

November 1996

STORY PAPER

VOL 50

COLLECTOR'S DIGEST

No. 599





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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

VOL. 50

No. 599

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OUR GOLDEN JUBILEE

It is with a truly golden glow that I present to you this Fifty Year Celebratory edition of the C.D. As you will see, it is larger than usual (although not quite a 'double number') and the extra pages are my Jubilee gift to you, loyal readers and contributors. As Eric Fayne and I have so often said, without your wonderful support the magazine would not have survived, let alone flourished, for half a century.

This issue of the C.D., with its emphasis on our very special occasion, has necessarily had to omit some of its regular features. Rest assured, however, that these will be back again in their full glory next month and afterwards.

As your Editor, I am of course delighted with the many tributes which have been sent by readers. Several of these, long and short, prose, verse and even musical, are printed this month, as well as greetings from the editors of other collectors' magazines, namely Lance Salway of SOUVENIR (the journal of the Violet Needham Society), J. Randolph Cox of the U.S.A.'s DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP, Norman Wright and Tony Summerfield of the ENID BLYTON LITERARY SOCIETY MAGAZINE and Sue Sims and Belinda Copson of Folly.

Several of the Clubs sent appreciations which have been published in the Museum Press volume (S.P.C.D. - THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS - see announcement elsewhere in this issue) but greetings from two other Clubs are included in this number of the C.D. You will see that Una Hamilton Wright has marked our Jubilee with an article about her uncle, Charles Hamilton, when he had reached his half-century. Many of you will recall that, until his passing at the end of 1961, Charles Hamilton regularly



"I've written some jolly good tales," said William. "An' I wouldn't mind helpin' you a bit."



contributed to the C.D. He was one of our 'star' contributors, as was also C.H. Chapman, the main illustrator of the MAGNET whose drawings frequently graced our pages during his lifetime. Pictures specially drawn by him for the C.D. are included this month. The work of our 'resident' artists, Henry Webb and Bob Whiter, is also featured; Henry drew our cover, and the picture of Eric Fayne is by Bob. I've included two of my personal favourites (Richmal Crompton's William, drawn by Thomas Henry, and Bessie Bunter - depicted in celebratory mood by T.E. Laidler) to accompany this editorial.

Hamiltonia, Nelson Lee, Sexton Blake, Cliff House, Morcove and the Thomson boys' papers are represented in this Jubilee issue. The extraordinary skills of the original writers and artists and the resilience of their characters make up the life-

blood of our magazine, and it is extremely gratifying that for fifty years the flow of articles appreciating and analysing their achievements has been unceasing.

Many individual contributors have been associated with the C.D. over the decades. Some of these are mentioned in the following articles, and I most gratefully acknowledge their tremendous support. I would also like to express my thanks to Quacks of York, who have been printing the C.D. almost from its beginning: working to a monthly deadline for us is no easy task but Michael, Mandy, Debbie and other staff there have always been unfailingly helpful and considerate.

I must, of course, pay a special tribute here to my remarkably dedicated and knowledgeable editorial predecessors - Herbert Leckenby and Eric Fayne. John Geal has written an appreciation of Herbert for us. Of Eric, what can I say? The debt we owe him for editing the C.D. for so long is enormous: striking a personal note, he was the very first editor for whom I ever wrote anything - and I shall always remember his gracious acknowledgement of the article I sent him, and his warm encouragement. Eric has written an extremely interesting feature for the Museum Press volume which John Wernham and I have compiled. In the letter to me accompanying his article he wrote: 'Fifty years is a very long time. Our magazine has lasted much longer than all the magazines which the C.D. exists to perpetuate. It sounds smug - but the C.D. has been lucky with editors who put it first, and never allowed their own enthusiasm to waver or their steam-pipes to grow old.'

My thanks go out to Herbert and Eric - and also to you, dear readers all. Let us hope that our C.D. will continue for another fifty years, and that some future incumbent of the editorial chair will then be preparing its Centenary celebratory issue.

