

STORY PAPER  
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL.53

No.633

SEPTEMBER 1999

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# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by  
W.H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by  
HERBERT LECKENBY

S.P.C.D. Edited and Published 1959 - January 1987 by Eric Fayne

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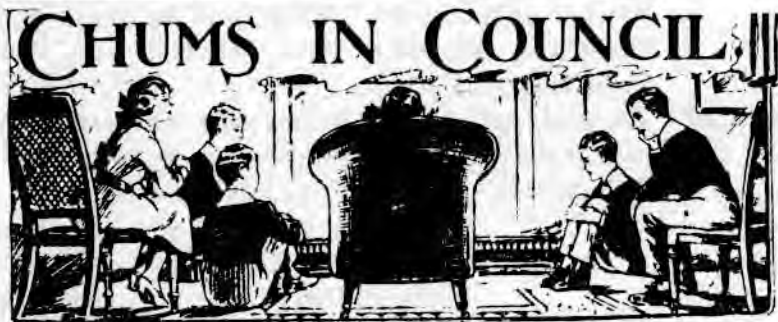
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## OUR ANNUAL

Once again it is my pleasant task to prepare the C.D. Annual (without which several readers say that Christmas just would not be Christmas!). I have already received some excellent contributions for this year's bumper book and I look forward to having further items on many aspects of our hobby.

You will find an order form enclosed in this month's C.D. and, as always, I have tried to keep the price of the Annual as low as possible. It is helpful to me and to our printers to receive your orders early so that we know well in advance how many copies to print. To whet your appetites, next month I shall begin to 'trail' the Annual's contents.

## TALKS AND CONFERENCES

Several C.D. readers have asked to be kept informed about literary conferences and also about talks which I give on books and hobby-related subjects. A few weeks ago I was one of the speakers at a three-day conference

arranged by the Children's Books History Society to mark 200 years of publications by the Religious Tract Society (later Lutterworth Press). My talk was on the *Girl's Own Paper*, and the *Boy's Own Paper*, of course, was also celebrated together with an intriguingly wide range of other publications. I understand that Lutterworth Press will be publishing all these talks in book form, and I will keep readers posted about this.

### **FORTHCOMING EVENTS:**

- LEEDS:** I shall be speaking at the Northern O.B.B.C.'s meeting on 9th October on broadcasting about books and also on Baroness Orczy and the Scarlet Pimpernel. Mark Caldicott, a regular C.D. contributor, will also speak at this meeting which will be preceded by a lunch and an informal afternoon gathering. Details are available from the Club's Chairman, Joan Colman, 2 Grove Farm Croft, Leeds LS16.
- NOTTINGHAM:** There will be a W.E. Johns Day at the Royal Moat House Hotel on 16th October. Details from the organizer, Alison Thompson, Wendover, Windy Harbour Lane, Bromley Cross, Bolton BL7 9AP.
- BROADSTAIRS:** The local Celebrity Connections week is allocating two days to mark the work of Frank Richards, as follows:  
26th October: Talk on F.R. by John Wernham  
F.R. Forum: Mary Cadogan, John Wernham, Una Hamilton Wright, and Peter Mahony  
Fat Owl's Dinner: Guest - Gerald Campion  
27th October: Talk on F.R. by Peter Mahony  
Talk on Billy Bunter by Mary Cadogan  
Details from Pam Porritt (Administrator), Celebrity Connections, Broadstairs Town Council, Pierremont Hall, Broadstairs, Kent CJ10 1JX
- ROEHAMPTON:** I shall be speaking on *Just William* and Multi-Media at a one-day conference on 13th November at Froebel College. The conference theme is an exploration of how favourite books and stories have overflowed from the printed page into different types of presentation - radio, theatre, film, T.V., records, etc. Other speakers include Quentin Blake and Marina Warner.  
Details from Dr. Kimberley Reynolds, Roehampton Institute, Roehampton Lane, London SW15 5PH.

Don't forget to order your Annual! Happy reading. MARY CADOGAN

Like many hobbyists, I was once what might be called an emblematic - that is to say a fanatic collector of badges. This lively compulsion started nearly seventy years ago when I was ten, triggered by one of the Thomson story-papers (*Wizard? Rover?*) which, over several weeks, gave its readers a series of badges connected with a story about a Secret Service agent. These metal emblems each bore a different "secret"(!) code providing keys to incidents in the story itself. Naturally, my friends and I, at such a tender age, thought this was all marvellous stuff. The badges themselves were very clearly die-stamped (they had to be to carry a double alphabet on an area not much more than a square inch!) and though, alas, I no longer possess any of them, their memory can still bring something of that pleasurable glow they gave almost a lifetime ago. About the same time (1930), the *Magnet* issued a set of metal badges in full colour depicting the emblems of famous, and mostly pretty exotic, cars: Bugatti, Lancia, Alfa-Romeo, etc. These copies did full justice to the exciting originals whose designs have mostly, and remarkably, remained the same to this day.

Back in the Twenties and Thirties, many familiar badges were associated with the readers' clubs run by juvenile publications and there again the Thomson and Amalgamated Press comics and story-papers were well to the fore. Interestingly, some readers of AP's Sexton Blake saga (*Union Jack*, *Detective Weekly* and the *SB Library*) would suggest, from time to time, that there should be a Blakian Club (complete, of course, with identifying badge). This idea was always turned down by the editors concerned who would vaguely reply that the idea had been explored and rejected. The truth, no doubt, was that the Blake stories were aimed at older adolescents, and even adults, for whom clubs and badges might seem somewhat juvenile.

Most leading newspapers ran clubs connected with their children's features. Everyone remembers the Arkubs (Happy, Japhet and Co.,) the Gugnuncs (Pip, Squeak and Wilfred) and Bobby Bear to name the most famous - all, I believe, having badges as evidence of club membership, as well of course as codes and passwords. At least two provincial newspapers that I know of fostered clubs for their younger readers. *The Leeds Mercury* ran a rather bizarre picture strip about an anthropomorphic apple whose image adorned the badge of The Alfie Apple Club! In Brighton, a weekly paper now defunct ran a very popular children's club called The Acorns ("mighty oaks from tiny acorns grow"). Its badge was simply a gilt-finished acorn carrying no reference to the club. Clearly intended to rouse the interest of non-members, this was a stroke of pure genius.

My own present collection of badges naturally includes a number of hobby items. I treasure the wonderfully inspired Eagle Club badge which, long ago, belonged to my son who, as a non-collector, happily passed it over to me. I have a badge of the Outlaws Club (a large plastic production with a nice portrait of William himself) as well as a handsome enamelled badge of the Saint Club. Best of all is the exquisite miniature badge of the OBBC itself which previously belonged to hobby pioneer, Len Packman, and was most generously given to me by his widow, Josie, a lady whom I never met but with whom I had much correspondence when she was conducting the Blakiana feature many years ago.

Outside the hobby, my collection celebrates places visited in every corner of the UK and quite a number of corners from overseas. Like most such collections, it reflects a range



of general interests: history, the arts (especially the cinema) and much else. Naturally, the further back in time they go, the more nostalgia these emblems arouse and, of course, one yearns for those one didn't keep - or even never acquired in the first place. Among the latter was a badge connected with that famous comic school for criminals, Narkover, created by the pre-war humourist 'Beachcomber'. Immortalised by Will Hay in his hilarious film, *Boys Will Be Boys*, Narkover was turned to charitable purposes by Hay himself. A contribution to a fund for helping the down-and-outs of those Depression days earned the donor a badge emblazoned with a number of convict symbols and carrying the motto "Up Narkover!"

Have other hobbyists tales to tell? There must be a lot of badges, emblems and other memorabilia in the hands of *Digest* readers. And what memories . . .

*(FOOTNOTE: While still writing this piece, my attention has been drawn to an article in the financial pages of our Sunday newspaper. With sales at Sotheby's, it looks as if old enamelled badges are now big business. Some of us might think this is a shame.)*

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**Editor's Note:** Following Mr. Graham-Leigh's article about the Bunter books in last month's C.D., I thought it would be interesting to re-publish the following piece by Nic Gayle which first appeared in C.D. 404 in August 1980.

