from early February 1921. The 1939 "Jack Drake's Hat-Trick" had the quaint title "Wharton's Sandringham Hat" in 1921; "From Foes to Friends" had originally been "Shoulder to Shoulder".

"If you've come here as customers, all right!" said Coker. "If you haven't, get out, before I boot you!"

And now, for some reason, a story in the original series was omitted. This bore the title "Fishy's Football Syndicate" and it told how Fish came on a sporting paper with a competition where readers were offered £1000 for forecasting correctly the results of 12 football matches. Gosling had got 10 out of 12 right. Fishy thought that if each member of the form sent in a different forecast with Fishy running the syndicate, they would certainly get an all-correct entry. Naturally, there was a slip-up at the finish. Why was this story omitted from the Gem in 1939? It could be that the issue was missing from the A.P. files, but that is extremely unlikely. It seems

probable that football pools, as we know them today, were unknown in 1921 but going strong in 1939. Actually I don't know when the pools started. It seems likely, I think, that the story was omitted for moral reasons. The Gem didn't want to turn its readers into a clique of gamblers. Following this omission, the sequence continued. "Pulling Bunter's Leg" bore the same title on both occasions: "Skinner's Revenge" of 1939 originally bore the surprising and clumsy title "Skinner's Scheme Squashed!".

Idly, and nothing to do with Danny, how things are changing! We walk *killlommmeters*, get our temperatures in *Shellfish* - and we no longer hear of the Union Jack. They always call it the Union Flag now. What would Sexton Blake and Tinker think of that? The same as I do, I reckon.

As Danny reminds us, it was in November 1939 that Coker became a grocer's boy - assistant to Mr. Clegg the Friardale grocer. Not surprisingly, most of the happily remembered themes turned up at all the three Hamilton schools. It was Lumley-Lumley who became a grocer's boy to Mr. Sands, the Rylcombe grocer, in a delightful Blue Gem "Shunned by his Father" (1911) and repeated in the mid-thirties in the Gem as "From Schoolboy to Grocer's Boy". One recalls the friendship of Lumley with Grimes, the real grocer's boy. Then in the mid-twenties in the Boys' Friend at Rookwood, it was Mornington who became "Mr. Bandy's New Boy".

It is not surprising that Hamilton repeated successful themes. We are glad that he did. But one wonders, perhaps, that he did not vary the tradesmen a little. But no. It was a grocer's boy on each occasion. I'm sure now that we would not have wanted it any different from what it was.

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THEIR HOLIDAY MYSTERY AT BLACKWATER PELE
Part 4: Chapter 7 (conclusion) by Margery Woods

"I'm starving!" moaned Bessie. "I simply refuse to ride one of those things. I'm black and blue all over after those ghastly wood beds."

"We're all hungry!" they chorussed. "We're all stiff and tired. But we're going to look for grub. Coming, or staying?" Grumbling, Bessie got aboard a bike and wobbled down the lane in the wake of the others. Leila seemed to be the only one to remember the original objective of the holiday and had brought her new camera. She had been up with the dawn sun, photographing the pele and aspects of the manor. Meanwhile, Jemima had mapped out their day. She and Babs and Clara were going to visit Mrs. Jones, who had posted the keys in her letter to Colonel Carstairs, and because eight strangers descending on that lady might prove too overwhelming Mabs and the others were to leave the bikes there and bus into town, stock up with provisions, and wait for Babs, Jemima and Clara to meet them there for lunch. By then, Jemima hoped to have some more info. When she had got over her surprise, Mrs. Jones, a motherly country-woman was horror-stricken when she heard that the girls had spent the night in the pele.

"It hasn't been used for years! No heating, and no hot water either. You poor bairns", she exclaimed in her soft Northumbrian accents. "I'm going to make you something to eat right now." In their hearts, the girls did not want to protest too firmly. They were longing for a civilised meal, and Mrs. Jones did not disappoint them. While they tucked into porridge with creamy milk, bacon and eggs, and toast with lashings of farm butter and home-made marmalade, she told them all she knew of Blackwater Pele and its manor. She had been housekeeper to old Miss Newton, and Greg was indeed a nephew of the late owner. "A regular wastrel." Mrs. Jones said flatly. "Always wanting money to get him out of scrapes. The mistress got tired of him at the finish and refused to see him any more. Said she wasn't going to leave him a penny."

"You must miss looking after her and all her treasures", murmured Jemima, telling her conscience that this gentle curiosity was essential. But the old housekeeper shook her head. "The mistress never cared for jewellery and oil paintings and suchlike. She was a farming countrywoman before Blackwater came to her. There wasn't much money for the upkeep, either. We had to watch the pennies."

Jemima frowned. This seemed to rule out Clara's theory. But she stayed silent as Mrs. Jones went on: "Then last week Greg turned up, saying his cousins wanted him to modernise the manor. He demanded the keys so I had to give him them but something made me hang on to the spare set. There was just something that didn't ring true. And those awful men that came with him... Mind, I feel sorry for that lassie. She looks afraid of her own shadow."

"How far is it to the coast?" asked Jemima unexpectedly.

"A couple of miles, I'd say. Were you thinking of a picnic?" asked Mrs. Jones. "It's a lovely little cove, but very lonely mind."

"Spot on for a midnight feast!"

Mrs. Jones looked surprised, as well she might, but Babs, well used to Jemima's strange humour, which very often proved otherwise, just smiled, and the subject was changed as the kindly woman asked where the girls were going to stay, because she could put up three and Mrs. Dixon down the road could help out. Jemima assured

her that this would be perfect, except that she planned to stay at the pele that night. At the finish, only Bessie elected to accept Mrs. Jones's hospitality and Marjorie was persuaded to keep Bessie company. Meanwhile, the Fourth's enigma wanted change, lots of small change, for the telephone...

