

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOLUME 31 NUMBER 364

APRIL 1977

ALL BLACKS ON THE WARPATH! — See pages 3-4

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TALKING POINT

There is, of course, nothing new in the theme of the worth of Charles Hamilton when compared with other writers of school stories. I have long bored readers with my belief that Hamilton was the finest of all school-story writers, meaning, of course, school-stories for boys. Last month a letter appeared in our Postmas Called column in which Mr. W. Thurbon asked "Was Hamilton a greater writer than Hughes, Reed, Warren Bell, Finnemore, Kipling, Vachell, Benson, Waugh, Walpole, or Wodehouse?" In my view, if greater writer of school-

stories is meant, he was!

Hughes and Farrar each wrote a tale which has been remembered and has become a little classic of its type, because they were the first in the field - somewhere about the mid-1850's, I think. Had "Tom Brown" and "Eric" been first published some 50 years later, I doubt whether they would have made much impact in face of the competition of the early 1900's.

As a youngster, I enjoyed "Eric", "Mike", "Fifth Form at St. Dominic's" and plenty more. But that Hamilton, on occasion, did not beat them all is beyond my belief. True, he wrote hundreds of pot-boilers - it is a question whether he would have written any better if he had limited his output - but he also wrote dozens of school masterpieces in a career which spanned half a century - and the fact that his stories appeared in a tuppenny weekly paper is quite beyond the point.

Mr. Thurbon does not mention by name Desmond Coke - whose "Bending of a Twig" is arguably the finest school story between stiff covers - or Hylton Cleaver, but he does include Alec Waugh who wrote a wordy and rather dreary tale entitled "Loom of Youth" which was certainly not written for the entertainment of boys. You might as well include Van Druten whose "Young Woodley" was also not intended for boys and was far more entertaining for adults.

Mr. Thurbon wound up by enquiring: "Is it not wiser to say that Charles Hamilton was the greatest writer for the particular boys he served?" I wonder which particular boys our correspondent had in mind.

CRICKET - AND HAMILTON

Last month our Northern Club debated whether Hamilton "had only a very sketchy idea of the principles of cricket", and decided that Pentelow wrote well about the game. "Was this, perhaps, the reason why Hamilton did not?" our Northern reporter asked surprisingly.

Well, I daresay I know as much about cricket as the average hobbyist. I played it for years, and have always followed it closely. I love cricket. I think that Hamilton wrote a number of splendid cricket series, and I always found his portrayal of the game more than adequate.

True, yet again, he wrote plenty of pot-boilers on the theme. An early Rookwood tale in which Jimmy Silver showed his contempt for a

challenging Eleven by having only two players - himself and Tommy Dodd - in the side to represent Rookwood juniors and won the game, was an absurdity. In the "Let's Be Controversial" series we discussed one story in which Temple managed to secure the services of Vernon-Smith for his side, sent him in last to bat and did not put him on to bowl at all. No skipper could possibly have acted with such stupidity, and what could have been a great story was ruined.

But such flaws in a writing life did not lessen the impact of masterpieces like the Stacey series in the Magnet and the Victor Cleeve series in the Gem, to mention but two.

No doubt Pentelow knew the game better than Hamilton, but Hamilton had the gift of atmosphere which few writers on the theme equalled. And Hamilton never made the error of thinking that a detailed description of a fictional cricket match made a story.

MORE WILLIAM

Recently the television critic of the Daily Telegraph had this to say: "The arrival of the Botts enlivened the series, but confirm my impression that a world created by Richmal Crompton for the enjoyment of children has been turned into an adult comedy show."

Such a comment is amusing for those of us who know better. William's world was not created by Richmal Crompton for the enjoyment of children. William's world was created for adults, as I myself pointed out about 16 years ago, and Richmal Crompton herself, in a letter in Collectors' Digest at the time, agreed that her aim had originally been to entertain adults. Much of the subtlety of the earlier William tales would be lost on children.

The magazines in which William appeared regularly for a time were not children's papers. It was not, in fact, until after 1940 or even a good bit later than that, that Miss Crompton changed course and aimed William at the children's market. And the William stories were never so successful again.

A BLIND C.D. READER

Mr. J. Wark of 15 Harperland Drive, Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, was a keen C.D. reader right from the beginning. As a boy he had

almost all the old papers for boys like the comics, passing on, as he grew older, to the Gem, Magnet, Nelson Lee, Boys' Friend, Realm, and so on. In the C.D. he always turned first to Danny's Diary, to be carried back 50 years to the days of his youth.

Mr. Wark can turn to Danny's Dairy no longer. At the age of 69 he has lost his sight. For a while he could get about with the aid of a white stick, but back trouble has put an end to even that activity.

Recently Mr. Wark sent me an hour-long tape-recording in which he poured out to me all the thoughts of the old papers which he used to convey to me in his letters. I found listening to that tape a most moving experience.

Mr. Wark's joy in life now is to listen to anything about the hobby which he can no longer see. If any C.D. reader has a tape on the hobby which he would be prepared to send to Mr. Wark, I know that Mr. Wark would be able to find again a pleasure in the hobby of which the loss of his sight has deprived him. If you have a spare hobby tape, do a good turn to a less fortunate reader and send it along to him. Thank you.

THE EDITOR

Danny's Diary

APRIL 1927

Summer Time came in on the 10th April, the clocks were all put on an hour, and, as usual, the evenings seemed too long and too cold for a day or two. I get out of doors more, and there is not so much time for reading, but I shall still do plenty of it.

The Magnet has carried on with the marvellous series about Paul Dallas, the boy who was adopted by Mr. Vernon-Smith and sent to Greyfriars. All the worst in the Bounder seems to have been brought out by the arrival of Dallas, and in "The Bounder's Feud" Vernon-Smith made up his mind that, at all costs, Dallas must be driven away from Greyfriars.

In the next story "Condemned by the Form" it is clear that the Bounder is doing himself more harm than he is Dallas, and all his form-

fellows turn against Vernon-Smith. Even, at long last, the Bounder's real pal, Redwing, turns against him.

Then came the Magnet's 1,000th issue, with a reproduction of Magnet No. 1 on the cover. The story this week is "Paying the Price" in which the Bounder goes on with his bitter and unreasonable feud against Dallas. The Bounder throws in Redwing's face the fact that Mr. Vernon-Smith gave the scholarship which enabled Redwing to be at Greyfriars - and so, when the Easter holidays arrive - Redwing leaves Greyfriars for good. I expect he will come back one day. But Dallas goes home with Mr. Vernon-Smith, while the Bounder spends his holidays at the school.

The new term starts in "The Hand of an Enemy", and, at the end of that story, the Bounder's plot causes Dallas to be expelled.

Last tale of the month is "At The End of His Tether", and the expelled Dallas makes friends with Ferrers Locke, the detective, and Ferrer Locke finds out the truth. The Bounder gets a public flogging, Dallas stays on at Greyfriars - and this splendid tale goes on next month.

Frank Richards wrote an interesting article in the Magnet's 1,000th number.

Cambridge won the Boat Race by $2\frac{1}{2}$ lengths, and I was glad, because I am a Light Blue supporter.