## IN DEFENCE OF THE BUNTER BOOKS

by Nic Gayle

In response to Eric Fayne's editorial in the July issue of C.D. wherein he raises the question of the post-war Bunter books, I write to plead the case for the defence. I was seven years old when Charles Hamilton died, and had then just started reading the series, and have continued to do so - albeit spasmodically - until the present day. I had never heard of the *Magnet* or *Gem* till 1975, so for me, and in fact for my generation, Bunter WAS Greyfriars, and Frank Richards was the author of books. Now, my adult view of them is the same as anyone else's; that they cannot compare with the greatest or best of the golden years of the *Magnet*, and I would deem it silly and perverse to argue otherwise, but to acknowledge them simply as stories that are competently written and nothing more is unfair and, I believe, unjust. There are plenty of gems amongst the dross.

One has to accept that Frank Richards' powers as a writer diminished towards the end of his life, but the best of the Bunter books represent a distilled essence of Greyfriars, a Greyfriars that the author had lived with and in for forty or fifty years, and moreover a Greyfriars no longer being churned out along the weekly treadmill imposed by the *Magnet*. This undoubtedly made a difference: gone were the fifty-two *Magnets* a year, to be replaced by the equivalent of only half a dozen or so. And in the best stories from the Bunter books he showed that the quintessential Greyfriars could be conveyed with more economy than in days of yore.

"Bunter the Ventriloquist", for instance, is a beautifully written tale where - for once - the results of W.G.B.'s peculiar and impossible gift are seen to have in interesting and cumulative effect. We see him cause a row between Quelch and Prout - the chapter entitled

"The Last Wasp of Summer" is delicious - and there are some hilarious sequences set in the Remove formroom where Mr. Quelch is forced to take delivery of any amounts of ridiculous goods that he is supposed to have ordered from Chunkley's Stores.

"Bunter in Brazil" once again brings the welcome return of Inky to the limelight as the dusky Nabob takes the lead in unravelling a mystery abroad. In "Bunter's Banknote", the drama of Smith's 'execution' lives on in my mind though it must be at least a decade since I last read it, and while on the subject of the Bounder, Frank Richards never wrote about the cancerous nature of gambling as finely as he did in "Bunter's Beanfeast" - it recalls "Rivals and Chums" of thirty-five years before.

"Bunter the Bold" is an original and clever story of W.G.B. seeking to reinstate himself in the good books of the Remove who have sent him to Coventry, and the Famous Five at odds with one another - the 'rift in the lute' - gets an interesting and restrained airing in "Bunter Comes for Christmas". This is much the better of the two Christmas titles, though it might interest some readers to know that the ending of "Bunter's Christmas Party" actually came as a surprise to the eight-year-old Nic Gayle when he first read the story! Thinking back, this can only have been because I did not understand that mysterious word 'extra', and what it meant to have it 'put down'. Oh, the palmy days of innocence!

My pick of the bunch must be "Billy Bunter's Treasure Hunt". Written right at the end of Frank Richards' life, this represents for me the very essence of the Greyfriars I love. At long, long last, we learn the truth about the famous Greyfriars treasure; we follow, in a surprisingly original story, Bunter's benighted efforts to learn enough of the Latin language to help him transcribe an ancient parchment that holds the clue to the treasure, and Coker's attempts to uncover the hidden hoard when the parchment falls into his hands. How the Famous Five get there first makes delightful reading in a story that is gentle, witty, clever and effortless, the distillation of a great man's private world after half a century of living in it. Though 'only a Bunter book', it forms, I believe, a fitting enough memorial to Frank Richards and the wonderful world of Greyfriars.

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**WANTED:** All pre-war *Sexton Blake Libraries*. All *Boys Friend Libraries*. All comics/papers etc with stories by W.E. Johns, Leslie Charteris & Enid Blyton. Original artwork from *Magnet*, *Gem*, *Sexton Blake Library* etc. also wanted. I will pay £150.00 for original *Magnet* cover artwork, £75.00 for original *Sexton Blake Library* cover artwork. NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 EASTBURY ROAD, WATFORD, WD1 4JL.  
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## WILSON THE GREAT!

by Des O'Leary

To my astonishment and delight, the *Daily Telegraph* of 28.12.1998, in its weekly sports supplement, featured an article by Michael Parkinson, the well-known TV and radio personality, dedicated to a certain famous sporting pioneer, Wilson! Mr. Parkinson, of course, has been voted 'Sportswriter of the Year' and for many of us armchair sports fans his witty articles with their informed comments on a wide range of sporting activities are compulsory reading on a Monday morning.

*Here is a picture of Wilson clearing a high jump of 6 feet 5 inches. But look—he's doing it BACKWARDS!*

## WILSON - SEEKER OF CHAMPIONS



On this particular morning it was not so much the headline, "Wizard Who Had the Jump on Fosbury", as the two illustrations accompanying it that caught my eye immediately.

The first, the photo showing Dick Fosbury winning the Olympic gold medal in the 1968 high jump with his 'revolutionary' technique. His backwards leap was at once christened the 'Fosbury Flop'. The second was a drawing of a figure instantly

familiar to readers of the old D C Thomson story papers. In his one-piece, homespun costume, leaping to victory in a seemingly identical manner was Wilson of the *Wizard* in 1946!

The article proceeded to give a brief account of Wilson's truly mind-boggling feats in the *Wizard*, details of which had been furnished to Mr. Parkinson by TrackStats, the journal of the Association of Track and Field Statisticians. Benny Green, the late and much missed music and literary expert, was also an enthusiast for the stories and had also supplied Mr. Parkinson with information and, even, years before, a copy of the 1962 paperback "The Truth About Wilson". Now the original creator of Wilson, Gilbert Dalton, is warmly praised for his stimulation of so many boys' imaginations. Future athletic stars like Chris Brasher, Bruce Tulloh and Geoff Capes were also to acknowledge the inspiration they gained from the stories, we might add. Mr. Dalton, encouraged no doubt by Thomsons'



shrewd and experienced editors, went on to create what was surely the second most famous storypaper athlete in "Alf Tupper, the Tough of the Track", star of the *Rover*.

Mr. Parkinson gives us his personal recollections of the stories spiced with amusingly un-serious speculations: could Wilson's home, Stayling Moor, be "later the birthplace of Dickie Bird, Geoffrey Boycott, Fred Truman and Sachin Tendulkar" and "if he [Wilson] and Benny ever reminisce on some celestial park bench, it wouldn't surprise me if Benny discovered Wilson was a better piano player than Art Tatum".

The writer ends with the thought: "Will the CD Roms of today be remembered 50 years hence? I belong to that age group which every Christmas is asked: "What do you give the man who has everything?" We smile forgivingly, but inside we are dying to say: 'What about a Wizard Annual?'"

To the great surprise of the journalist, but not of those of us who still appreciate and remember the vanished world of the story papers, a veritable flood of correspondence ensued resulting in further articles and selections of readers' letters.

Mr. Parkinson returned to our super-athlete on 11.1.99 with a similarly light-hearted but evocative feature on Wilson's talents on the cricket field both with bat and ball. As he says: "... the all-rounder we have been seeking since Ian Botham (who might be Wilson's lovechild)" and "His batting often threatened the rooftops around Headingley (did I forget to mention he was a Yorkshireman?)"

Mention, too, was made of his outstanding achievements as a racing cyclist such as when an eccentrically chosen and trained team went on to beat the crack cyclists of Europe under his leadership.

The Parkinson speculations about Wilson concern his name too. Could his Christian name be Ezekiel or Joshua or even perhaps just Great? But we would all surely agree with his plea: "Why doesn't someone publish all the Wilson stories in book form?"

On 25.1.99 more information is passed on to the reader. The name is William Wilson. He was born in 1795 and owed his longevity and physical powers to a mysterious elixir obtained from an old hermit. The journalist comments: "For obvious reasons I cannot publish the entire recipe which is now in the hands of Mr. Dobson, the Health Minister ... Expert opinion is that it will make viagra look like a wine gum."