The sun's autumnal gold was deepening in the west by time the six chums returned to Blackwater. They had enjoyed their day in the village and the neighbouring market town, they were well stocked up with provisions, now all they had to do was wait and find out just what might happen that night. Even though Jemima looked superbly sure of herself Babs knew flickers of doubt. They were still trespassing, no matter how mysterious or wrong the circumstances at Blackwater might seem.

They played Snap and Beggar-my-neighbour with an ancient pack of cards Mabs had found until the light failed, then resorted to Proverbs, until darkness was full. At last Jemima said it was time for first watch and the girls went like dark silent ghosts to their allotted posts. No light showed at the manor, and when her watch hands reached ten Babs felt her doubts return. Then beside her Clara stiffened. "Listen."

The dark car swept up the drive as she spoke. It slid into the shadows at the side of the house and this time four men got out. Greg appeared, and after a brief exchange with the newcomers unbarred the coach house door.

"It looks as though old Jimmy's right", whispered Clara, and Babs hushed her warningly. It all happened so quickly and quietly the chums realised these men had worked this way many times. The white van was backed up closely, the bales and boxes and crates were brought up from the cellars and stowed away in an operation that could have been on oiled wheels. Greg closed the doors, went into the house for a brief time, then with the man called Nick got into the white van while the other three piled into the black car. The two vehicles drove off into the night and from their places of hiding four girls with thumping hearts watched them go. For the white van now carried two other passengers --- Jemima and Babs!

Chapter 8

Cramped and aching, crouched in the lurching van, Babs thought their journey would never end, even though, if Jemima were right, it would cover only a few miles. What would happen if Jemima were wrong Babs did not dare think. Fury, embarrassment, perhaps real trouble when their presence was discovered. And if the timing of Jemima's plans misfired they would be in very real danger. Afterwards, she could only marvel at the audacity of that girl when the van stopped almost on the beach of a deserted cover and the men flung open the doors. Jemima stood there, her monocle firmly affixed, and said airily: "Beastly hard work moving house, isn't it, old Spartans? So we thought you'd like some help." She scarcely got the words out before she and Babs were roughly seized and frogmarched over the sand to a large motor launch moored at a rough natural jetty. To the accompaniment of much language that caused Jemima to tut-tut in disapproval, line was bound round them and Greg himself mounted guard. "Now hurry!" he snarled at the other men "We've less than an hour before that moon's up. As for you, you interfering brats, you're going to regret this prank for the rest of your days."

"What have you done with Judy, you brute", cried Babs.

"That's none of your business." He turned to watch the men, urging them on as they transferred cargo from van to launch. Then Greg passed a folded wad to one of the men who hurried back to the white van and drove off. The launch throbbed into life and headed out to sea, and Babs and Jemima saw the big freighter looming up out of the darkness.

"Chin up, old spartan", encouraged Jemima, "any moment now --- I hope!" she added in tones of mock despair.

They were right under the lee of the big vessel now. Ropes came snaking down and the men began to secure the crates in the big net. The first lot swung up into the air, and then from nowhere lights blazed, voices yelled, and Greg screamed an obscenity.

"Oh no you don't!" cried Babs, throwing herself sideways towards the man who was leaping towards the launch controls. The unexpected movement caught him completely by surprise and he lost his balance to topple helplessly over the side.

"Man overboard --- hurrah!" whooped Jemima. "Encore, my child!"

But it was not needed. Customs and police were already aboard. Others were boarding the freighter and a hailer ordered her to follow an escorting customs launch. In no time the heroines of the hour were released and back ashore, to be greeted by Clara and Mabs and Janet and Leila, who had her new camera and flash working overtime as the cursing Greg and his accomplices were led away to a waiting police car.

"A very successful operation", observed the police officer, who seemed to be a very important person indeed, judging by the sirs and deference with which he was addressed. "Now tell me, young ladies", he asked, when they were all back at the manor, this time in the charm and chintz of its spacious sitting-room, where the owners, Mr. and Mrs. Newton, awaited them, having flown back from France only an hour ago, "what made you so suspicious?".

"Yes", said Mrs. Newton, "how did you know our black sheep relative was working with one of the biggest fences in the country, who has been smuggling stolen antiquities abroad for years?".

"Ahem, we didn't", admitted Jemima", but I'd just read an adventure novel on this very theme."

"And if Greg hadn't been so unpleasant and anxious to get rid of us", put in Babs, "I don't suppose we'd have given him another thought."

"To think that Greg was using our house as temporary head-quarters and as a hiding place for all that stolen property. Thank goodness you decided to phone us this morning", said Mr. Newton.

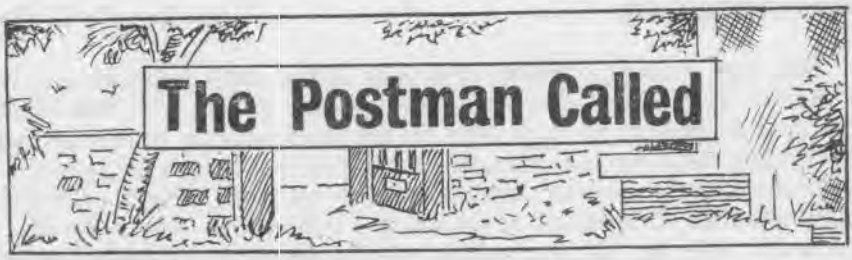
"Yes", interjected the inspector, "that interior design business was quite a cover. Free run of people's houses and a good excuse for transporting antique furniture and fittings and objects d'arts. By tomorrow we should have the continental connection rounded up as well."

Babs bit her lip. "What will happen to Judy?" she asked. "I'm sure she wasn't a willing party to it all --- except as a lacky to her brother."