Two good tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library. They are "Rolling in Money" in which the rich boy is Johnny Bull, whose cousin tries to disgrace him and rob him of his inheritance, and a St. Jim's tale "Tom Merry's Enemy". The enemy is Lumley-Lumley. I liked it because we never hear about Lumley-Lumley these days.

I haven't seen the Boys' Friend since the Rookwood tales ended, but I bought a copy this month. I don't like it. It has adventure tales, and a serial entitled "The B.A.T.S.: or The School for the Backward and Troublesomes." I shan't waste my money on it any more.

The Cup Final took place at Wembley, and Cardiff City beat Arsenal by 1 - 0.

In the Nelson Lee Library the series about flooded St. Frank's has continued. The boys, with some of the Moor View girls, are afloat on Handforth's Ark in the opening tale "The Floating School". And there is absolutely nothing dry about it all when the Ark drifts out to

sea. Next came "The Schoolboy Bargees". Fishing vessels take some of the boys, plus the girls, off the drifting Ark, but Nipper and Handy decide that they themselves will get the barges back to the river and claim salvage money from the owners. An interesting character is Captain Joshua Pepper, who decides that justice must be done for the boys.

Last tale of the series is "Spring-Cleaning at St. Frank's", in which Handy leads some of the boys back to help to clean up the school in readiness for the new term. Mr. Brooks, the author of these stories, doesn't do anything by halves. All good clean fun.

Then a new series started with "The Funk of St. Frank's". He is a new boy named Harry Gresham, the son of a famous cricketer. The new boy makes himself despised by nearly everybody for his cowardice, but there is a mystery about him. Handy and Nipper stand by him in his trouble. Last of the month brought "Shunned By St. Frank's" in which Alec Duncan, the New Zealand boy, makes a friend of the cowardly new boy. There are ghostly shapes in the darkness and weird figures in the Triangle, and it all adds up to make one of those series which the author does so well. It goes on next month.

The new Monster Library is "The Remove in the Wild West", and is yet another trip abroad for the juniors.

There is a new Musical Comedy on at Drury Lane Theatre in London. It is called "The Desert Song". Doug took his girl friend, Monica Pooter, to see it. You'd have thought he would have taken his only brother, wouldn't you? Fancy spending 12/6 for a stall for Monica Pooter.

We have seen some lovely pictures at the local cinemas. One I liked very much was Richard Barthelmess and Dorothy Mackaill in "Shore Leave". Then there was Matheson Lang in "The Chinese Bungalow" which was exciting; Buster Keaton in "Battling Butler"; Rin Tin Tin in "Hero of the Big Snows"; Leslie Fenton in "Sandy". A great war film was John Gilbert and Renee Adoree in "The Big Parade" and another war film was Estelle Brody in "Mademoiselle from Armentieres".

The first two stories in the Gem this month were "The Boy From Russia" and "The Siege of St. Jim's" about a new boy named Prince Michael Rakovsky. I thought it a stupid affair.

To mark the 1,000th issue of the Gem the real Martin Clifford

paid a flying visit with "Trimble's Tenner". It was a counterfeit one that his father let him have to swank with. Quite good fun. The author also contributed an article to say that it doesn't seem possible that he can have written a thousand Tom Merry stories. It doesn't seem possible to me, either.

Then two stories "Under Faddist Rule" and "St. Jim's in a Quandary" about a new Headmaster and his wife - Dr. and Mrs. Crankley - who replace the sick Dr. Holmes. I felt a bit sick, too, when I had read them.

In the Popular they have just started the long series about the Fistical Four out in the Wild West on the Windy River ranch which belongs to Jimmy Silver's uncle.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: S.O.L. No. 49, "Rolling in Money" comprised two red Magnets, a fortnight apart, which appeared in January 1911. No. 50, "Tom Merry's Enemy" comprised two consecutive blue Gems of February 1911 concerning the return to St. Jim's of the Outsider, Jerrold Lumley-Lumley and how he caused trouble between Tom Merry and Jack Blake. Both these S.O.L.'s provided good melodramatic reading for the boys of 1927.)

blakiana

conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

Just a short preamble this month as Blakiana is a little on the long side. A few more mysteries have been solved, but can anyone supply the answers to Cyril Rowe's queries please.

MORE BLAKE REPRINTING

by Cyril Rowe

In the C.D. for May 1972 I noted several short stories of Sexton Blake in the Boys' Friend Weekly.

I now discover that "The Man in Black", B.F.W. No. 589, was originally "A White Man" in Penny Pictorial No. 463. The "Clue of the Fingerprints" in B.F.W. No. 591, appeared under the same title in Penny Pictorial No. 465. I cannot find in my incomplete Penny Pictorial collection "The Agony Column Mystery" in B.F.W. No. 595, or "The Kidnapped Ambassador" in B.F.W. No. 599, but this tale introduces

Simmons, Sexton Blake's valet of the Penny Pictorial sequence, so suspect that both were Penny Pictorial reprints.

I have located two more Blake tales I had not earlier recorded, i.e. B. F. W. No. 392, dated 1908, "One Minute to Live" and B. F. W. No. 405, dated 13 March, 1909, "Mystery of Marburg Reef".

I have not located these in the Penny Pictorial either. Incidentally the short tales in the Boys' Realm of 1906 appeared before the Penny Pictorial series commenced in 1907. I wonder if they were reprinted years later in the Penny Pictorial?

DETECTIVE WEEKLY: SOME OBSCURE

ORIGINS

by S. Gordon Swan

I have been following with interest the Blakiana articles dealing with the origin of the Sexton Blake reprints in The Detective Weekly and appreciate that considerable and sometimes tedious effort must have attended the necessary research. Having made a few investigations of my own, here is some information which may fill in a few gaps.

D. W. 253 Mr. Smith -- Gang-Smasher by Paul Urquhart

This was derived from S. B. L. (2nd Series) 396,

Mr. Kilner Sees Red by the same author.

D. W. 284 The Bride of Doom by Anthony Skene

This was reprinted from S. B. L. (2nd Series) 261, The Death Trap.

D. W. 302 The Trail of the Black Knight by G. H. Teed

The original of this story was not by G. H. Teed at all.

It is to be found in S. B. L. (2nd Series) 235

The Masked Marauder by Robert Murray Graydon.

D. W. 273 The Great Milk Racket by Gwyn Evans

This is listed in the December 1976 C. D. as being derived from U. J's 1365/6, The Mistletoe Milk Mystery and The Masque of Time. I would like to correct this: the association with milk in the two titles is pure coincidence. The story on which D. W. 273 was based was also by Gwyn Evans but it was S. B. L. (2nd Series) 283, The Riddle of the Turkish Baths.

Certainly, as Mrs. Packman says, these reprints were chosen without rhyme or reason and with little sense of continuity. One week

a Union Jack, the next a Sexton Blake Library, which latter must have been considerably abridged to fit into the format of the ill-fated Detective Weekly.

D.W. No. 265 by G. H. Teed is a reprint of S.B.L. No. 319 called "The Chinatown Mystery".