Wilson did not die in the Battle of Britain and in 1954/5 led a hastily assembled team to win the Ashes in Australia although his bowling (average delivery timed at 120 mph!) had five catches dropped off it in one eight-ball over. Parkinson's comment - "Some things never change!" He does point out, however, that some sceptics have identified the elixir as a "performance-enhancing drug, in which case Wilson's feats are ineligible for the record books".

One of the most pleasurable features of reminiscence is how one thing leads to another. Willis Hall, friend of Mr. Parkinson, distinguished writer and a member of the Northern O.B.B.C., is reminded of a comic paper hero whose bowling baffled the opposing Australian batsmen by delivering the cricket ball vertically and landing it on top of the stumps! This phenomenon was identified by readers as first featuring in a story by Conan Doyle, "The Story of Spedegue's Dropper". More germane to Mr. Hall's enquiry was probably a certain Joe Cover (could it be 'joke over'?) a mysterious bowler in one of the story papers of the 1930s, named by several correspondents. A lively discussion about various real-life cricketers who had used 'droppers' ensued.

Meanwhile, some letter-writers advocated H.K. Rodd, yet another super-athlete, as rival for Wilson. (Rodd, despite his equally outstanding career, is quite different from Wilson. He was blond, of superb physique, product of what we would now call a genetic experiment to raise a baby to fulfil all his potential. He was a deliberate contrast with Wilson, at least in appearance, and made his debut in *The Rover*, sister paper of *The Wizard* in 1946, some years after Wilson's.)

Another reference cited by Parkinson earlier is one I find particularly fascinating. Following his description of Wilson's unconventional training methods of his unconventionally selected cycling team, he recalls how English cyclist Dave Orford visited the home village in Belgium of champion cyclist Eddie Merckx. He found there a well with bike and pulley attachment exactly like Wilson's training system. He was told that Eddie had constructed it after reading about it in a comic!



Another illustration of the 'Wilson inspiration effect' in real life.

Finally, on 1.2.99, Parkinson was forced to call a halt. "... Enough already ... A full representation [of readers' letters] would occupy several editions of the entire paper. They demonstrate Houseman's observation:

- That is the land of lost content,  
I see it shining plain,  
The happy highways where I went  
And cannot come again."

Let me end with Mr. Parkinson's earlier tribute to Gilbert Dalton "... who kept a record of his work and in the front of the journal had placed a quote from G.K. Chesterton describing boys' stories as 'the actual centre of a million flaming imaginations.'

I know a generation who will drink to that."

**FOOTNOTE** I was reminded of Wilson again in rather a roundabout manner by a superb BBC TV drama *Shooting The Past*, which was based on an archive of historical photographs. In an unusual approach it had some of the actors commenting in character on a significant photo. In one the character 'Veronica', played by Billie Whitelaw, chose a wartime scene of Smithfield Market. The camera focused closely on a section of the great building, through a window of which could be glimpsed a strange shape. She explained that this building housed a pet scheme of Winston Churchill which required Smithfield's

refrigeration expertise. It was the prototype of an aircraft carrier, unsinkable because constructed mainly of ice!

An absurd fiction? Not entirely. Occasional references to such a scheme have surfaced from time to time. One Jewish refugee scientist claimed to have worked on it himself until Churchill was persuaded that such a craft would require almost as much badly-needed steel as a conventional carrier.

Why was I reminded of Wilson? In 1951 *The Wizard* published a series called "The Truth About the Ship of Shivers", in which Wilson was recruited to use his supernormal physical abilities in experiments on a secret aircraft carrier made of ice!

Before Churchill's idea was public knowledge, the story papers had used it as a novel background for their greatest hero.

*(Illustrations are copyright D.C. Thomson)*

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## **TED BALDOCK WRITES:**

I have just been browsing through the July issue of C.D. and kept returning to the article by Dawn Marler - "Merrymakers at the Cornish Carnival". It caused several ripples to run through my memory.

Where had I heard of, or read about, the 'Helston Floral Dance' referred to by her? I could not be at peace with myself until I had tracked down the source.

It was, of course, H.V. Morton in his book "In Search of England". He describes the Floral Dance at some length. Its origins appear to reach far back into antiquity and have various roots and sources. There are some archaeologists who claim that this Maytime Dance is perhaps the oldest custom in England and may well have been connected with the Roman 'Floralia'.

For the duration of the dance the doors of Helston, back and front, are thrown open to give passage to the dancers. To quote Morton:

"Sharp on the stroke of noon the band played the Floral Dance; and down the steps into the blinding sunlight came, two by two, solemn men in silk hats and morning coats, holding their ladies gently by the tips of their fingers. The Solicitor was dancing, so were the Doctor, the Clergyman, the Estate Agent, the Bank Manager and his wife - in fact the hierarchy of Helston were stepping out together two by two, then turning and changing positions, with the couple behind to execute a smart but formal twirl."

There are apparently three dances. The before breakfast dance, the after breakfast dance for the children, then the noontide full dress dance led by the dignitaries of the town. It must present a very picturesque sight and be not a little exhausting.

The by-ways into which one is led by the articles in the C.D. are strange and intriguing - and always most interesting. Always they seem to be stirring memories, many of which have remained dormant for decades. For me the ongoing exercise in nostalgia is one of the great attractions of the C.D. We reach back to the joys of our childhood reading. Surely in this area the C.D. can be seen as unique.

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## THE END OF THE NELSON LEE

by E. Grant-McPherson

I wonder how many boys joined me on the 12th August 1933, in thinking what has happened to my favourite weekly? No doubt there was a reason, but the following shows how it appeared to at least one of its readers.

5th August, 1933. Third New Series No. 24. The penultimate issue. The only intimation of anything amiss was a mention in the Round Table Talk to the effect that the next issue would contain an Important Announcement that would concern everyone.

12th August, 1933. No. 25. The final issue of the *Nelson Lee*. Several pages carry small items announcing such statements as: "Don't ask for the *Nelson Lee* next week; ask for the *Gem* for this is the last issue. The *Nelson Lee* will in future be incorporated in the *Gem*" - these culminating in a full-page advert.

The Round Table Talk tells us that the *Gem* must be asked for next week and that the exploits of the St. Frank's chums will be continued in the *Gem*. The short story at the back was about St. Jim's.

12th August, 1933. *Gem* No. 1330. There is a footnote at the end of the serial to the effect that the new serial would feature Nelson Lee and Nipper & Co. of St. Frank's.

19th August, 1933. *Gem* No. 1331. At the top of the page above the normal title THE GEM, in letters 3/8" high is the caption THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY AND -. Underneath the THE GEM the wording: "Incorporating the Nelson Lee Library". This latter was retained until the end of the year, *Gem* No. 1350, when it was dropped. On page 3 was a box stating: "This Grand Number of the *Gem* incorporates *The Nelson Lee Library*, former readers of which are accorded a hearty welcome, the Editor." On page 17 in the Editor's Notebook there is a big write-up.

THIS week I am proud to welcome a host of new readers, in addition to the great body of loyal Gemites who have well and truly supported this paper for so many years. Of these new friends some have been enthusiastic readers of the "Nelson Lee Library", now, for reasons of policy, incorporated in this paper, and for them I have a special message. It is this: Give to the GEM the same splendid support and the fine loyalty for which "Nelson Lee" readers have always been specially distinguished, and I, on my part, will pledge myself to maintain intact the old traditions of genuine, honest-to-goodness school stories of the true vintage, which with their clean humour and wholesome thrills, have always been your sheet-anchor.

Our future has never been brighter than now, and no stone will be left unturned to ensure that this paper maintains its reputation of being the best and brightest school story paper on the market.

Martin Clifford and Edwy Searles Brooks are the master writers of schoolboy fiction - and the GEM will now have them both.



Let us, then, go forward joyfully from strength to strength, making new friends into old friends, and each passing week forging new links in the bonds of true comradeship which bind together Reader and Editor!

The last story in the *Lee* was about Dr. Foo Chow, itself a reprint from the First New Series. The balance of these stories was continued as the serial at the back of the *Gem*.