Mrs. Newton smiled "We're going to look after Judy, don't worry. I wonder, would you like to go up to her, Babs? She's breaking her heart over this business." Babs needed no second bidding, and soo she had persuaded the young victim of a criminal's bullying to believe that happiness could be waiting round the corner. She came downstairs, to learn with joy that Babs and the chums were to stay at the manor as guests of Mr. and Mrs. Newton for a whole week and she was to be part of

the happy photographic project. After all that excitement it was unthinkable that Cliff House should fail to carry off the trophy for the best entry. For the greatest scoop of all provided to be Leila's film of the story that made national headlines --- the latest chapter in the long and grim history of Blackwater Pele!

* *



RAY HOPKINS (Oadby): In "Denise's Diary" for October, Mr. Bird in commenting on SGOL 698 by Ruth Maxwell, says that the sequel, SGOL 716 is by a different author. The 'different author' is Enid Earle, however, the hand that wrote the story is the same person (Mr. J.G. Jones) who used Ruth Maxwell, as well as Mildred Gordon, Ambrose Earle and Enid Earle as some of his other pen-names.

I did so enjoy Brian Doyle's revealing article on Richard Bird and Jeffrey Havilton (I always want to call this Hamilton, but only because he's the only HaVilton I've ever come across). It was nice to have an article about hard-back authors again. And what a bit of luck G.M. Fraser had known both the authors in his own schooldays. How odd that the two gentlemen in the article "almost never" Brian says, had little chats to each other about how they were getting on with their current stories as they did overlap somewhat.

JOHN LEWIS (Uttoxeter): In his article 'Pluck Will Tell", Eric Fayne commented on the fact that "You used to be able actually to read postmarks in those days" - referring to the Edwardian era.

It may be of interest to readers to note that in 1938 Charles Hamilton was likewise complaining about the illegibility of postmarks, viz: "... Moreover, that stamping, like so much Post Office stamping, was indistinct. In detective stories letters are traced by postmarks, but in real life a postmark is only too likely to be utterly indeciperable.." (Magnet No. 1567, p.24).

SIMON GARRETT (Bath): E. Baldock's enjoyable piece on Peter Todd prompted a few thoughts. Remember how often "Toddy" was Bunter's last choice as a holiday host when all others had failed him? It would have been fun if, just once, Toddy had given in. The modest house of a "poverty-stricken solicitor" would have made a change from the Owl's usual round of Granges, Halls and Lodges. Interestingly, very few Remove men seemed to have middle-class paters. Most of them came from mansions or cottages. Bunter and Todd were the obvious exceptions, so that was one bond between them (though you'd think solicitors and stockbrokers would be better-off than retired army officers like Colonel Wharton

and Major Cherry!). Finally, remembering all the crooked solicitors in the Magnet, isn't it odd that Peter Todd and, presumably his father, should be so very straight?

* *

"DENISE'S DIARY"

NOVEMBER 1939 by Dennis L. Bird

This was a vintage month. The four SGOL titles published on 2nd November were all first-class examples of their genre. Two had similar plots (not surprising, for they were by the same writer): young man gets into trouble with the law through no fault of his own; plucky sister at school desperately seeks to clear his name by all kinds of secret activities, but incurs stern disapproval of friends and colleagues. The difference is that in one case the girl is a teacher, and in the other a Fourth Former - Clara Trevlyn, no less.

"Clara's Strange Conduct" (No. 704) starts happily enough, with the cheerful sports captain and her Cliff House form-mates off to rehearse a revue at Peggshall Manor, the nearby home of the admired head girl Dulcia Fairbrother. But on the way Clara is accosted by "a slouching, furtive-looking man" with rough beard and battered cap; Clara found "something strangely familiar in his bearing". He passed her a note - which began all her troubles. The man, of course, was her brother Jack, "framed" by crooks and wanted by the police.

The Fairbrothers' house is the target of the thieves, and Jack and Clara keep watch in the eerie gallery of waxworks. Clara's frequent absences, missing sports events, her defiant behaviour and her unauthorised entries to the Manor cause misunderstandings with Barbara Redfern & Co. Worse, Clara is deprived of her sports captaincy, and incurs the puzzled anger of Dulcia. Of course, all comes right in the end ("the butler did it", or tried to), and Jack and Clara are cleared.

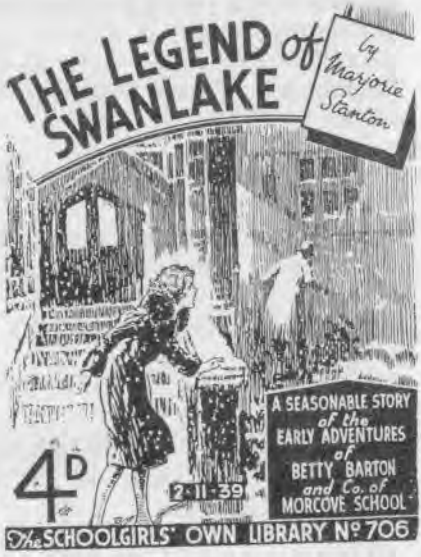
Brother and sister are well drawn; their courage and devotion to each other are never in doubt - but "Hilda Richards" does not gloss over their inpetuosity and muddled thinking which brings some at least of their problems on their own heads.