THE MYSTERY OF THE CHRISTMAS UNION JACK or
WILLIAM J. ELLIOTT - MYSTERY WRITER by W. O. G. Lofts

Many mysteries pertaining to Sexton Blake, his chroniclers, and their papers have been solved over the years, yet there are still many tantalising intriguing matters remaining to be elucidated. At the time of writing, and with the approach of the festive season, my mind dwelt back to the excellent Christmas numbers of the Union Jack written by Gwyn Evans, who made a speciality of this subject. With the exception of Charles Hamilton, I don't think any other author could touch Gwyn Evans writing in his Dickensian vein, his stories being penned with the authentic ring of the really true old spirit of the Christmas we used to know. In my rare collection of Blakiana, I have a photograph of Gwyn sitting at his desk writing one of these special numbers.

Readers of the Union Jack in December 1931, must have felt that they had been badly let down by Father Christmas, as the special number that year, was not written by the usual brilliant Gwyn, but by one new to the Blake field - William J. Elliott. Since 1925, and starting off with 'The Mystery of Mrs. Bardell's Xmas Pudding', the Welsh author had penned the seasonal tales, nearly all featuring Splash Page, Ruff Hanson, or The Robin Hood League. Either an editorial blurb, or later in answer to a readers letter explaining the fact that Gwyn was indisposed at the time - so No. 1470 entitled 'The Phantom of the Pantomime' - a run of the mill yarn was written by Elliott.

If this was the case, one would have thought that the editor would have entrusted such a special number to one of the more established and regular authors such as G. H. Teed, E. S. Brooks, Anthony Skene, or Gilbert Chester, but when I put this question to the late H. W. Twyman editor of the U.J. he could not elucidate the problem. In this period he was off the paper, preparing the dummy for a new project, and all Union Jack's policies were handled by his chief sub-editor. He did

though venture the opinion that maybe William J. Elliott was a friend of his deputy, as several other unknown and new writers such as Arthur Palk, Stawford Webber, and David MacLuire, had had stories published during his absence from office.

Curiously, William J. Elliott seems something of a mystery man himself in the writing field, and biographical details about him are scanty. He always seemed on the fringe of writing for the main publishers, but never really getting established. As a consequence, most of his work was for the minor types of juvenile firms such as Gerald Swan, Grammoll, and the Bath publications. Certainly he was prolific and extremely versatile, writing thrillers, historical romances, children's tales about Fooey the Frog, and girls stories under the pen-name of 'Phyllis Elliott'. In his early days he was a film star, and in 1917 he wrote a book on the subject entitled 'How to Become a Film Star', and if his height as given in this manual is correct at six feet three, he would have tied with Anthony Parsons as being the tallest Blake author.

W. J. Elliott was also a journalist, writing a romance of Fleet Street, and dedicating it to E. C. Buley, who probably had a hand in the famous 'Bat Masters' racing tales. There is no doubt that Elliott knew Fleet St., and his accurate accounts of his peringrinations of the various Inns and Taverns make interesting reading. He also related the adventures of two former members of the Foreign Legion in semi-biographies, curiously like his namesake, and other one-shot Blake writer, R. C. Elliott, whom I once met.

According to the publisher Gerald Swan, William J. Elliott died in the late fifties or sixties, leaving behind the mystery of how he wrote that solitary Union Jack story, and of his own authentic career in writing.

Readers of the paper in 1932 were however delighted to read another Gwyn Evans special in No. 1521 entitled 'The Masked Carollers', but unfortunately for the famous old paper, it shortly changed to the new buff large Detective Weekly and no Christmas number was ever the same again.

Postscript. When I wrote this article, I had no idea that Raymond Cure had written about the same Union Jack in the C.D. Annual. However, his theme was about the actual story, mine being the author. Perhaps in a way, this article could be a postscript to Mr. Cure's excellent

effort. I have no doubt that Gwyn Evans knew W. J. Elliott but I don't agree that Gwyn helped him with the story. Elliott was not only an actor, but script writer as well, and quite competent to write a tale of the classic Phantom of the Opera theme, a film shown on T.V. last year, and reviewed by the Editor of the C.D.

Nelson Lee Column

AN EIGHT YEAR GAP?

by R. J. Godsave

It would have been a great surprise to the authors of the old papers had they known that some sixty to seventy years after publication their stories were still being read with just as much interest as that given by the original readers, and that some of the papers remained in excellent condition.

Since it can be assumed that the original readership of a long-running weekly paper changes every six to seven years, an author could be forgiven if he repeated earlier episodes with just the necessary alterations to bring the stories up-to-date for a new set of readers. It is to the credit of the authors that these duplications did not take place. Plots, of course, were naturally repeated with different backgrounds.

It is fairly evident that E. S. Brooks was not of the opinion that many issues of the Nelson Lee Library would be in existence after they were declared out of print. His advice to readers who wished to obtain such copies was to advertise their wants to other readers in the Nelson Lee. He actually advertised in his own 'Between Ourselves' for copies of the earlier Lees.

One wonders if Brooks did take advantage of an eight year gap, or did he use Len Clapson in the School Ship series which visited Australia without giving thought to a previous statement made some eight years before.

In o.s. 304, 'Fooled at the Finish', 2/4/21, a party of St. Frank's juniors were guests of Lord Dorriemore at Dorriemore Hall near Stowmarket, Suffolk. In an April Fool jape Len Clapson was given the task by the College House juniors to send telegrams to the Ancient House Juniors purporting to come from Lord Dorriemore

requesting the Ancient House section of his St. Frank's guests to meet him at Brighton owing to a change of plan. Len Clapson was given this job because his home was near to Dorriemore Hall. In this issue Nipper states that "Clapson lives just outside Stowmarket. His people have got a whacking great country seat there. Clapson's pater is Lord of the manor, or something." Again in o.s. 305 'Adrift in Mid-Air', 9/4/21, the statement is made that Clapson being invited with other St. Frank's juniors to make a trial trip in an airship "Suffolk Queen" housed at a nearby aerodrome, rushed home to get his parent's permission to make the trip. Greatly to Clapson's chagrin, they put the veto on the idea.

Eight years later Brooks wrote the School Ship series in which a visit to Australia and New Zealand was made. In No. 147, New Series, 'The Valley of Surprises', 28/2/29, the St. Frank's party lost in the Australian Bush were rescued by a 'White Master' who controlled a secret colony of aborigines,

It was a statement made by the 'White Master' to the effect that his name was Stanley Winton which had such a result on Clapson as to make him ask whether his name was really that of Stanley Clapson. It appeared that Winton was Clapson's grandmother's maiden name on his father's side, and the fact that Clapson had been told by his aunt who had brought him up that his mother had died when he was one year old, and that his father had died abroad soon after.

Actually, Stanley Winton had been in prison for five years for a crime committed by another, who had later confessed to the crime. After his release he had made his way to Australia to start life afresh, and had been now in Australia for nine years. Having admitted that his name was Stanley Clapson, he asked for details of Len Clapson's early life. Being satisfied with the answers father and son were united.

Had Brooks chosen either of Clapson's study mates, Oldfield or Nation, to find a father then the whole point of differences in statements made would have not arisen.

COINCIDENCE

by C. H. Churchill

I recently read a hard covered volume of the adventures of Lord Peter Wimsey by Dorothy Sayers. I came across it amongst some books

of mine which had been stored away for years. Actually I cannot remember ever reading it before and neither can I recollect how I came by it. It was apparently published in 1934 and was entitled "Lord Peter Views the Body". It consists of twelve short stories each of which stars Lord Peter Wimsey.