**IMPORTANT NEWS FOR ALL READERS WITHIN!**

Following the Foo Chow serial came a new story, "The White Giants of Dorado". A number of St. Frank's pupils with Nelson Lee, Dorrie, and, of course, Umlosi, travelling in an airship, *The Sky Wanderer*, revisit the Dream City first met in summer 1920. The city is now ruled by none other than Lee's old adversary, Professor Zingrave, and many are the adventures our heroes have before they finally outwit him. *Gem* No. 1346 depicted an incident from the St. Frank's story on its cover: this was the only occasion that this happened.

After the White Giants came "Treasure Isle", a completely new story. The company as before, again with an airship, go in search of an explorer whose ship's crew has mutinied whilst he was searching for buried treasure on Tao Tao island. After many exciting adventures our chums manage to foil the mutineers and find the treasure for the explorer.

The next story takes place way out west in Arizona. Justin B. Farman learns that there is trouble at the ranch he has inherited. He takes six juniors with him

to Ghost River Ranch. When some of them get captured by the Black Riders, he sends for Nelson Lee, who, in company with Justin's father, Big Jim Farman, outwits the rustlers and finally clears up the matter.

The sixth story, entitled "The Boy From Down Under", deals with the adventures of the St. Frank's boys with a party of Australian schoolboys and their masters who take over the River House School for a period. Throw in a mystery and a lot of rivalry, and you have the ingredients for a new Brooks story.

"The Ten Talons of Taaz" is a ten-part story in which ten of the St. Frank's juniors assist in the rescue of number of Tibetans from a shipwreck, but in doing so they upset a religious sect by looking at the face of their God, and each of the ten parts deals with the trials of one of the boys to prove his fitness to live..



Following this came another reprint, very slightly abridged, but not enough to affect the story. This was the first Northeustria series, in my opinion one of the best things that Edwy ever wrote, now entitled "The Secret World".

This in turn was followed by yet another reprint, just one book this time, The Mystery of the Poisoned River", now called "Mystery Mill".

The last of the serials is "The Black Hand at St. Frank's". Another completely new story. Eight of the St. Frank's boys rescue an airman from a crashed plane; when they realise that he is dying they promise to deliver a package for him to a Dr. Zangari, an astronomer, and to keep it secret. They little imagine, however, what they are letting themselves in for. The doctor turns out to be a Mafia leader, and when some of the boys are captured, Nelson Lee and Scotland Yard come to the rescue and of course all ends happily.

This serial ends in *Gem* No. 1448. There is no further mention of St. Frank's.

SIC TRANSIT GLORIA LEE

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## THE MAN WHO MET HIMSELF

### Part Six: Back to the Cats

by Mark Caldicott

Which are the first two Ironsides novels? Look in the ESB Bibliography (still available from Happy Hours!) and you will see, of course, "Footsteps of Death" (1939) and "Ironsides of the Yard" (1939). However, my claim is that these should be regarded as the third and fourth Ironsides stories. The first two are "The Strange Case of the Antlered Man" (1935) and "The Grouser Investigates" (1936). I described in my last article the problems Brooks experienced with Harraps. I would like to go further now and speculate that if ESB had not fallen out with Harraps neither Victor Gunn nor "Ironsides" Cromwell would have existed at all. Instead we would be enthusing over a long series of adventures of Inspector William "Grouser" Beeke, and our friend the Honourable Eustace Cavendish would still be flourishing.

The introduction of Chief Inspector William "Ironsides" Cromwell to the reading public was confusing, to say the least. This, I believe, had much to do with the problem that Brooks was now caught between his old and new careers. On the one hand he was selling his stories in the story-paper market, in which he was firmly established but which itself was in decline. On the other hand he was recognising the need to become established in the hardback fiction market, in which he was a relative newcomer but which presented a hope for the future. What he tried to do with the Cromwell stories was to try to sell in both markets, hoping either would buy - and as luck would have it not just one or the other

bought the stories, both did. The result being that in September 1939, by a strange quirk of publishing fate, "Ironsides" Cromwell made almost simultaneous debuts (if such a thing is possible) in both *The Thriller* and in a Collins hardback novel. For the record, the novel was the slightly earlier publication.

What is interesting about Brooks' approach to the two markets is that he took different approaches to the stories intended for either. Let us look at the hardback version first.

Brooks was obviously pleased by his new relationship with publishers William Collins who had by this time already begun to republish as hardback novels the Norman Conquest stories in *The Thriller*. The problem with Harraps, as was explained last time, was editorial interference. This did not seem to be a problem with Collins since they took the *Thriller* text of the Conquest stories word for word. What was wrong, then, in inventing a second series - and re-issuing his "Grouser" Beeke and Cavendish stories for Collins? To this end, therefore, Brooks took the character of the Grouser and transformed him unchanged apart

from the name into "Ironsides" Cromwell. This, of course, followed the historical trend set by Norman Conquest and was perhaps intended to bring the same kind of luck as with that series. Brooks had already had his hero Larry Cromwell, the "Invisible Speedman" who had appeared in the fairly short-lived *Buzzer*, and that name was now back on the shelf ready to be dusted off.

Our old friend Eustace Cavendish was also re-created as Johnny Lister, again without any discernible difference except for the change of name. Cavendish had, of course, already been toned down in the Grouser stories - his monocle having disappeared and his suits becoming a little less remarkable than in the Blake yarns.

Another reason for the smooth transition from Beeke and Cavendish to Cromwell and Lister (at least in the hardback version) was that Brooks had a Beeke novel already on hand which he could use, for, as has been said, the third Grouser novel had not made it into a Harraps cover, but had been sold as a serial, "Mr Nemesis", to *Detective Weekly*. All that Brooks appears to have done to convert the serial to the novel is to substitute the names of Cromwell and Lister for Beeke and Cavendish. Textually they are identical - thus



descriptions of their characteristics remain unchanged between the serial and novel versions.

It is not surprising that Brooks should have wanted to use this story since as well as being a ready made novel, it is also an exceptionally good yarn, having the same entertaining quality as the first two Grouser novels.

But what about the other debut - in *The Thriller*? Brooks could not have been certain of the acceptance of his story by Collins, or maybe he wanted to emulate the success of the Conquest stories where he had attracted two fees for the same stories. Whatever the reason, he set about also writing Cromwell stories for the market he could rely upon to accept him - Amalgamated Press. He could not submit the same story, of course, so he had to write new ones.

For some reason, however, he chose to depart from the Beeke and Cavendish formula for Cromwell's debut in *The Thriller*. Instead, he brought onto the scene an entirely new assistant, Detective Sergeant Potter. Sergeant Potter is, I think, one of Brooks' least successful characters. He is Bunter-esque in his size, his lack of intelligence, and in his single-minded greediness. He is intended as a comic character, but in fact detracts from the entertainment value of the stories considerably.

Cromwell and Potter are introduced in "Ironsides of the Yard" (*Thriller* 556, 30-Sept-39). Johnny Lister is featured centrally in the story, but no longer as Cromwell's assistant. Lister has now left the police force and joined the diplomatic service. We meet Lister on holiday in the sleepy Suffolk coastal town of Eastwold, rescuing a girl from drowning. Lister is accused of murdering his friend Larry Barnes, and calls upon his former boss Cromwell for help. Thus we learn of an earlier existence of the Cromwell-Lister partnership, and "Ironsides", of course convinced of Lister's innocence, sets out with the "help" of Potter to investigate the case. The series continues in "Zimmler the Wolf" (*Thriller* 558, 14-Oct-39) and "Depot Z1" (*Thriller* 560, 28-Oct-39). During the course of these stories, a disappointing war-time series about Nazi spies, Lister is Cromwell's unofficial assistant, playing a key role in helping him bring the enemy to justice.

The fact that both the hardback and story-paper versions of Cromwell stories appeared at the same time, with Lister playing different roles in each, was just one of those things. It may have been potentially confusing to his readers, but this shows some shrewdness on Brooks' part since if the *Thriller* version had been a long-standing success Lister could have been dropped as a character altogether, as indeed he was in "Freedom Station Calling" (*Thriller* 576, 17-Feb-40). If, however, the Collins stories took off it would be possible to re-issue the stories in hardback form, which is in fact what happened.