MARY CADOGAN

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

by Keith Atkinson

Come celebrate in classic style
Our anniversary.
Long live our little magazine,
Laud Herbert Leckenby,
Effective founder of the feast.
Collectors far and near
Take glass in hand, propose a toast:-
"Our fiftieth golden year!"
Remember papers, authors, friends,
School stories, sport and crime,

Dear to our hearts and childhood days,
Idealised by time.
Gem, Magnet, Nelson Lee and Blake,
Excitement, thrills and fun,
So here's to Richards, Brooks and Co.,
Toast each and every one.

Good health to Eric Fayne who served
Our magazine so well.
Long may he live to share the praise.
Deservedly to tell,
Each month for many happy years -
No time for holidays -

Just editing and reviewing
Under Princess Snowee's gaze.
But last and no means least we toast
In glowing terms "Our Mary",
Linking Hobbyists everywhere,
Expressions never vary, here's health and happiness to her,
Editoress extraordinary.



ERIC FAYNE

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

THE STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST - THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS (compiled by Mary Cadogan and John Wernham and published by the Museum Press) is now available. This truly bumper book of just over 360 A4 size pages must be the biggest - as well as, hopefully, the best ever - book about our hobby. Please see insert for details of contents, price, how to order, etc.

DOFFING THE CAP

by Tony Glynn

I cannot now remember how I came across the address of Herbert Leckenby and the "Collectors' Digest" in 1959 but I think it was through a listing of amateur publications.

For quite some time, I had been a collector of sorts and had discovered the late Bill Martin and Tom Lambert, of Norwich, both of whom supplied me with oddments of my favourite old papers. A full decade earlier, I was delighted by E.S. Turner's "Boys Will be Boys", then newly published, and spent a whole weekend of spare moments in a spell as orderly corporal with my nose in its freshly-minted pages. Turner's book caused me to recapture the thrill of the days of my wartime boyhood when, starved of the fictional delights of pre-war times, the discovery of an odd number of a boys' publication from the piping days of peace was a blessing indeed.

By 1959, almost without realising it, I was solidifying into a fairly serious collector. So I wrote to Herbert Leckenby for a sample copy of the "CD". It arrived with a most warm-hearted letter in Herbert's spiky handwriting which said he hoped I liked the magazine and that I would become one of its regular readers.

From the start, I was hooked. The "CD" did not at that time have the slick and near professional appearance it was later to acquire, but it was clearly a labour of love. What it contained and those who contributed to it were obviously in tune with myself and I only recently realised that 1959 was not far short of 40 years ago. Therefore, although for me there were temporary lapses now and again, I have enjoyed the publication for nearly 40 years, during which time it has been instrumental in providing hours of enjoyment and in introducing me to some highly worthwhile personalities.

To some of them, I should like to doff the cap.

Firstly, a doff of the cap to the memory of Herbert Leckenby. I did not know him personally and that first, friendly, letter was my only direct link with him for, not long afterwards, he died. From what I learned of Herbert, he was a simple and modest Yorkshireman who had soldiered in the first world war and had great knowledge of and affection for the boys' papers of his youth, a time now separated from us by many decades. In founding the "CD", he opened the doors of wonder for generations yet to arrive. He also paved the way for many a friendship between kindred spirits. We all owe his pioneering spirit a debt of gratitude.

A doff of the cap to Bill Lofts, who was probably the first person with whom I exchanged letters as a result of his contributions to the "CD". I remember that we were discussing some aspects of comics of the 1930s and I quickly learned that Bill's knowledge of the field was very wide and that he could identify various comic artists whose names were then obscure. Not until "Comics 101" did I meet Bill and I'm delighted to see that he is still going strong, and still providing behind-the-scenes insights into the fascinating world of popular publishing.

I must doff my cap to the memory of the late Josie Packman, with whom I corresponded now and again in the days when she ran the Sexton Blake lending library. Josie supplied me with many an instalment of the Blake saga and we corresponded for some time after the death of her husband, Len, another stalwart of the collecting world, deserving of a doff of the cap. Josie and I shared a love of films from the grand old days of Hollywood and we discussed them in several letters. Through her work with the Sexton Blake lending library and her contributions to the magazines, she kept the memories of Blake, Tinker, Pedro, Mrs. Bardell, Inspector Coutts and all the rest evergreen.