On reading the ninth story "The Learned adventure of the Dragon's Head" I sat up and took notice, as they say. To my surprise, on page 205, Lord Peter's young nephew passes the remark - "How exciting! It's just like a story in the Boys' Friend Library." (The last three words are in *Italics*.) Then on page 208 I read -

The arms of the intruders being secured behind their backs with a neatness of which Gherkins felt to be worthy of the best traditions of Sexton Blake, Lord Peter motioned his captives to sit down and dispatched Bunter for whisky and soda.

Bunter, of course, is the name of Wimsey's valet/butler/assistant, etc. etc. All this makes one wonder whether Miss Sayers had been a reader of the BFL, SBL and the Magnet at one time.

The coincidence, however, came to my notice after I finished reading this short story for the workings of the plot seemed very familiar to me. In brief it is this - Wimsey and his young nephew purchase an ancient volume in a second-hand bookshop. Someone tries to buy it from them and on being refused try burglary. Naturally they fail and the old volume eventually gives Wimsey the clue to some buried treasure.

After reading this I turned to my Nelson Lees and read old series No. 125, "The Mystery of the Blue Volume", dated 27/10/17. Result - almost an identical plot with, of course, differences in detail. The basic plot of the N. L. was the "Blue Volume" on sale in a second-hand bookshop. This was bought by Nipper and a man tried to buy it off him. Being repulsed he, too, resorted to burglary but failed to get hold of the book. This old volume in the end gave Nelson Lee the clue to where the proceeds of a burglary were concealed.

What a coincidence that these two stories written by two different authors some seventeen years apart for two entirely different types of reader should have basic plots so alike.

JIM COOK REPLIES

The March C.D. has just arrived and after a short perusal I feel I must reply to at least three statements therein in which my name is mentioned.

To Alan Stewart: The Exercise book I have is headed BOOK 1 and "Instalment The First". Its opening chapter is ...

"De dinner am served, Massa Frank."

To Bob Blythe: Edwy S. Brooks once told me he sent his original hand-written summaries of his stories to editors and would later have them typewritten if accepted. Thus if the editor(s) found the summaries a good guide to a suitable tale then the typewritten Ms would follow. Later, I understand, synopsis were not necessary once Brooks was established at Fleetway House.

To Mr. E. Kadish: I am indeed very sorry to have caused ill feeling, but the item about Solomon Levi was actually taken from a St. Frank's magazine. I have a Jewish relation myself and I have never seen or heard of a more free-hearted fellow. He would be the first to smile at a Jewish joke. These myths, I am afraid, will never die out. The character of Levi at St. Frank's was never unfavourably drawn by Mr. Brooks although he did presume on a characterisation that is entirely fictional.

Shalom Mr. Kadish

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 142 - Schoolboys' Own Library No. 368 - "Rookwood Calling"

Many of the later Rookwood Schoolboys' Owns were little more than miscellaneous collections of single stories and series of two numbers from the Boys' Friend. If it is borne in mind that each Rookwood episode in that paper originally ran to about five or six chapters, it is easy enough to guess at the manner in which the editor of the Schoolboys' Own Library culled his material. "Rookwood Calling" is typical in this respect, since it contains one single story and three pairs. What is unusual about it is that the seven stories are taken from a consecutive sequence in the Boys' Friend (Nos. 1219-1225). Usually

the reprinting was done in a much more haphazard order.

The first pair of stories was about Gower and the debt he owed to Joey Hook. Lovell good-naturedly agreed to intervene on his behalf and ended up hitting and booting the bookmaker, a piece of diplomacy that Newcome found amusing. The second pair of stories was based on a classic theme: the alteration of an advertisement in a newspaper. Carthew's bicycle was advertised at ten shillings instead of £5, thanks to Putty Grace, and purchasers were requested to call at Rookwood, which of course they did.

The single story provided the cover picture: Cuffy in goal as a result of an injudicious boast from Tommy Dodd that he could beat the Classics even with this handicap. The final pair of stories was another well-used theme: the visit to the auction rooms. Lovell kept bidding for lots he didn't want, just for fun, and refused to take warnings from his friends. Of course, in the end something was knocked down to him, an enormous trunk for £2 when he had only two and three-pence in his pockets. "I did not know you were so stupid a boy," was Dr. Chisholm's verdict on the affair, but naturally enough there was more in that trunk than met the eye.

The Schoolboys' Own in question gives a fair impression of Rookwood in its heyday and especially noticeable is the prominent part played by Lovell in many of the stories. There is an undeniable attraction in a limited cast of characters, but it is difficult not to wonder occasionally whether Lovell, like Bunter, was not a little too much to the fore at times.

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 214. A THOUSAND WEEKS ON AND FIFTY YEARS BACK

Exactly 50 years ago both the Gem and the Magnet celebrated the publication of their 1,000th issue. In the case of the Gem, as the editor truly pointed out, it was really No. 1049, because the Gem, after 48 issues, had started again at No. 1 at the time that the Magnet came on the market.

Martin Clifford and Frank Richards each wrote an article to

mark that occasion in April 1927, in the Gem and the Magnet respectively. The source of comments from either of those authors was always suspect, but, this time, both articles had the ring of authenticity, and there is no doubt that Charles Hamilton wrote them both.

There was some irony in his writing that little article for the Gem, for he had been playing truant regularly from that paper for quite a long time, and his St. Jim's contributions were getting few and far between. However, he did come back with a little yarn about Trimble and a counterfeit £10 note for the 1,000th issue. It was a pleasant interlude for those who knew the real thing when they saw it.

It is interesting to see that Hamilton claims that Monty Lowther was founded largely on himself. It had never occurred to me before, but I think it is true. In the blue Gem in particular one can find a great deal of punning and light, inconsequential humour. A great many years later, that same type of humour was evident in the author's own letters to his readers.

His article of 50 years ago had plenty of that light facetiousness which was to be evident many years later in his own autobiography.

The piece of humour which caused friction with his friend, Mr. Isaacs, was akin to similar humour which caused friction between Monty Lowther and the new Jewish boy at St. Jim's, Dick Julian. Hamilton's Jewish lads were all good fellows, so far as I recall, and I am sure that the author meant well. In a review on the re-issue in 1974 of the St. Jim's story "The Jew of St. Jim's" I wrote: "The author was faintly patronising in tales of this type, to the mild embarrassment of the reader." Later on we had the same phenomenon in connection with Monty Newland of Greyfriars, not to mention an odd tale called "Harry Wharton's Amazing Relation". But that sort of thing was a very minor flaw in a great career.

Here, then, is the article which Martin Clifford wrote for Gem readers exactly 50 years ago:

A THOUSAND WEEKS OF THE GEM

by Martin Clifford

A THOUSAND weeks!

I rubbed my eyes when the Editor
of the Gem told me that he was about to

celebrate the 1,000th number of the good
old paper.

Really, it seems to me only the

other day that Tom Merry & Co. made their bow to the public. Certainly they seem to me, at least, as fresh as ever. Like Cleopatra, age cannot wither them nor custom stale their infinite variety!

Many great things - besides the Gem - have happened in that time. Wireless, and the War, and Oxford trousers, to mention only a few.