It was *The Thriller* which disappeared, before even completing the second Cromwell yarn. The hardback series continued, and therefore it was possible - just - for Brooks to use the *Thriller* episodes as novels. Personally, I would rather he had left them in the pages of *The Thriller*, for to me they are an aberration. After the success of "Footsteps of Death" the next novel to be published was "Ironsides of the Yard" (April, 1940) which opens with Johnny Lister, no longer a policeman, now a diplomat, on holiday in Eastwold rescuing a girl . . . etc. The difficult problem of reintroducing as a diplomat a character who was the Detective Sergeant in the previous novel is dismissed in Cromwell's statement: "Johnny and I got on well when he was my assistant . . . I was really sorry when his parents decided to push him into the Diplomatic Service . . .".

The third Cromwell novel, "Ironsides Smashes Through" (October, 1940), is a direct reprint of a second series of stories written for *The Thriller*. Only one episode, "Freedom Station Calling" (*Thriller* 576, 17-Feb-40) had appeared before *The Thriller* was forced to cease publication through wartime paper shortages. No doubt this story is action packed. Cromwell and Potter first get to grips with a spy ring led by a notable public figure, and are then placed in charge of the safe delivery of a train carrying a new, and highly expensive, aircraft fuel. Nevertheless this is not one of my favourite Cromwell novels. The most significant fact about this eminently-forgettable story is the absence of Johnny Lister altogether. For me the combination of Cromwell and Potter was a disaster.

Fortunately, however, for the next Cromwell story, "Ironsides' Lone Hand" (May, 1941) Johnny Lister is back. The explanation is brief:

"Why did I ever think detective work was exciting?"

"You thought it exciting enough to come back to, anyway," said Cromwell tartly. "The trouble with you, my lad, is that you don't know your own mind. You graduate from Hendon like a disease, plant yourself on me for a period, and then duck into the Diplomatic Service . . ."

"And find it as dull as hell . . ."

"I could have told you that!" said Ironsides. "Instead of staying put, and leaving me in peace, you shoot back from Vancouver, or Washington, or some such God-forsaken place, and deprive me of the best cook I ever had!"

Sergeant Lister grinned.

"Meaning that fat chump, Sergeant Potter?" he drawled. "Come off it, Ironsides! You're not going to tell me that you really liked having that pin-brain as your assistant. Why, as soon as you knew I was back on the job you practically infested the A.C.'s office until he promised to team me up with you again."

This, and the two stories which follow, are re-workings of previous *Sexton Blake Library* tales. "Ironsides' Lone Hand" is adapted from "The Black Dagger" (*Sexton Blake Library*, 2nd series, 406, 02-Nov-33). It is a rather strange tale involving a knife-throwing murderer and strange happenings in a country house. "Death's Doorway" (Nov-41), is a rewrite of "The Riddle of the Body on the Road" (*Sexton Blake Library*, 3rd series, 6-Aug-41), which involves an elaborate plot to steal a precious radium supply, a fake inn, and a close call for the detectives in a blazing building. "Mad Hatter's Rock" (Sept-42) is rewritten from "The Three Frightened Men" (*Sexton Blake Library*, 2nd series, 641, Oct-38, written as Berkeley Gray), and is an excellent story which had also formed the basis of the radio play "Enter Sexton Blake" in 1939.

Despite occupying the position formerly held by Tinker in these stories, there is some rewriting to develop in the Cromwell and Lister partnership towards the old Beeke and Cavendish characterisation established in "Footsteps of Death". The full return to the old partnership came in the next Cromwell novel "Ironsides Sees Red" (Jul-43) and in the slightly later novel "Ironsides Smells Blood" (Apr-46) which include re-workings of the four Beeke and Cavendish *Detective Weekly* stories.

There is a significant and unique feature common to the Beeke and Cavendish stories which are rewritten as Cromwell novels. In the Cromwell stories Brooks did not rewrite the narrative or change the names of the supporting characters, as he had had to do with his other stories. Rather, the supporting characters have the same names; and the only



difference is in the chapter headings, in the substitution of Cromwell and Lister instead of Beeke and Cavendish, and General Lister instead of Lord Halstead. All descriptions of Cavendish are interchangeable with those of Lister.

The partnership now established, Cromwell and Lister are set for a long and successful career. The mysteries which would have taxed the Grouser and the Hon. Eustace now fall to this pair.

There is one last episode to recount. It occurs in "Three Dates With Death" (Oct-47), when Cromwell is called in to investigate a strange and bizarre incident when certain eminent persons receive parcels each containing the body of a black cat. Returning to the Yard Cromwell discovers:

... the one easy chair occupied by a young man of exceedingly dandified appearance. His sports coat, of a check pattern which caused Ironsides to shy like a startled gazelle, was the last thing in gents' new spring wear; his pastel-green flannel trousers were flawless, and his neckwear harmonised perfectly with the whole. His somewhat vacant face, which accommodated a monocle, was in complete repose.

"Who," demanded Ironsides sourly, "is this?"

Johnny Lister, who was sitting at the desk, jumped to his feet...

"One of my pals, Old Iron," he said cheerfully. "The Hon. Algy Pirbright..."

Johnny Lister meeting Algy Pirbright is surely evidence of The Strange Case of the Man Who Met Himself. The meeting also illustrates the subtle change over time which we have seen between the man as he was at the beginning and the one he has become. Anyway, this (as we used to say when the cinema had continuous performances) is where we came in. Long live Eustace Cavendish, in whatever form he appears.

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## CRICKET IN THE JENNINGS BOOKS by Jonathan Cooper

Cricket, the noble summer sport, provides innumerable thrilling episodes in school stories, often defining moments for the heroes of such yarns as P.G. Wodehouse's *Mike* (1909), E.F. Benson's *David Blaize* (1916) and Walter C. Rhodes' *Quills* (1918) (not forgetting heroines like Angela Brazil's *Luckiest Girl in the School* (1916) who exhorts willow-wielding Amazons with a cry of "look here my hearties" and cracks some lusty boundaries. May the gentleman reader not forget that it is our lady cricketers who have won the World Cup in the past.)

The cricketing ideal is probably to be observed most charmingly in Charles Hamilton's





many golden descriptions of the game. Contests keenly contested, but played out in a truly sporting fashion, with some heroic performances and a narrow victory, generally for the side we are following in the particular series. The vast majority of characters are keen and skilful cricketers. Only slackers like Bunter or cads like Skinner shirk the game.

Alas, the situation is not quite so straightforward in the Jennings books.

Naturally, heroics on the cricket field **do** exist in the books. Atkinson is involved in a vital last wicket stand for the school, Jennings is called up at the last moment to play for the 2nd XI against Bracebridge, and his score is the margin of victory. Jennings also scores a 50 in one house match, and in another he and Darbishire take Drake to victory by scampering (or rather staggering) the vital run to win.

However, such occasions are undercut by humour or irony. Atkinson's defiance is brought to an abrupt and unceremonious end by him sitting on his own wicket. Jennings only in fact scores 2 at Bracebridge and his 50 is discounted because Darbishire, the official scorer, has been feasting elsewhere. To add insult to irony, when the proper game does get underway he is bowled for a duck. And the stunning house victory is accompanied by the farce of Darbishire tripping over his inadequately strapped pads and falling on his face.

Although such comedy is slightly contrived, there is more realism in these situations which combine agony with the ecstasy than in the gilded canvases apparent in most other stories in this genre. Having witnessed a number of disastrous run-outs, embarrassing collapses and shocking deliveries over the last few months, I see Harrow life imitating Buckeridge art every day. In the Jennings stories, as in life, cricket does not, alas, grip every boy's imagination all the time.

For instance, the boys not playing in a 1st XI match, instead of being engrossed in the game, are said to be organising caterpillar crawling contests and stuffing handfuls of grass down neighbours' necks. Even Jennings, often the most enthusiastic of boys, occasionally goes out of his way to avoid being on the periphery of a game. On one occasion Jennings sneaks off with Darbishire to go rowing instead of watching a school game, and on another he dodges his umpiring stint by hiding underneath the pavilion.