The prolific and reliable John Wheway wrote that tale, and under another pen-name ("Hazel Armitage") he produced No. 705, "Loyal to the Mystery Mistress". The mistress is romantically - or should I say classically? - named Lorna Corinth, beloved by her Fourth Form, whose adulation at times becomes cloying. Her brother Don was secretary to a business tycoon, and was suspected when money went missing. But the plot's ramifications are less convincing than the characterisation. There is a sub-plot in which the former Council-school girl Pamela Dean, Miss Corinth's loyal supporter, is subjected to sustained attack ("We don't want your sort here"). And there is a quite subtle portrait of a prefect, Greta

CLARA'S STRANGE CONDUCT
by Hilda Richards
G. TREVLYN
CAPTAIN
A FINE STORY of the Early Adventures of BARBARA REDFERN and Co. of CLIFF HOUSE SCHOOL
2-11-39
4D
The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY No 704

LOYAL TO THE MYSTERY MISTRESS
by Hazel Armitage
SUCH an EXCITING and UNUSUAL SCHOOL STORY!
2-11-39
4D
The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY No 705

The TYRANT of RANALPUR
BY CLIVE BANCROFT
4D
2-11-39
An Exciting Tale of Mystery and Adventure in India
The Schoolgirls' Own Library No 707


THE LEGEND of SWANLAKE
by Marjorie Stanton
4D
2-11-39
A SEASONABLE STORY of the EARLY ADVENTURES of BETTY BARTON and Co. of MORCOVE SCHOOL
The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY No 706

Parsons: "Slow, lazy-looking, with a round, contented face, and sleepy good humour in her grey eyes." She is a helpful friend to Pam Dean - until the last few pages, when it transpires that she is the daughter and accomplice of the villain.

No. 707, "The Tyrant of Ranalpur", is an exciting story of the British Raj in India. Anne Meredith and Second Lieutenant Rob Whitfield pit their wits against Ram Gopal Vinayak, the autocratic new Rajah who virtually imprisons his predecessor's daughter, Anne's friend Roshanera. A curiosity of the book is the author's name: Clive Bancroft. Apart from "Peter Langley" of Noel Raymond fame, this is the only instance I know of an SGOL writer using a male identity.

I have kept to the last No. 706, "The Legend of Swanlake". This is, I think, the best Morcove story - and our Editor shares my liking for it. She once told me that she took it to India one Christmas, in order to have some traditional and favourite reading. It was an appropriate choice, for it is set in the festive season, with Study 12 and their boy chums staying at Pam Willoughby's stately home.

Strange things happen. A "Grey Man" is seen haunting the snow-covered grounds ("When 'tween the trees Grey Man is seen, Woe to Swanlake on Christmas E'en"). A terrified Christmas waif is found - and vanishes. Pam herself disappears for an entire day. There is a powerful, brooding air of mystery, with hints of a dark family secret. And then, in the middle, there is the most hilarious chapter in any SGOL book: the account of the young people's Christmas entertainment "The Haunted Inn". Brilliantly funny, it throws into stark relief the strangeness of that Swanlake Christmas - just as the Porter's scene pierces the gloom of "Macbeth". Horace Phillips ("Marjorie Stanton") never wrote anything better.

* *

FOR SALE: Dandy, Beano, Topper Annuals (1950s): also some Pre-War Comic Annuals, "Bubbles", etc; 1940's Film Mags, 'Sight and Sound', etc. 30 odd copies. L. MORLEY, 76 ST. MARGARETS ROAD, HANWELL, LONDON, W7 2HF. Tel. 01-579 3143.

* *

GEMS STILL REQUIRED: Nos. 1647, 1652, 1653, 1654, 1659, 1660. MARY CADOGAN, 46 OVERBURY AVENUE, BECKENHAM, KENT, BR3 2PY.

* *

DEAR DEPARTED FRIENDS

Sad news has come of the passing of two friends of our hobby who have for a long time provided us with warm and happy links with the old papers and comics. Terry Wakefield died at the end of September, and Edith Hood in October.

TERRY WAKEFIELD - A Tribute by Mary Cadogan

Terry Wakefield was, through his wonderfully zestful illustrations in my favouite comics, one of the friends of my childhood. He also, over the last fifteen years, has become a friend of my mature years, and I shall always remember his warmth and generosity of spirit in sharing with me and other collectors his great fund of memories, and of experience. Any tribute to his work must also touch on that of his father, George William Wakefield, who inspired and influenced Terry. The styles of father and son were similar; as we all know, George Wakefield included amongst his prolific achievements that of being one of the Rookwood illustrators. His best known work, however, must be his many great strips and characters for FILM FUN, many of which were continued by Terry. Terry became his father's full-time assistant at the age of 14; later he attended the Richmond Art School. He started work for Fleetway publications in his own right in 1927, working first on *Tiny Tots*. He first drew Laurel and Hardy (whom of course his father had been portraying for years) in a FILM FUN giveaway booklet entitled THE LAUREL AND HARDY BOOK OF WISECRACKS. He also drew for BUBBLES, TIP TOP, BUTTERFLY and JOKER.

In 1935 Terry married Irene Gunnis (whose father was the artist Louis Gunnis) and theirs seems always to have been a most happy and fulfilling relationship. Their son, John, was born in 1938. Terry served in the Second World War, first in a Royal Artillery Anti Aircraft battery and then in the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. Serving with this regiment, he was wounded in Italy. After the war Terry continued the Laurel and Hardy FILM FUN strips (his father had died in 1942); he also became the regular artist for the George Formby strips, as well as drawing such charismatic performers as Red Skelton, Peter Sellers and Tony Hancock.

All who knew Terry will miss him greatly. As C.D. readers know, he often provided original illustrations for our magazine. We shall continue to use these, as links with this most friendly, likeable and gifted artist. Our sympathies are extended to Terry's wife and son - both of whom always shared his fascination with books and comics illustration.

MISS EDITH ELSIE HOOD - A Tribute by Maurice Hall

When I was informed of the death of Miss Edith Elsie Hood on the 10th October, 1989, by Friar Jamie Campbell, who was the last to visit her a week earlier, I felt a sudden personal loss. I had visited her myself only a few months back, when she seemed in quite good health.