The War, happily, is over. Oxford trousers, of course, are under. The wireless, no doubt, will last as long as the Gem. I do not see why a less period should be assigned to it. Carefully disentangle the foregoing sentence, and you will find a pun in it, worthy of Monty Lowther at his best.

Shall I confess that the character of the humorous Monty is founded largely on my own? Punning is my one weakness. If I were going to be hanged, I feel sure I should instruct my lawyer to apply for a stay of execution! There was quite a coolness once between me and a friend of mine named Isaacs, because when he went into the cavalry, I advised him not to charge too much.

At school sometimes our French master had the pleasure - or otherwise - of taking us out for walks. Once I quite perplexed the dapper little gentleman, as he strutted ahead, by remarking "Je suis heureux parce que je ne suis pas ce que je suis." It was quite a good pun in his own beautiful language, but he did not seem to catch on, which was no doubt fortunate for me. While scouting one day, my patrol leader told me to go on ahead. I asked "Whose head?" It is painful to relate that instead of laughing heartily, as I naturally expected, he kicked me. It

was still more painful at the time.

But my favourite character in the Gem is the one and only Gussy.

I have often been asked whether Gussy was drawn from life. Certainly he was. He came into existence as the result of a discussion with an editorial gentleman more than a thousand weeks ago. But it was later that I found the real model for him. At that time there was an extremely elegant young gentleman, then a sub-editor on the Gem, whose manners were moulded on those of Lord Chesterfield, and who wore such beautiful clothes that I - who am rather careless in such matters - regarded them with awed admiration. Quite unconsciously he served as a model, and every time I had the pleasure of seeing him I went away with fresh characteristics stored up in my mind for Arthur Augustus. But there was good stuff inside the beautiful clothes, for, when the War came, the elegant youth was in it from the first month to the last day. And he never knew how useful a purpose he had served, and never will know, unless he should chance to read this article - and guess.

Tom Merry, too, is taken from life, though from no special individual. Just a hearty, decent British lad who plays the game, such as I count by tens of thousands among the readers of the Gem.

Another character I rather like is Ernest Levison. Properly speaking, he doesn't belong to me. Old readers of the Magnet will remember him at Greyfriars. His experiences there were not altogether happy. He fell into bad company and began to tread the slippery downward path. In spite of Harry Wharton's efforts to save him, Nemesis overtook him at last. But

there was always a good deal of what was good in Ernest Levison, and I felt that perhaps I could do better with him than my friend Frank Richards had done. At any rate, I felt inclined to try, if I could get the required permission, for I was as familiar as his original creator could be with every trait in Ernest's complex make-up. I read the Magnet as regularly as Frank Richards, I believe, reads the Gem, and I was greatly taken with this character - and borrowed him. I became so attached to him that I am still borrowing him. Richards sometimes asks me rather

sarcastically to let him have Levison back when I am finished with him. Certainly I shall, but I am not finished yet. After another thousand weeks, perhaps!

Well, here we are at No. 1,000 and it is a real pleasure to me to speak these few words to the many friends whom I shall never see, but who are nonetheless, I hope, my friends. I have lots more to say, but space forbids, so I shall ask the Editor's permission to say it in No. 2,000. You fellows make a note of the date.

A CONTROVERSIAL ECHO

by W. T. Thurbon

"Let's be Controversial" (C.D. Feb. 1977, p. 19)

"Bunter had pretended to Mr. Quelch that he was interested in Greek, a subject which was not in the curriculum at Greyfriars"

This is certainly a controversial statement, for the curriculum certainly should have included Greek. There are numerous references to Latin in the Hamilton stories; there are references to German and French masters, usually to provide comic relief, and there was a modern Side at Rookwood. But just what did the Greyfriars curriculum include?

Greyfriars, like the other Hamilton schools, was a leading Public School. It would certainly have prepared many boys for the Universities, others for the Army, the Church, Law and Medicine.

Let us consider what this involved. First the Universities. In 1920 the Cambridge Entrance Examination, the "Little Go", required (1) Latin, (2) Greek or a Modern Language, (3) Mathematics or Maths. with Physics or Chemistry, (4) English, and either the Gospels or History.

The Cambridge Tripos Examinations in 1910, the period of the early Hamilton stories, required Honours in one or two of the following subjects: Mathematics (dating from 1748); Classics (dating from 1824):

Moral Sciences; Natural Sciences; Theology; Law; Oriental Languages; Modern and Medieval Languages; Mechanical Sciences; History (all dating from the latter half of the 19th century). I have omitted Economics, and the many post 1930 and 1945 new subjects. Before the establishment of Triposes in these forms there had been a regular requirement for Classics and Mathematics.

So the Greyfriars curriculum should have included Latin and Greek and Ancient History and Philosophy for the Classical Tripos; Mathematics; English; the Natural Sciences (Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Zoology, and Botany), Medieval and Modern History; Latin, Greek and certain foreign languages for the Historian; without Greek no one could have taken the Classical or Theological Tripos; without Mathematics no one could have taken Mechanical Sciences; a pupil intending to sit for Sandhurst would have required Mathematics, foreign Languages, History and drawing; for either the Royal Engineers or for the University Engineering courses Mechanical Drawing; if reading for the Bar he would have required some Latin and French, and History. The prospective doctor would have needed Chemistry, Physics, and either Zoology or Biology. Usually the medical student, whether entering a University, or a Hospital Medical School direct, would have passed his first M. B. Examinations in these subjects before he commenced residence.

A second point arising from Greyfriars is that the Form Masters seem to have taught their forms in all subjects. But the public schools, and most modern senior schools, have specialist Masters each teaching their own subjects in special periods.

So what was the Greyfriars curriculum? And what were the special subjects of each Master. Did Hamilton really understand the public schools?

If we turn to Kipling, who was a public schoolboy, and based "Stalky and Co." on his old school, we find "King" teaching Latin and English; "Hartopp" teaching Chemistry; the "Chaplain" teaching French as well as carrying out his Chaplain's duties; presumably also teaching the Bible. For Kipling had brought from school a very full knowledge of the Bible. He used this to great effect in a number of his short stories; especially in "Proofs of Holy Writ" and the superb last line of "The

Gardener".

Kipling's School had a Laboratory (see "Regullus") and a Chapel.

Hamiltonian experts can perhaps refer me to the Greyfriars Masters who taught Mathematics, and the Sciences. Is there a reference to a Laboratory at Greyfriars? And can anyone point out references to a Chapel at Greyfriars; or to a School Chaplain, or a Master, as many Public School Masters were, especially pre-1914, in Holy Orders?

I saw for many years the entrance examination papers set for entrance scholarships and exhibitions at the various Cambridge Colleges. I remember particularly that entrance candidates for scholarships in classics needed Latin and Greek translation and Composition; Roman and Greek philosophy, history and art; as well as an English Essay. The History Scholarship Papers included as well as Ancient, Medieval, Modern and English History, papers for translation in a choice of modern languages, French, German, Spanish, and sometimes Italian. So schools sending in candidates for Exhibitions had to have a wide syllabus.

Can some Greyfriars expert work out exactly what was the curriculum at Greyfriars?

If Kipling could write a school story like "Regullus" based on a Latin lesson did Hamilton ever do anything of the same kind in a Greyfriars story.