To be fair, he conceals himself so that he can listen in peace to commentary on a county match. At other times the whole school community gets very excited by external cricket matches. The school is on tenterhooks whilst England and West Indies battle it out at Old Trafford and the boys go to see the MCC play Surrey at Dunhambury.

Occasionally, foreign cricketers visit Linbury Court itself. In *Jennings' Little Hut*, Jennings and Darbishire represent England and Australia respectively in a "Test Match". Jennings responds to Darbishire's complaint that he is **always** Australia with the retort that "If you're playing for Australia, England will be able to win the Ashes, so if you're patriotic, you should be happy to help your country like that".

Cricketers from even more distant parts beam down in *Jennings in Particular* with the visit of an Outer Space XI (including one alien player resembling Jennings with two ball-pens sprouting from his scalp, and another Darbishire with a green, plastic vegetable colander on his head). The latter insists "We outer-space chaps know all about crafty bowling. We've been listening to BBC commentaries ever since the radio telescopes were invented." Although the MCC has, as yet, not been able "to invite well-known space athletes to play a Test Match at Lords by Outer Space rules", there is something distinctly alienating about cricket to the uninitiated. One such poor soul is the French boy Henri

Dufour, to whom Darbshire tries to explain the rules in *Jennings Abounding*. Inevitable confusion ensues, with Henri mistakenly believing that the game is being played on a game of fruit (a peach) and that the players carry winged mammals around with them (a misunderstanding over the word "bat"). Henri dismisses the game and its lunatic laws with a shrug.

On the other hand, none of the English boys would profess ignorance of the game. Both Temple and Venables demonstrate that weedy play on their part does not prohibit them showering criticism on and offering expert advice to other players. Even Darbshire, who plays like a "flat-footed newt", is known to offer an opinion.

This demonstrates that there is, in fact, something for everyone in cricket. Jennings can show his initiative by captaining his house 2nd XI and by adapting (nay, inventing) the rules to deal with an excess of old tennis balls that need to be disposed of swiftly. Darbi, on the other hand, generally contents himself with being 3rd XI scorer (reserve) and enjoys the advantages that this brings with it (such as occasional large teas and the chance to censure older boys who block his view of the game). When Darbshire does actually play, the result is often disastrous. However, he does bowl what he calls leg spin: his run-up closely modelled on Mr Carter's. On delivery, though, it is the square leg umpire, not the batsman, who is in danger.

The cricket field really does seem to be a place where the antagonisms of the classroom are, largely, put aside, and where boy and beak can meet, learn from and even emulate each other. Not only does Darbshire copy Mr Carter, but Atkinson models his umpiring stand on Mr Hind, replacing this gentleman's shooting stick with a reversed cricket bat. The Head Master, Mr Pemberton-Oakes, in some ways a rather distant man, comes alive on the cricket field, bowling to the 1st XI in practice and sharing his team's despair or joy at matches. Even Mr Wilkins unintentionally replicates Jennings' hitting of one of Darbi's special balls into the Head Master's garden and the subsequent smashing of one of his beloved cucumber frames.

So, in the rush and excitement of the moment, men becomes boys and boys men. Group identity is established and one's position within that group is defined or confirmed. Fun can be had by all. So, to corrupt more modern schoolboy slang in a Defouresque way, cricket is "wicket".

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DO NOT FORGET TO ORDER YOUR CD ANNUAL.

IT HELPS THE EDITOR IF ORDERS

CAN BE RECEIVED EARLY.

*Memory, the warder of the brain.*

Macbeth.

It has been argued that life is comparable to a prolonged climbing expedition, a journey which in early years is constantly uphill with our vision somewhat inhibited by the heights above.

Middle life finds us somewhere approaching, or having achieved, the summit, where we may pause and gaze around at the great world lying below us, together with all our petty-seeming and oft-times futile accomplishments. The future then lies before us sloping gently away down to that which we hope may prove a pleasant and contented progression into the 'sear and yellow'.

So we stand upon the summit, having read and to a degree absorbed the literature, classic and contemporary, the good and the not so commendable. Together it all lies within our subconscious mind to be sifted through, to surface periodically and to be conned over in quiet moments.

Before us now lies a less strenuous, less demanding journey, a flat plain in which to do much as we will. It could be termed the second half. We feel privileged to 'free wheel', to retrace our steps and become less adventurous in our search for the fresh and new. "The web of our life is a mingled yarn, good and ill together." as Shakespeare has said. We fall back upon the old and tried favourites of our youth.

In the halls of literary fame, alongside the creation of such giants as Victor Hugo, Goethe, Dickens, Homer, Schiller and Maupassant, surely our well-trying heroes, Harry Wharton and Co., Mr Quelch, Dr Locke and, quite certainly, William George Bunter, all quietly pursue their respective ways and, just being themselves, we would not have them change for all the gold of Ophir.

In retrospect the playing fields of Greyfriars appear just as green and appealing as ever. The old elms are just as tall, casting the same shadows that we so valued on sunny afternoons. Nothing has changed. Is there not an element of magic here? If we stand, in imagination, by the dusky elms late on a summer evening, remain quite still and listen carefully, we will sooner or later detect the distant click of bat on ball, the subdued murmur of voices, and the mellow chiming of the school clock. A hundred school terms cannot but leave these vibrations, which will linger for those whose ears are attuned.

Visualise white-clad figures in the level rays of the afternoon sunshine. A key match is in progress - Greyfriars is on the way to another well fought victory over St. Jim's, contested stubbornly every inch of the way by Kildare and his stalwarts. There is a sense of well-being among the crowd of fellows round the boundaries. Even the languid Mauly, lounging in a deck chair beneath the elms hard by the pavilion, manages to generate a mild display of enthusiasm, while Bunter, much stained by cherry juice, pauses in his machine-like delving into a large bag at his side, to grunt approval of Wingate's prowess.

So does the life of the school go forward, work and play alternating, certain characters, whom to name is unnecessary, having to be literally driven to both. It is said that every

# Greyfriars Champions



## BILLY BUNTER

(Champion Feeder)

Of all the folks who feast and feed  
And love the "flesh-pots" dearly,  
The portly Bunter takes the lead:  
The champion feeder, clearly!  
His appetite is keen and good,  
His study-mates inform us;  
In fact, we've always understood  
That it is quite enormous!

He often lacks the wherewithal  
To satisfy his cravings;  
He scans the post rack in the hall  
With ragings and with ravings.  
No postal-order ever comes  
From Auntie Maud or Mabel;  
And Bunter has to seek the crumbs  
Shed from the rich man's table!

But if, by some amazing luck,  
He finds himself with money,  
He revels in a realm of tuck—  
A land of milk and honey!  
"In life, there's nothing half so fine,"  
Said Billy once to Sammy,  
"As Mrs. Mimble's tarts divine,  
And doughnuts, sweet and jammy!"

"Eat not to live, but live to eat,"  
Is Bunter's favourite maxim;  
Whether it's muffins, rolls or meat,  
No food can overtax him!  
Perched high upon the tuckshop stool  
We see his ample person;  
The greatest gorger in the school,  
Bard ever vented verse on!

barrel has its less than perfect fruit. Would the heroes shine half as brightly if this were not so? Each has his niche in the hierarchy, each plays his part according to his lights.

So much more of all this will be forthcoming in Mr Quelch's *magnum opus* 'The History of Greyfriars School' when this is finally presented to the world. A labour of love and rare scholarship, it will constitute a fitting memorial to a master who is respected and loveable - in spite of his acidity. History may look upon the Remove teacher as something of a 'Mr Chips' with all the attributes of that legendary house-master, plus the magical asset of being a 'Greyfriars man'.

From a lofty niche on the Head's bookcase, a splendid glass-fronted erection, a bust of Homer gazes down over the centuries, with inscrutable marble, yet all-seeing, eyes, upon the entries and exits below him, the routine traffic of the Headmaster's study. Below Homer, too, is a complete set of his works in the Loeb edition, in faded green cloth, showing ample evidence of much usage and care. Beloved books, solace of many quiet and happy hours, dear friends and companions of Dr Locke, a prize from far distant student days.