My association with Charles Hamilton's companion and housekeeper goes back to my visit to him in 1950, when I first had the pleasure of meeting this small and dainty lady with such charming manners, so characteristic of those born around the turn of the century.

Edith Hood was born on the 18th September 1905 and was destined to become an important figure, albeit a shadowy one, behind the world's greatest writer of school stories. From the age of 9 when she first met Charles Hamilton (then aged 38) out for an early morning walk in the village of Hawkinge, it seemed that fate had decided that their two lives would become tightly enmeshed. From those first words of friendly greeting by Hamilton to young Edith (talking, as he did to all children, as friend to friend, exactly as he wrote in the *Gem* and *Magnet* to his thousands of readers), she was captivated. It was because he behaved like this that his writings were so real and enjoyable.

For a number of years, Edith called at Hamilton's rooms at the Hawkinge Post Office, helping in small ways, running errands, and continuing to do so when he went to Clyde Cottage and then Appletrees. The association became closer when his sister Una's baby (Una Mary Beatrice) was born, and it was Hamilton who arranged that Edith should become nurse to the child. This arrangement lasted until the mid 1920s when he needed some help as his housekeeper, Miss Beveridge, was unwell. Edith came to the rescue. It did not take long for her to show her abilities in running the house and, when Miss Beveridge had to retire, Edith took on the job permanently.

There is no doubt, that the care Edith took of her employer enabled him to write in an unfettered and relaxed fashion, and that without it his output would not have been so great. For all her good manners and retiring nature, she kept the interruptions to his work down to a minimum; without upsetting anybody, not an easy task, particularly once he became a famous name in 1946 after the *Picture Post* article.

Charles Hamilton's regard for Edith is demonstrated by his leaving her the use of *Rose Lawn* for as long as she should wish. Poor health and other problems forced her to retire to a home on the front at Broadstairs, later moving to the *Broadstairs Nursing Home* on the North Foreland Road.

When speaking to me after Hamilton's death, Edith always referred to *Mr.* Hamilton and never once to 'Charles'. Her respect for him, and his for her, could never be doubted and it is marvellous that she survived him for 28 years, giving us in the hobby the benefit of her memories of a great writer. My memories of Edith will be of her careful copperplate hand-writing, her willing kindness to all and sundry, her obvious pride in the job she did so very, very well. I hope she conveys the love and respect of Hamilton's old boys to him, when they meet.

* *

CENTENARY SNIPPET:

Bill Bradford writes: 'I enclose the first chapter of a m/s by E.S.B. intended for the Dixon Hawke Library, to be titled 'The Pillar-Box Mystery'. Bob Blythe said it was never published - I have no reason to doubt this although it is difficult to be one hundred per cent sure as this Library is shrouded in mystery...'

Unfortunately space permits only the inclusion of a few paragraphs from this. However, these indicate the atmospheric and thrilling nature of Brooks's stories.

DIXON HAWKE LIBRARY - FIRST PART

E.S. Brooks, "Englefield", SOUTH CERNEY, Cirencester, GLOS.

THE PILLAR-BOX MYSTERY

CHAPTER 1
A STAB IN THE DARK

As the gaunt man got off the bus at the cross-roads, a mile or two beyond the outskirts of Bristol, a flurry of rain lashed into his face carried by the gusty wind. He was the only passenger to alight, and he walked quickly away to be swallowed up in the intense darkness.

He was satisfied that he had shaken off the swarthy-faced man who had been following him in the city, and he congratulated himself on his opportunism in jumping aboard the bus just as it had been about to move off. That manoeuvre had completely baffled his shadower.

Or were his suspicions merely the result of his own imaginative fears? He was not absolutely certain that he had been shadowed at all on his way from the docks. But it was just as well to be on the safe side. It only meant a four-mile walk back into Bristol --- and if he was lucky he might get a return bus. He trudged on, his head bent against the wind, and he calculated that he would be able to get to his hotel by eight o'clock, at the latest.

The darkness was so complete, and the road so utterly lonely, that it was difficult to believe that a great City lay within an hour's walk. The gaunt man rather regretted staying on the bus so long; he might easily have got off in the Bristol suburbs. Once on the bus there had been no danger ---

He checked, his heart hammering. A slight sound behind him was exactly like a stealthy footstep. He spun round, staring into the gloom. Fool! How could there be any danger here? How could the shadower --- even supposing that such an individual existed --- have followed him? The sound had probably been caused by a loosened creeper blown against the brick wall which bordered the road at this point. He turned his face to the wind again and walked on.

This time the swarthy-faced man was more careful; he gave no hint of his approach. Overtaking his quarry with the stealth and silence of a redskin, he drove the thin-bladed dagger straight into the back of his victim.

* *

LAUGHTER AND THRILLS: number 8.
Norman conquest 1937-1968. by Norman Wright

Norman Conquest crowded into the "Thriller" in January 1937, shouldering his way into a marketplace thick with similarly minded desperadoes each dedicated to removing those un-godly individuals whose nefarious activities remained apparantly within the law, yet caused misery to those unfortunate enough to find themselves within their grasping clutches.

I'm not an expert on desperadoes, but to my mind most seem to have been based on Leslie Charteris' indomitable creation, 'The Saint'. In that respect Norman Conquest was no exception. In his first exploit, "Mr. Mortimer Gets the Jitters", published in the "Thriller" for January 1937, Conquest acted in a very 'Saintish' manner. He bantered with the enemy, even when they greatly outnumbered him, and laughed in the face of an artillery of small arms. He casually explained to the villain just how and when he intended to releave him of his ill-gotten gains. Unlike Charteris, Brooks was not always able to handle his 'desperado dialogue' in a believable manner. In the earlier stories it usually succeeded, but in the Conquest stories published after about 1957 it was often embarrassingly inept. When Joy, Conquest's elfin wife, begins to tell the villain that her husband is 'A real he man' I cringe - and I expect the villain did too!