Incidentally although many of the Hamilton Schools had Sports Masters how often did we see them actually coaching in games?

ERIC FAYNE replies: The offending passage in Let's Be Controversial did not originate in that article. It was a quotation from the Magnet story "The Duffer's Downfall".

Denigrators of Hamilton, ever since Orwell lamented that the Magnet did not contain sequences with Wingate in bed with the housemaid, have fallen over themselves to point out that Greyfriars was far removed from a public school and that the curriculum was strange. Those of us who love the stories take all that sniping in our strides. We also accept that the Remove, with about 50 pupils, was absurdly top-heavy and out of proportion, though that was partly due to compilers of Who's Whos and weird Prospectuses who collected all the dead-wood characters from down the years and lumped them with the rest of the cast in a mighty heap.

Mr. Thurbon's invitation to somebody to work out the Greyfriars curriculum seems profitless, like those lists of ideal cricket and football teams, selected from characters whose gifts often changed down the years, with which CD was bombarded years ago. Though Greyfriars was always Greyfriars, it was, in fact, changing all the time, for Hamilton made his background suit the needs of the current series, and did not keep it static or consistent. Lists, generally speaking, mean little to anybody but the person who enjoys making them.

Some live in a world of make-believe, and make notes of characters' exact ages, heights, weights, colour of eyes, study numbers, and such trivialities.

For most of us, the story and the way it was written was the all important factor. If we accepted, as we did, that the Harry Wharton of 1940 was the same Wharton who was sent to Colonel Wharton in 1908, then we agree that Greyfriars was rather larger than life - and, I suppose, we like it that way, in spite of the likelihood that Harry Wharton & Co. would never be suitable for the Cambridge Entrance Examination.)

HAMILTON BOWLED OUT?

Like Geoffrey Wilde (March CD) I've often been surprised that Charles Hamilton numbered ignorance of cricket among his few shortcomings.

After all, cricket might have been designed to help him display his greatest skills: characterization and evocation of background.

First: the leisurely processes of the game are ideally suited to demonstrate the characters of such as Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, Hazeldene, da Costa, Vernon-Smith - even Coker and Bunter.

Secondly, cricket is intensely evocative of the golden pre-war summers Hamilton portrayed so affectionately; even to those like me who don't remember them! It is even a symbol of period ethical standards, such as "keeping a straight bat", although latterday on-field manners often reflect less happy standards.

We know that in other areas, Hamilton was a most conscientious researcher. For instance he gives us vivid images and accurate details of places he'd never seen - like Brazilian plantations and South Sea atolls.

Yet the authenticity of his cricket is limited to a knowledge of two eleven-strong teams; of scoring runs by impact of bat on ball; and of being either bowled, caught or run out. This is less than the average general knowledge of the national summer game.

In the Stacey series, and elsewhere, the batsman merely "knocks the ball away". Worse still, we even hear of the ball being "snicked away", as if intentionally. It is an odd premonition of modern limited-over cricket, where fortuitous snicking through the untenanted slips is widely applauded.

As Mr. Wilde says, occasional failure is treated surprisingly

harshly in a game whose charm includes the "levelling effect" of frequent failures by the greatest exponents. Established batsmen are supposed to be certain of scoring a certain quota of runs every time. If they don't it is presumed they have been smoking too much, or have had bad news from Joey Banks.

When the vagaries of Remove politics bring such fringe players as Hazeldene or Nugent into the team, (nearly always to be bowled first ball, which is quite rare in real life) their failures are held directly responsible for the team's defeats. Old Smithy, Stacey, Cherry - or whoever was omitted - would certainly have scored the necessary ten, fifteen or twenty needed to snatch a famous victory. Cricket simply isn't like that.

Again, in the Cliff House Feud Series, Vernon-Smith admits he was off form in one match partly on the grounds of having taken fewer catches than Hazeldene. It is implied that the opportunity to take catches is as equally distributed as the opportunity to score runs!

Now, how to explain all this?

Certainly not indifference or laziness, and probably not editorial direction either - after all the Magnet, at least, ran frequent cricket coaching and commentary pages with plenty of technical detail.

Was it, as suggested in the March CD, a rather irritable reaction against Pentelow's greater knowledge of the game? It's an interesting idea and certainly I can think of nothing more likely. It doesn't seem inconsistent with some of Hamilton's less happy contacts with editors.

It is a tribute to Hamilton that one quibbles at such details as cricket background. As things are, the cricket element does enhance the Stacey, Lancaster and other series. But one still imagines the added dimension of Bolsover channelling his aggression into dangerous bumpers, or da Costa's guile exemplified as a devious leg-spinner.

And it still seems sad that Hamilton, who always played the game so well, never played the game.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Is there any evidence at all that Hamilton never played cricket? This article did not bear the author's name, and somehow it got detached from any accompanying letter. If the writer will let me know, I will disclose his name in our next issue.)

BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 37. THE CRAZY GANG FILMS

And now the war was on. Renters had to re-arrange their lists of releases. So far as American films were concerned, releases were substantially delayed. There was no longer cargo space in ships for bringing over films. That space had to go to the supply of materials for war - and for food. A large section of what was to remain of the British film industry was turned over to the making of instructional films or propaganda items for the war effort. Very little film stock was available for the making of entertainment.

Renters, with new releases coming in far more slowly or not at all, had to turn out their vaults and give a new lease of life to good prints which remained in those vaults. Exhibitors, too, often had to look back over old release lists to find good subjects which they had not previously screened, or to give some a return visit.

For a time, the war made very little difference to the Small Cinema. We opened the new term with a double-feature programme from G.F.D. This comprised Will Hay in "Convict 99", which was amusing if not so memorable as other Hay films, plus John Boles and Madge Evans in "Sinners in Paradise".

Next, from Warner Bros., Bette Davis and Errol Flynn in "The Sisters", plus Claude Hulbert in "Many Tanks, Mr. Atkins". Followed by another double from the same firm: Wayne Morris and Priscilla Lane in "Brother Rat" plus Johnnie Davis in "Mr. Chump".

Then a double programme from

G.F.D.: The Crazy Gang in "Aif's Button Afloat" with, as second feature, John Wayne in "Adventure's End". We played several Crazy Gang features, but I can't recall much about them. I know they always went down pretty well with our youthful audiences, but I always thought them rather crude. At that time we were showing a good many John Wayne films, but we seem always to have played them as "second features", which is a bit surprising in view of his popularity today.

Next, from G.F.D.: The Dead End Kids in "Little Tough Guy", plus Louis Hayward in "Midnight Intruder". Followed by a double show from Warner's: George Brent in "Wings of the Navy" plus Joan Blondell in "Off the Record".

Then a double feature show from Warner's: Humphrey Bogart in "You Can't Get Away With Murder" supported by Priscilla Lane in "Yes, My Darling Daughter".

Now, another double from Warner's: John Garfield and the Lane Sisters in "Daughters Courageous" plus Eric Blore in "A Gentleman's Gentleman". (Blore was the typical English butler of films. I wonder how he would have got on with the part of Colonel Wharton's "Wells".)

Now another double from G.F.D.: The Crazy Gang in "Okay For Sound" plus Bob Baker in "The Last Stand". Then an outstanding double show from Warner Bros.: James Cagney in "The Oklahoma Kid" plus Margaret Lindsay in "On Trial".