With a little imagination one may catch the rolling cadence of Homeric periods in the quiet study mingling with the merry laughter of carefree fellows on the playing fields. As he sits there on his high perch in stony silence, one wonders if he has any inkling of the seemingly insurmountable problems he would one day inflict upon generations of schoolboys. How much midnight oil he would cause to be burned by moist-browed toilers attempting to unravel and invest with meaning his moving and



tragic poetry.

Meanwhile, largely oblivious, Greyfriars pursues the more or less even tenor of its way, arranging its sporting events, particularly its cricket fixtures, the most important of which are, of course, those of the junior eleven, ably captained by Harry Wharton and supported by such stalwarts at Vernon-Smith and Bob Cherry.

So time and events move inexorably forward. Last term's titanic football match against Rookwood (won by a goal scored in the final minute) is already history. It remains, crystallised with all its excitement and glamour, while the school continues to move forward seeking fresh fields and pastures new. With the progress of time, there grows round these old Homeric victories an aura of romance; legends gradually generate around them as they enter into the realms of the 'things that were'. Thus are the annals of the school created, and forever being added to.

With the shadows lengthening in the quad one may observe two figures pacing slowly beneath the elms, heads bent, gowns undulating in the slight breeze, deep in conversation. The angular figure of Mr Quelch and that of Mr Prout, master of the Fifth, whose rotundity casts an infinitely bulkier shadow than that of his colleague. Observe them proceeding sedately to and fro beneath the windows of masters' studies. Thrashing out, probably with ponderous and prosy verbiage on Mr Prout's side and short, pithy rejoinders on that of the Remove master, some obscure problem of school politics.

Armed neutrality seems always to have existed between the masters of the Remove and the Fifth. When in company of the other each is very much upon his mettle and always, it would appear, watching and waiting for the slightest hint of criticism of any member of his form. Such criticisms produce upon occasion a fine turn of acidity and sharpness of response. Even so they are close friends. There exists between them a rather impatient toleration. Certainly they are far from being colourless characters.

Dr Locke, drawing from great reserves of patience and understanding, views them from the Olympian and solitary heights with a measure of quiet amusement, devoid of any hint of condescension. They are his two senior masters, so have they not a perfect right to their little foibles? Have they not been his loyal supporters over many years, through many crises, through periods of shadow and in the blessed dog-days, the happy times when the scholastic vessel has moved smoothly and serenely forward through the slow progression of terms?

The Greyfriars saga, a phenomenon in junior literature, will surely, through time, assume its rightful place in our literary firmament. It is a comforting thought that our great-great-grandchildren may rediscover something of the old magic which so captivated their forebears. *Ars est celare artem* - herein lies one of Charles Hamilton's greatest attributes. These pictures of another time are the legacy of those time-less favourites, the *Magnet* and *Gem* which came slipping through the letterbox with the regularity of clockwork each week.

Governments would - and did - tumble. Stock markets would crash. Tornadoes would wreak their havoc, and volcanoes unleash their awesome power. Man-made and natural disasters came along frequently much as today.

Through all these diversities the two companion papers continued upon their weekly odyssey, much to our enjoyment. These images of things that were still persist. They have become part of a way of life for many who have known them for so long.



**The Enid Blyton Dossier by Brian Stewart and Tony Summerfield, published by Hawk Books, £17.95.**

The title page of this sumptuous tribute to Enid Blyton gives an early quotation from her which sets the Dossier's tone: "... and this is a secret. I'd love to write a novel ... about children, and the jolly, happy things of life." This is indeed a joyful book, crammed with visual delights (some well-known and some rare) and full of information about Enid's life and works.

Of course, it will be a "must" for any Blyton collector and enthusiast, and possibly it will also invite those who dismiss her to look again at her truly phenomenal output. The sheer variety of the books illustrated on these pages is breathtaking. Hundreds of covers are shown in full colour as well as occasional black and white line illustrations from inside the books, together with picture of spinoffs such as jigsaws, dolls, board games and badges.

The Dossier is divided into sections, beginning with Enid's own life-story and ending with a useful chronology. The other sections concentrate on over 20 different sub-genres within the overall Blyton canon.

To whet your appetites I list just a few of these: Golden Oldies - The Early Work: Fairies and Fantasy: The Magazines: Poems, Songs and Plays: Children of Adventure: Back to School: Roll Up! Roll Up! Come to the Circus: Nature Books: Down at the Farm: Bible



Stories and Prayer Books - and, of course, Noddy (who commands two large sections, one on his books and the other on the games, egg-cups, toothbrushes and so on which feature him!)

There can be little doubt that this Dossier's primary satisfaction lies in the glowing pictures which produce not only instant nostalgia for one's own childhood but also a kind of overview of the childhood of 'everyman' and 'everywoman'. However, the text also offers riches and provides occasional insights into how Enid's life affected her writings. The authors acknowledge their debt to Barbara Stoney's definitive Blyton biography, and they give a comprehensive bibliography for further study. There is also a list (staggeringly long) of the many artists who have illustrated Enid's books, with of course many named examples of their work throughout the Dossier.

This is a book to dip into many times rather than to read at a sitting: it is ideal for deck-chair browsing - or to brighten a damp and cheerless day.

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### September means Return.

Although the four seasons traditionally divide the year into set calendar sections the month of September can be a lovely bridge, one built of memories of summer, of holidays and new friends, and the anticipation of the pleasures autumn can hold, even the first thoughts of Christmas coming over the horizon of the year.

The chums usually crossed the bridge of September with happy holiday memories mixed with the uncertainty of what a new term might bring. In September 1933 the month began with the ending of their exciting American holiday when Bessie became a film star and had to choose between Hollywood and Cliff House. Her chums and the school won, aided by the desire to help the new friend she'd made at the studio and who needed a chance so badly.

So back came the newly famous plump duffer to find a most surprising transformation awaiting the chums: Miss Bullivant, the harsh maths mistress was a changed woman. It seemed unbelievable, and even more so when the chums discovered that the Bull had an enemy within the Fourth; Nancy Bell, mean and unscrupulous, had discovered the reason behind Miss Bullivant's change of temperament.

Unbeknown to the girls, this most unpopular of mistresses was not without sorrow and secrets. She had a younger brother, Grant, serving a prison sentence for theft. Now he had escaped and was being sought by the Police. In secret, Miss Bullivant was helping him where he was hidden and Nancy Bell had some knowledge of this. She was making the most of this for Nancy had her own secret and a vital reason for seeing that Grant Bullivant was recaptured as soon as possible, and Miss Bullivant sacked from Cliff House. Then the heat of publicity about the case would die down and Nancy's own brother could breathe freely again from the fear of his own guilt being discovered.

Now Miss Bullivant needed help and found it from the loyal group of girls she had so often punished. When it was all cleared up and Nancy's brother had confessed before he managed to escape from the police Miss Bullivant also made her own confession, of how much she owed to Babs and Co. She vowed she would never forget and that she would change, now longer be so harsh.

But would she keep that promise? Only time would tell.

September 34 also extended the exciting African holiday, one of the best of the Cliff House adventures, and it was mid month before the chums were back at school to discover great change.

Their form mistresses, Miss Mathews, is leaving to become Head at Whitechester School, not so far from Cliff House, the girls were glad to know. Connie Jackson had been in a car accident during the holidays and was still in hospital. Also missing are the Terraine twins, who'd caught the mumps, and there is a new girl in the Fourth, a girl from Canada called Celia Charmant. She proves to be the young sister of Valerie Charmant at Courtfield who is to be their new form mistress.

The chums are appalled by Celia, who is one of the worst newcomers suffered by Cliff House and they dread the arrival of her older sister. If she is anything like Celia they are all in for a very rough ride indeed. But their worst fears are not realised. Valerie Charmant proves to be youthful, attractive, friendly and just. She is soon nicknamed The Charmer, and anyone less like the newly orphaned sister from Canada is difficult to imagine.

Again the old ploy for conflict and protection is set up. Valerie herself was adopted as a baby by the Charmants, close friends of her natural parents who emigrated to Canada and for various reasons could not take their baby daughter with them. Mr and Mrs Charmant were wealthy and kind and gave Valerie their name, and when news came of the death in Canada of Valerie's real father and that there was a young daughter left orphaned, the Charmants immediately offered her a home. It followed automatically that Valerie should be asked to look after Celia at Cliff House.