Joy Everard, Norman's diminutive companion, was introduced in the first story. She was not slow in entering into the spirit of things and within a few minutes of meeting Conquest she had offered to open Geoffrey Mortimer's safe. 20th century swashbucklers have to eat and, while the 'ungodly' were being dispatched to jail or somewhere a lot hotter if their deeds had been particularly distardly, The Saint or The Toff, or in this case Norman Conquest, were reaping their rewards ransacking the concealed wall safe or making off with the secret nest-egg that the villain had had put by for a rainy day. In the case of the jittery Mr. Mortimer Brooks added a nice touch by making him voluntarily relinquish his well stuffed suitcase to Conquest after the latter had caused Mortimer near apoplexy by looping the loop in the plane they were both flying in. Geoffrey Mortimer had, of course, been blissfully unaware of his pilot's identity before the aerial acrobatics had commenced.

Like his fellow swashbucklers Norman Conquest was a man of many skills. He could pilot a plane, drive with the skill of Stirling Moss (or whoever was the racing idol of the period), pick locks with bent pins and out-escape Harry Houdini. His first residence of any note was 'Underneath the Arches', a unique home constructed inside three railway viaduct arches. He even persuaded the G.P.O. to allocate him the telephone number Bayswater 1066 for that particular dwelling!

With the proceeds of several escapades behind him Conquest decided to invest in property and purchased Lexington Park Plaza House, a block of flats overlooking Hyde Park. Joy and Norman re-christened it 'Conquest Court' and occupied the penthouse flat. Other occupants of that spacious abode were Miss Susan Bliss, Joy's old aunt, who acted as housekeeper and chaperone, and Manderville Livingstone the little ex-tramp who was a Man Friday and general dogsbody. A familiar visitor to Conquest Court was Bill Williams, the cherubic faced Scotland Yard man, who spent most of his waking hours attempting to gather enough evidence to convict Conquest for some of his unlawful activities.

The best of the Norman Conquest books were those published between 1938 and 1948. They were action packed thrillers with lively plots; totally escapist tales paying only a hint of lip service to reality. During the late 1950s Brooks attempted to change his forumla; to slicken up the plots and add a touch of sex appeal. The result was an uneasy mix, for his style of story telling did not adapt well to the 'James Bond' image of the late 1950s and 1960s. The ensuing books were, in the main, unsatisfactory affairs. The last Norman Conquest book to be written by Brooks was "Curtains for Conquest", published in 1966. By then the intrepid '1066' had drawled his way through forty nine volumes.

Despite the shortcomings of the last fifteen or so titles the series as a whole provides plenty of good reading. Brooks at his best could compete with most of the best thriller writers of his day and at least a dozen of the Conquest novels must rank as classics of the 'desperado genre'.

* *

OUR BOOKSHELVES

REVIEWS BY

MARY CADOGAN

(Picture by Terry Wakefield)

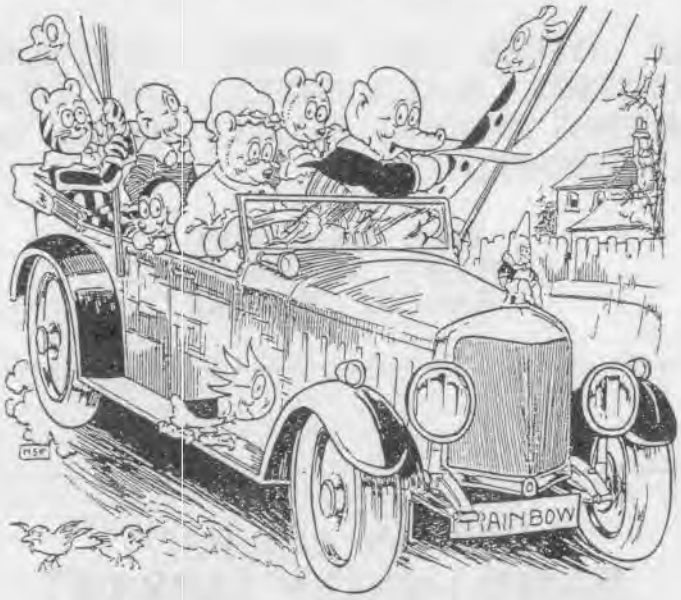
THE STORY PAPER PRICE GUIDE by DENIS GIFFORD (Published by ACE: The Association of Comics Enthusiasts, and BCW: British Comic World. Available to C.D. readers in the U.K. at £3 (including post and packing), and overseas at £4, from ACE/BCW, 12 Inglehurst Gardens, Redbridge, Ilford, Essex, IG4 5HD.)

Denise Gifford's works in the field of comics are extremely widely known, and he has turned his attention to story papers in this price guide, which many collectors will find very helpful and interesting. As well as giving prices which might reasonably be used for buying and selling, Denis provides informative details about publication runs, amalgamations, and so on. Over 1200 story papers and children's magazines are covered, from 1788 to 1988. Happily Denis gives proper, uninflated prices - unlike some magazines which seem to try to raise, whenever posible, the prices asked for the old papers. I was very much impressed by the comprehensiveness of this guide; it mentions many magazines of which I had not previously heard, as well as those we all know and love. The only omissions I noticed were the Victorian girls' magazine ATALANTA and the 1960s WONDERLAND (which was a cross between a comic and a magazine and thus perhaps should not be included anyway!).