This was one of Cagney's few "westerns", but one could never call him miscast; he was always completely versatile.

Finally a programme with one big feature plus a big programme of "shorts", the type of show which we had run in

earlier times and a type we were to return to a long time later. The big picture was in technicolor: Wayne Morris in "The Valley of the Giants", a re-make of a subject which had previously been done as a silent film, many years before.

FOR SALE: ANNUALS - Eagle 1,2,3,5,8; Rainbow 1949-51-55; Tiger Tim 1950-53; Teddy Tails 1935; £1 each. Radio Fun 1947-48; Playbox 1948; Herbert Strang 1922; £1.50 each. H.B. REPRINTS: Magnet 1,2,3,4,6,8,10,12; Gem 1,2,6; Sexton Blake 1. Holiday Annuals 1920-25-28-73-74-75; £1.50 each. Magnet 20,21,30; Holiday Annual 1977; £2 each. Union Jacks, Buffalo Bill, Magnet, Gem, N.L.'s, etc., 1903-1939; 40p each. Triumph 6 copies (1925-1934), good, 60p each. Dandy 1949 (fair) 40p. Adventure, Hotspurs, etc., 1940-50, 20p each. Large selection Bunter and William Books, hardbacks, 60p each, paperbacks 30p each. Please add postage.

G. HARDIMAN, 16 FAIR VIEW, WITTON GILBERT
CO. DURHAM, DH7 6RA.

WANTED: C.D. from Jan. 1975 to Dec. 1976 inclusive.

LEESE, BUNNY HILL, COSTOCK, LOUGHBOROUGH, LEICS.

DURING Wife's illness I decided to sell all books. My children advised against it, saying it would keep me from brooding on my loss to keep hobby going. I am taking their advice.

SALE: Union Jacks from 868 to 1531 or will exchange for early Magnets or Gems or w.b.y. Write first, s.a.e.

LITVAK, 58 STANWELL RD., ASHFORD, MIDSX.

MAGNETS WANTED: 950 to 1165, 1564, 1568. Your prices or exchange for Magnets, Holiday Annuals, etc. Some items for sale. S.a.e. for list.

JOHN BECK, 29 MILL RD., LEWES, SUSSEX.

WANTED: Tom Merry's Own Annuals - good condition complete with dust jackets. Billy Bunter books (published by Charles Skilton) including "Bessie Bunter of Cliff House School" - must be good condition complete with dust jackets. Will buy or have for exchange Howard Baker out of print volumes No. 21, 23 and 24.

D. SWIFT, 22 WOODNOOK CLOSE, LEEDS, LS16 6PQ.

Telephone: Leeds (0532) 671394

The Postman Called

(Interesting items from the Editor's letter-bag)

S. HAILSTONE (Lewisham): I was interested in your remarks re Broadcast Records in the CD editorial. I had forgotten the name until you jogged my memory. My Father had a number I remember, unfortunately no more. My thoughts turned to Woolworths. They had their own label, but I cannot remember the name. We had a number of those also. Two titles I remember were "Red Sails in the Sunset" and "Sandy Powell and the Taxi Driver". I often wonder how those records stood up to those heavy arms with the huge sound box on the end bearing those lethal looking steel needles with very sharp points.

BILL LOFTS (London): Of course our Editor is correct. C. H. Chapman drew in many other companion papers as well as Magnet. This was not ignorance on my part, but my bad phrasing, in a letter. Indeed, Chapman did once try to break into the comic strip papers with a series about hikers, but this unfortunately did not last for long.

H. HEATH (Windsor): Could you tell me how many stories Charles Hamilton wrote in "Pie" Magazine featuring Carcroft School? I understand that these stories started in 1944. I would also be interested to know how many booklets were issued covering Sparshott School. My information is that at least four were published around 1947.

(Anybody know the exact number? - ED.)

M. LUB (Transvaal): Re Biography of a Small Cinema: "Kate Plus Ten" is an Edgar Wallace story published by Hutchison's in 1927. Although I have over 50 Wallace books in my private library, I could not find this one, so cannot summarise the story for you. Probably another lady criminal like "Four Star Jane". "Kate Plus Ten" came out in paperback (Arrow) in 1962,

M. S. FELLOWS (London): I have vivid memories of the Cagney film "Something to Sing About" and I can still sing the title song. I thought it was a lovely picture. So, at least one of your readers remembers it and wishes he could see it again. Ernest Truex was an American, born in Kansas City in 1890. He was certainly still acting and was on TV in

the 1960's. The last film of which I have any record of him was "Fluffy" in 1965.

H. MEARNS (Bridge-of-Allan): The Old Master, whatever his deficiencies, had more than a working knowledge of, as well as an affection for, the Grand Old Game with the lovely name. One or two writers have written disparagingly about the needle-keen finishes so characteristic of encounters between Greyfriars and St. Jim's or Rookwood. But last minute one-run victories are far from unknown when teams are closely matched.

J. P. FITZGERALD (Manchester): I am grinning and bearing it, and I hope to do so for many years to come in spite of all increases. With the C.D., at least, we get value for our money. I've just paid 7/- (35p) for a scrap of so-called cheese I wouldn't have put on a mouse-trap 20 years ago. So, dear Editor, regret, yes, but don't worry - and do keep up the good work. All best wishes for a rosy future.

G. W. MASON (Torquay): I was pleasantly surprised to find a nostalgic item in the 1919 blue and white Magnet "The Terrible Uncle", reproduced in the Howard Baker 1977 Holiday Annual. This was a "free-of-charge" advert for football players, inserted on my behalf. They got my initials wrong, but in other respects the notice had the desired effect. We played our matches on Wormwood Scrubs, which, in those days, opened to a green countryside, now long built over.

I discovered my first Gems and Magnets in a second-hand book-shop, curiously enough called Foyle's, near Shepherd's Bush Met. station. This was before the first World War, when it was easy to find copies, in that shop, of most A.P. publications at two-a-penny.

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WANTED to complete set: Collectors' Digest Nos. 1 to 22 inc.

N. THROCKMORTON, THE FORSTAL, BIDDENDEN, KENT.

* * * * *

COMING SOON: "CENTENARY SALUTE FOR PERCY F.
WESTERMAN, by Brian Doyle.

News of the Clubs

MIDLAND

Nine enthusiasts attended the February meeting, including new member Christine Brettell, who bears a striking resemblance to some of the illustrations of Marjorie Hazeldene. Christine is a branch librarian and hopes to put on an exhibition on the lines of the one run by Winifred Morss at Walthamstow Public Library last year.

There was a fine display of books and papers to do with the hobby. Tom Porter's contributions this month were an anniversary number, Gem 576, 'The Two Bunters' of 22.2.1919, and Greyfriars Book Club Volume 12, 'Harry Wharton & Co. in Africa'. Geoff Lardner handed around a beautiful copy of Schoolgirls' Own Annual for 1923 he had purchased for 20p from a local Oxfam shop.

A period of general browsing ensued and another agreeable evening concluded with Jack Bellfield reading excerpts from a Rookwood story of The Popular, No. 532 of 1929, and two games appertaining to the hobby.