Celia, of course, has no desire at all to be nannied by an older sister she has just met for the first time and who has authority over her. The scene is set, the threads neatly laid for much conflict and anguish for the new young mistress. And there is another new arrival during that momentous term, a new maid at the school, Joan Sheldon, whose true identity is soon revealed. She is the genuine sister from Canada; Celia is an imposter, brought over by the untrustworthy detective hired by the Charmants to bring Celia safely over to England. He and his wife see and smell pickings for themselves and in return for their silence Celia is expected to aid them in their nefarious activities in the Cliff House area.

This four part series ended with Joan being restored to Valerie and adopted by the Charmants while Celia was arrested for her part in the burglaries and sent to a reformatory

to repent for her sins. So Valerie Charmant was free to settle happily at Cliff House and become, arguably, the most popular mistress the school had ever known.

September 35 opened with a two-parter featuring Phyllis Howell, the cycling champion of Cliff House, and the return of Lorna Goodwin, who had been expelled from Cliff House several years previously. She wants to get possession of a valuable bond she has stolen from Miss Primrose and been forced to hide in the Champions Shield before she could dispose of it. This story ended with a plane crash and provided the opportunity for a splendid show of heroism from Phyllis as she rescued her enemy from the blazing plane. Needless to say she won the Champion's Shield for the third time. (Long before the feat of Manchester United!)

That month continued with the arrival of Gail Gregory, a very strong character who meant to have all her own way. Being the niece of Sir Willis Gregory, the fiery school governor, was a distinct advantage and the girls were amazed as they watched Gail order him about and saw the peppery Sir Willis meekly obey her.

Even a completely restored Miss Bullivant, acting Head Mistress while Primmy was away, had to submit to the imperious young newcomer, just home from India where she had luxuriated in wealth and the constant attention of servants, and obviously saw no reason whatsoever why this pleasant state of affairs should not continue indefinitely just because she had come to school.

But new girls with similar ideas had come to Cliff House and soon had their fond ideas rearranged, as had the assorted tyrants who had darkened the school door, only to find their sojourns proved less than temporary.

Clara set the fireworks of defiance going and the chums soon showed Gail that even if Sir Willis and the Bull seem helpless against her they have no intention of being bullied into submission. However, Gail Gregory proves a tough nut to crack and the cracking carries on well into October.

In September of 1936 the chums returned from their exciting holiday in the wilds of Exmoor with its mysterious house called Red Towers, which held all the required ingredients to keep the readers turning the pages, to enter a new term with enough turmoil to drive any lingering holiday atmosphere far from their thoughts.

**Babs Redfern & Co. Feature in This Grand Long Complete Story of Cliff House School**



**STORMCLOUDS** over Cliff House—stormclouds of bitter enmity. Two captains in rivalry; tyranny; a feeling of growing rebellion—at first only an angry murmur, then flaming into sudden action! Dramatic and swift are the events which follow then!



Primmy, for once, had truly boobed when she decided to appoint Sarah Harrigan as joint school captain with Stella Stone, whose last term it was. This was meant to help Stella have more free time to study for an important exam which would earn her a much wanted job to begin her chosen career in veterinary practice.

The chums were appalled. Sarah was over the moon. She was bitterly envious of Stella; as usual she was heavily in debt and her creditors were becoming very impatient, and most of all she loved power. Also, she had a friend, Doris Grimshaw, who was rich, well-dressed and had influence, and was after the same job as Stella. She had promised Sarah twenty pounds if Sarah could scuttle Stella's chances of sitting the exam.

So the usual onslaught of bullying rages began, parried by the sheer rebellion of the girls. But the fates seemed bent on helping Sarah when an old girl and much-loved benefactor dies in Brittany and Miss Primrose and several mistresses depart for the funeral, leaving Sarah in charge. She made the most of it.

Lydia Crossendale and her cronies also made the most of it, toadying to Sarah, until Sarah deposed Babs and appointed Lydia as captain of the Fourth. The girls stage a strike, openly defying Sarah, and at the height of the uproar Miss Primrose returns. Then Stella can't be found. Not surprising, as Sarah had locked Stella in the attic the chums had cleaned and made ready for Stella where she could study in peace secretly away from Sarah's constant harassment.

The four stories in this series are strong and lively, full of the point and counterpoint that can be extended indefinitely.

Of course the chums win, and it is Jemima Carstairs who pulls the final coup de grace that tricks Sarah into giving away the truth behind her campaign of hatred against Stella.

Sadly, Sarah escapes with the loss of her prefectship till the end of term. Stella passes her exam with flying colours...while the disgraced Sarah sat in her study amid the pile of bills she could not pay.

This series was quite a hard act to follow. A dramatic single story of dark doings on Belwin Island followed, and the end of September brought a new series featuring Rosa Rodworth, who could always be relied on to enliven life at Cliff House.

As though Cliff House needed much enlivening!





## ROGER JENKINS WRITES:

Arthur Edwards' reference to the supposed death of Lumley-Lumley, the Outsider of St. Jim's, brings back vivid memories to me. It occurred in Gems 141-2, published in 1910, long before the Nelson Lee began. Lumley-Lumley was knocked down by a motor car, and this brought on a peculiar malady, from which he apparently died. Levison arrived as a new boy at St. Jim's in the second number. He knew that Lumley-Lumley suffered from cataleptic trances, and he went down to the vaults to resuscitate him. The reprint in Gems 1385-6 (in which I originally read the story) is much too abridged.

Edwy Searles Brooks actually wrote some substitute stories for the Gem, and some dealt with Lumley-Lumley. The supposed death of Church, however, was rather different in that Church was conscious even though he could not move or speak. I doubt whether Hamilton ever copied Brooks, though Brooks did write a Gem story in which Manners was awarded a camera, and Hamilton was told to feature the camera in future stories. Similarly, Clifton Dane and Farmer Pepper were substitute creations which Hamilton was told he must not ignore. In all it was a piquant situation when the creator of the stories was being hamstrung by substitute writers.

## PETER MAHONY WRITES:

I can answer a couple of the questions raised by Arthur Edwards in last month's FORUM. There is no doubt that Charles Hamilton used the back-from-death theme a long time before E.S. Brooks wrote 'The Death of Walter Church' for the 1927 Nelson Lee. Hamilton's story of Levison reviving Lumley-Lumley when the latter had been buried in the St. Jim's crypt appeared originally in Gem 142 (October/November 1911). It was reprinted in 1934 in Gem 1386.

As Mr. Edwards says, Hamilton used the 'doubles' theme on several occasions. The Tom Merry doubles story originally appeared in Gems 323/5 early in 1914, and was reprinted in 1937 in Gems 1524/6. Hamilton certainly copied, or rather adapted, from his own tales but it seems from the evidence unlikely that he copied from Brooks.

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## NEWS FROM THE OLD BOYS BOOK CLUBS

### Northern O.B.B.C.

In view of August being a holiday time, we had decided earlier not to have our more formal get-together but to do something a little difference.

Seven of us met at Brigg Shots Restaurant in the centre of Leeds for an excellent pre-theatre dinner after which we moved on to the Grand Theatre for a production of Agatha Christie's "Black Coffee". We felt that as this production has literary associations it was a good reason to do something a little more unusual.

Even though it was a holiday month, nine of us attended the production and it was agreed a good night out had been had by all.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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

At our August meeting Mary Cadogan presented an entertaining and highly nostalgic journey through the early years of her career in broadcasting. Members were reminded of such memorable figures as Jack Warner, Wilfred Pickles, Anne Zeigler and Webster Booth

and we heard a recording of Arthur Marshall and Mary discussing the school stories of Frank Richards and Angela Brazil.

If you were asked to choose the finest sporting and entertaining geniuses of the twentieth century, whom would you pick? Peter Mahony undertook and illustrated with video clips this extremely difficult task. Among his choices were popular figures such as Laurel and Hardy, Abbott and Costello, westler Les Kellett, and Anita Harris performing with the Welsh Guards.

Tea on the lawn rounded off this entertaining meeting.

VIC PRATT

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