THE BEST OF BRITISH COMIC ART by ALAN CLARK (Boxtree, £14.95)

Last year Alan Clark gave us THE CHILDREN'S ANNUAL: A HISTORY AND COLLECTOR'S GUIDE, and he now follows this up with a study of the works of six of the great comics illustrators from our home-grown publications. (Like Denis Gifford, Alan Clark is determined to see that British artists receive the acclaim which they so richly deserve but do not always get from the media.) The artists on whom he focuses are 'Bertie' Brown, G.W. Wakefield, H.S. Foxwell, Allan Morley, Dudley D. Watkins and Ken Reid. He not only assesses their work but provides

biographical backgrounds and a super selection of their pictures. 144 large sized pages, some in black and white and some in colour, are provided, in a volume that is reminiscent of those mouth-watering pre-Second World War Christmas Annuals which brightened and enriched so many children's lives. It is good to see the work of these brilliant illustrators justly celebrated, and this is a book to savour and to treasure.



THE TREASURES OF CHILDHOOD: BOOKS, TOYS AND GAMES FROM THE OPIE COLLECTION by Iona and Robert Opie and Brian Alderson (Pavilion Books, £20)

Here we have almost two hundred very large pages of fascinating text, black and white, and full colour pictures covering gems from the collection built up over many years by Iona and Peter Opie. The 20,000 books from this rare collection are now housed at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and this book certainly whets the appetite for a view of its treasures. The first section deals with the books, and the second with the toys, puzzles and games. The whole makes us grateful to the Opies for collection, preserving and cataloguing so much of our individual and collective childhoods. This book contains something for everyone (although I must admit that I would have liked it to include more about the comics and storypapers). It has a high cover price, but it is amazing value for money - a treasure trove of childhood and nostalgia, to buy, or to borrow from the public library.

* *

NELSON LEE LIBRARY

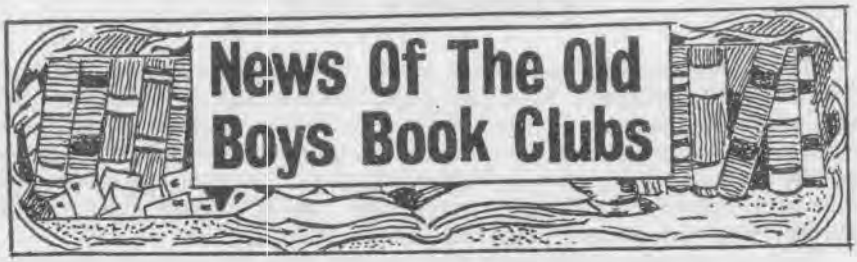
ALL ISSUES OF ABOVE AND MOST MONSTERS, B.F.L.'s, S.O.L's, AND OTHER WRITINGS BY EDWY SEARLES BROOKS MAY BE BORROWED FROM:

BILL BRADFORD
5 QUEEN ANNE'S GROVE
EALING W5 3XP.

LONDON O.B.B.C. - HAMILTONIAN LIBRARY

Now that the evenings are drawing in, it is an appropriate time to return to the delights of reading. The Hamiltonian Library of the London O.B.B.C. has over two thousand pre-war items, including Magnets, Gems, Populars, and Plucks, as well as the monthly Boys' Friends and Schoolboys' Owns, available for a two-month loan at a penny for a weekly paper and twopence for a monthly one. The sole aim of the Library is to provide a service.
Books may be sent by post to those unable to attend Club meetings, and a copy of the catalogue may be obtained by anyone who lets me have two 20p stamps.

ROGER JENKINS
8 Russell Road, Havant, Hants. PO9 2DG



O.B.B.C. MIDLAND SECTION

The summer break had no effect upon the dismal attendance at our September meeting, when only 5 people were present. If anything could illustrate the need for a completely different approach in our running of the club, this was it. With only 5 it is difficult to have a meeting at all, let alone a good one, but this we seemed to do. The refreshments, generously provided by Betty Hopton, Christine Brettell and Ivan Webster needed a Bunter to do justice to them. The programme consisted of a slightly easier than usual puzzle from Geoff Lardner, which I got right. I gave a quiz, which had as a prize a George Orwell Penguin book containing the now famous essay "Boys' Weeklies". The last item was a reading by Ivan Webster from a Howard Baker volume featuring Walker of the Sixth, his uncle and Bunter, who was asked to show off his ventriloquism. He makes Walker appear to say that his uncle is a fool and an old donkey. Walker, however, has the last word, lashing Bunter's fat bags with his cane.

We meet again on 31st October. Best wishes to O.B.B.C. members everywhere.

JACK BELLFIELD

WESTON-SUPER-MARE (SOUTH WEST) O.B.B.C

We met on 24th September at the home of Tim Salisbury. A truly glorious day of sunshine had everybody in good spirits for a full afternoon's enjoyment. As always, Bill Lofts had travelled down from London. His first talk was an interesting comparison between Frank Richards and Edwy Searles Brooks. Next, Terry Jones played a tape of a programme in his BBC Radio Gloucestershire series. The subject was the installation of his family's first radio set by his grandfather, complete with wireless pole at the bottom of the garden, earth return wire and lightning arrester switch. It was then time for tea which, as always, was a terrific spread laid on by Mrs. Salisbury.

After tea Bill Lofts gave a talk about the holidays enjoyed by our Greyfriars heroes. He made the point that they seemed to have very long summer hols., as their adventures used to stretch at times right into October. A lively discussion on which holiday series was the all-time favourite followed. Warm thanks are due to Tim Salisbury's parents for their hard work and hospitality in making these meetings possible.