Meetings, usually the last Tuesday of the month, are held at Dr. Johnson House, Birmingham.

CAMBRIDGE

The Club met at 99 Shelford Road, on Sunday, 6th March. Some interesting discussion followed the Secretary's production of a copy of Edgar Wallace's racing novel, "The Flying Fifty Five". Jack Overhill and Bill Lofts both commenting on Wallace's knowledge of racing and betting. The Secretary read a letter from Jack Doupe sending greetings from Teneriffe.

Jack Overhill played a recording of his fiftieth Broadcast, made on 28th January, 1967, called "A regular snob", describing the first twenty years of his life.

The tape, an hour long interview, made a striking impression on all the members. To Jack's contemporary, Bill Thurbon, it aroused nostalgic memories of a long distant past; to the members of later

generations there the view of life in the period from 1907-27 was an intensely impressive and emotional experience. When, to a sigh of regret from the listeners, the tape ceased, members returned to the present to ply Jack with numerous questions and comments. Cambridge Club has had some memorable moments in its comparatively short life, and this ranked with the best of these.

The members then sat down to one of Mrs. Overhill's marvellous teas. Even the weight conscious Secretary forgot his waistline, and proved unable to resist such a wonderful tea.

After tea the Secretary read a draft note on the February "Let's Be Controversial" column in the "Digest". He challenged the statement that Greek was not in the Greyfriars curriculum. There was a discussion and a general agreement that the Secretary should send his note to the "Digest" in the hope that the Hamilton experts would construct the Greyfriars curriculum, and which members of the staff taught which subjects.

The meeting closed with very warm thanks to Jack and Mrs. Overhill, for their most generous hospitality.

Next meeting 3rd April at the home of Edward Witton.

LONDON

A new rendezvous for the March meeting at the home of Bill and Thelma Bradford attracted thirty members and friends.

Cyril Rowe from Horsford, Norfolk, brought along Herbert Vernon who is here on a visit from Melbourne. Herbert conveyed felicitations of both the Melbourne and Sydney clubs. Bob Blythe read extracts from the newsletter of March, 1960, which was held at Neasden and dubbed a Nelson Lee gathering.

A humorous reading from Magnet, 1085, dealing with the barricaded study conversation between Coker and Prout was given by Roger Jenkins. Brian Doyle was the winner of Larry Morley's quiz.

Josie Packman read a treatise on Waldo and Sexton Blake, the former being the creation of Edwy Searles Brooks. Featured mostly in the Union Jack, the strange episode of the golden sovereigns caused many chuckles.

Bob Acraman read Herbert Leckenby's "Memories of Old Boys"

Papers" that dealt with Maxwell Scott's story "Birds of Prey" that appeared in the Boys' Friend. Herbert's first visit to Grays Inn Road was interesting, the thoroughfare of Nelson Lee's abode. Excellent hospitality by the hosts and a good programme went towards more happy memories.

Next meeting at Larry Peters residence at 89 Kemp Road, N.W.6. Phone 969 4110. Kindly advise if attending.

BENJAMIN WHITER

NORTHERN

Saturday, 12th March, 1977.

After the business of the session Darrell Swift introduced a recording of a Greyfriars programme shown on television some years ago.

Darrell spoke about the actors and said that four had taken the part of Quelch over the years but only one, Gerald Campion, had played Bunter, and he had managed to portray the character of Bunter exceptionally well.

In the Magnet Frank Richards had made excellent character studies, and the producers of the series had managed to capture required characteristics in a remarkable way.

Darrell said that, as a boy, he had watched the series with delight, and had then been introduced to the Bunter Books. Later, in seeking to know more about Greyfriars, he had discovered the Magnet.

The recording to which we then listened was made of a programme shown in August 1960 in which Bunter enters a poetry competition and - in an unexpected way - wins a bike.

Jack Allison followed on with a variation of 'Twenty Questions' as a team game. Each team had to find its own object, and the two objects together produced a combination which related to the Hobby. Each team had to arrive at its answer without asking any questions concerning the Hobby and then, if possible, guess the answer for the other team. 'Hilton' of course could refer to the hotel of that name, and 'Price' could be the cost of something. Put them together and the connotation is obvious.

WANTED: Holiday Annual, 1920, Monsters, B.B. & Blue Mauritius, S.O.L's, Walpoles "The Crystal Box", Stolz, 'Somatic Development Of Adolescent Boy', Elsie Oxenham Books.

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND.

WANTED: Mint condition - Howard Baker Magnets, Nos. 18-24, will pay double the market price to complete my set. Also Edgar Rice Burrows Pellucidar - Tanar Of Pellucidar - Back To The Stone Age - Land Of Terror. Any condition.

R. G. ARNOLD, 83 CANTERBURY TOWER, ST. MARKS ST., BIRMINGHAM.

FOR SALE: Chums Annual, 1920, £5. Boys' Own Annual, Vol. 42, 1919-20; Vol. 14, 1891-92; Vol. 48, 1925-26; £4 each. P. G. Wodehouse's, "The Gold Bat", £1.75; Mrs. F. Grant's "Chums At Last", £1.50. Kiplings 'Stalky & Co', 1st edn., £6. Eleven Sexton Blakes, Nos. 494, 497 to 506, Fleetway Publications, lot, £3.25.

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND.

I DEFEND MORCOVE

says E. Kadish

Roger Jenkin is quite mistaken in assuming that the Morcove stories in the "Schoolgirls' Own" had been shortened to "only half the issue" by late 1933. In fact - except for a very brief period of only a few months' duration in the early 'thirties, when they extended well over the 'half-way-mark' - the Morcove tales had never been so long. In its heyday, in the 'twenties, the stories actually consisted of some twelve pages out of a total of thirty-six. If my memory is not playing me tricks, there was a contest held in 1934, in which readers were asked to decide which kind of story they preferred to read:- school, adventure, home-life, etc. No results were ever published, but it is significant that in February 1935 the Morcove stories were again confined to their strait-jacket of twelve pages. There were even one or two covers which illustrated stories other than the Morcove ones - an unheard of innovation before this! - until the "Schoolgirls' Own" teetered to its demise in May 1936.

I feel that Mr. Jenkin is a little hard in his assessment of Horace Phillip's Morcove stories. I am sure that there will be many more knowledgeable and erudite people than I able to defend his reputation far more adequately than I could ever hope to. I certainly enjoyed his Morcove stories, and certainly did not find his characters "colourless", although I know little about the Cliff House tales he was said to have written for the "School Friend" when he took over from Charles Hamilton in 1919. Certainly, his Morcove stories must have had some popularity, otherwise they would not have lasted for some fifteen years. I agree with Mr. Jenkins, though, that many of the girls of that period said that they preferred to read boys' papers - keeping up with the Jones Minors, perhaps?

Horace Phillips often seemed to display an almost Victorian mixture of prudishness and melodrama in his Morcove stories - heroines were always sweeping their hands across their foreheads in a "hard-driven way", but - it seems to me - his plots were good, his characters well-drawn (if a little prim, at times) and he was certainly not lacking in a sense of humour. I particularly used to enjoy his descriptions of the storm-washed Devon coast on which Morcove was supposed to be set, and the inland moorland country around the school. You could almost see the yellow gorse bushes!