TERRY JONES

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

Our October meeting took place at the Willingham village home of our Librarian, Keith Hodkinson. Keith gave us an illustrated talk on 'Comics and Story Papers from the Repressed-Forties'. Wartime measures cut down on the number and pages of so many juvenile titles but, and this is not usually credited, the postwar austerity years caused a great many further reductions. The galaxy of colour papers in the 30s almost dried up during the next decade. "Mickey Mouse" alone remained, until the 'Eagle' brought back bright colour in the early 50s.

Later we watched a great many film excerpts from the past sixty years which used the theme of railway smashes. To retain audience-interest, and for some unknown but undoubtedly deep psychological reason, film-makers keep using these scenes.

ADRIAN PERKINS

LONDON O.B.B.C.

Nineteen members met at the Ealing Liberal Centre on 8th October.

The formalities over, Brian Doyle read his fascinating paper on the various attempts to televise the "William" stories. Chairman Roger Jenkins then produced an entertaining puzzle in which members were challenged to find twenty-one fictional schoolboys from a jumble of letters. The winner was Mark Taha.

After the break Bill Bradford took us down memory lane, this time to the October 1969 meeting. Don Webster then read a short piece by Leslie Thomas in which the author paid tribute to a lovable and faithful dog, now sadly departed. This article was both funny and moving, and a lively discussion followed on the parts played by animals in the Hamilton stories.

Thanks were expressed to Bill Bradford for arranging the venue. The next meeting will be held on 5th November (**not** the second Sunday in the month for once!) at the Walthamstow Co-Operative Rooms, 342 Hoe Street, Walthamstow.

ALAN PRATT

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Chairman David Bradley welcomed the 17 present at our October meeting, and reference was made to our Club Dinner held in September at which 18 were in attendance and a superb evening was had by all.

Geraldine Lamb spoke on "The Chinaman in Children's Fiction" and she had with her samples of various books and magazines in which the Chinese were depicted. They were always stereotyped - pigtails, smuggling, dragons, Tong. Frank Richards had produced a character study of Wun Lung in Magnet 36 of 1908, and Fu Manchu and Charlie Chan were notable characters in adult fiction. A wonderul presentation with some detailed research by Geraldine.

After refreshments, Keith Smith presented his "Alternative Quiz". Based on fiction, Keith asked questions and gave alternative answers for the solutions. This at least enabled everyone to put down some sort of answer, if they did not know the

correct one! For those not too keen on quizzes, this was the ideal sort! Geraldine and James Lamb were the joint winners of a copy of THE UNION JACK (which apparently turned out to be a missing number from a run that Geraldine wanted!).

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

FRIAR'S CLUB

Another pleasant day greeted club members as they gathered for the Friar's Club A.G.M. at Worcester Park, Surrey.

Those attending were Brian Simmonds (Club Secretary), Andrew Morton who brought his father along from Surrey, Bill Lofts, Colin Cole and a pleasant surprise visitor from Sheffield, Jamie Campbell; Martin and Hazel Troust hosted the meeting.

Chairman Maurice Hall summarised a successful year with a number of items achieved, one being the production of a club **Who's Who** crammed with information on members' interests and collection details. Due out in October, it is the first from the Chairman's new computer. Secretary Brian Simmonds proposed that there should be more readings from Hamilton writings, perhaps thrown open to discussion, and that games involving the hobby could be set by members for meetings. He suggested that guest speakers should be invited to talk apart from club members. Colin Cole investigated a venue for the Christmas dinner due to be held in January as a combined end of year celebration and welcome to the new decade. The Chairman promised to follow up Colin's enquiry. The date set was 21st January 1990.

The committee was thanked for their work by the members present.

A number of items were brought for sale including *Magnets* and *Gems* and various books and annuals. Two talks were given, one by Bill Lofts about his 'treasures', a collection of rare and interesting hobby items, the second by Jamie Campbell on the subject of Bunter's Bravery. An excellent Friar's feast was enjoyed by all members; thanks were expressed to Martin and Hazel.

BRIAN SIMMONDS

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ANNUALS FOR SALE - Biggles Air Detective (c1952) £6, Boys and Girls Book for 1937 (Daily Express - contains Rupert) £6, Dick Barton, Special Agent (1950) £5, Skipper 1940 £5, 1941 £5, Champion 1933 £3, 1952 £2, Teddy Tail's 1936 £2.50, My Favourite 1935 £2, Rupert 1936 complete reading copy - any offers? Post extra.
G. ARTHUR, 14 CORSTON PARK, LIVINGSTON, W. LOTHIAN, EH54 5NT. Tel. 0506 36184.

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POEMS OF GREYFRIARS by Keith Atkinson

No. 1 - THE QUELCHY BIRD

With gimlet eye and acid tongue
The Quelchy Bird doth rule,
Not suffering the intransigent
Nor, gladsomely, the fool.
Endeavouring to make his form
The finest in the school,
The Quelchy Bird holds sway.

'A beast' but yet 'a just beast'
Is a well deservéd tag.
A fatherley eye is kept upon
Each junior and fag,
But woe betide the miscreant
Who gets out Quelchy's rag.
That junior rues the day.

A lifelong friend and confidant
Of stately Doctor Locke,
In Sophocles and Aeschylus
They have a common rock,
Returning with a sharpened mind
To minister their flock,
And teach another day.

In leisure time the Quelchy Bird
In fitness takes a pride.
He takes long walks round Friardale
And surrounding countryside,
With puffing Prout endeavouring
To match him in his stride,
And chatting on the way.

The Quelchy Bird loves Greyfriars
And regards it as his home.
His 'History of Greyfriars'
Is a monumental tome.
It threatens to outdo in size
The history of Rome,
There is so much to say.

Throughout the years the Quelchy Bird
Has ruled with iron hand
Tempered with understanding,
For this paragon has planned
To see that Greyfriars College
Is the finest in the land,
Long may it stay that way.