Walter Webb was another Blakian deserving of a doff of the cap. He passed away several years ago. I never had any contact with him except as an appreciative reader of his articles. Walter Webb seemed to know the Blake saga inside out and I think his long series "The Century Makers", dealing with those who wrote the greatest number of Blakian works, was a remarkably erudite piece of research.

Other names from my first association with the "CD" come to mind. Tom Hopperton, for instance, and Frank Vernon Lay and, of course, Roger Jenkins, whose deep knowledge of Hamiltonian affairs continues to delight us. These, and so many more, deserve a doff of the cap.

I doff the cap to the memory of Jim Cook, a great enthusiast for the "NLL", whose portrait once appeared in the publication in the days of his youth and who remained a St. Frank's boy in spirit ever afterwards, writing a regular "Letter from St. Franks" for the "CD". I doff it also to the memory of Alf Hanson, an artist of genuine talent, perhaps not so widely known as some contributors to the "CD", though he had several drawings in its pages and in the Annual. I was delighted to find that this fellow reader of the "CD" lived on my newspaper district and I eventually wrote an article on him. We ran a photograph of Alf working on a drawing of Bunter and Gosling.

An enthusiast for both Greyfriars and St. Frank's, Alf was a commercial artist by profession and I remember how he once said to me that he wished the great days of schoolboy fiction could return for he would love to follow in the footsteps of Chapman and Macdonald as an illustrator.

A large and sweeping doff of the cap to Eric Fayne for the magnificent way in which he took over the editorial chair from Herbert Leckenby, subsequently making many changes and improvements in the magazine and the Annual. Eric guided the "CD" into an era of wider scope and brighter appearance. He also stamped it with his own learned and civilised personality. It was always a joy to read his own many contributions, among them his Buddle saga in the Annual.

Eric always found time in his busy schedule to drop one a note of thanks or acknowledgement and I am sure I am not the only one for whom he has done a good turn out of the blue. Years ago, I mentioned to him my affection for a wartime William book which my mother bought for me in celebration of the cast being taken off my arm, broken in the days of the Manchester blitz. I said I had not seen it for years, having lost my original volume. Almost by return of post, it turned up, on loan from Eric. Incidentally, the arm was broken in a fall from a bike, not through enemy action, though I played the old soldier in a shamefully fraudulent fashion.

And how huge a doff of the cap must be made in the direction of our present editor! Mary's energies and skills led her to build upon Eric's great work in a memorable way. She brought her specialised knowledge and her sure touch as a writer to the task. Not the least of her accomplishments is the way she opened up the pages of the "CD" to the distaff side of the hobby, which is not to suggest that they were exactly closed to feminine influence before she took over the editorial chair. Under Mary's influence, however, with contributions from Margery Woods, Tommy Keen, Ray Hopkins and others who know their schoolgirl fiction, she helped to make the girls of Cliff House, Morcove, the Chalet School and the rest at home in our hearts. A doff of the cap to all who furthered that work.

The trinity of Leckenby, Fayne and Cadogan is the pivot of the success of the "CD" but Bill Gander, to whose memory I give a doff of the cap, should not be forgotten when it comes to naming the editorial luminaries of our hobby. Bill blazed his own trail from his transatlantic base while retaining his links with the hobby in the homeland. It is fitting that the name of his "Story Paper Collector" should be incorporated into the title of the "CD".

I have, of course, breached all good taste by naming names.

On occasions such as this, it is usual to say: "I shall not mention any particular persons for fear of missing someone out". Even now, I suspect someone is saying: "Why didn't he mention so-and-so?" or "What about this person?" or "Surely that person should be remembered!" Well, let me make amends by doffing the cap to all those past and present who have contributed to the magazine and to all the silent majority whose names

we know not and who supplied its lifeblood by subscribing and enjoying its treasures down all the years. A doff of the cap, too, to all those yet to arrive on the scene and follow us as hobby enthusiasts, contributors and readers. For I believe the "CD" will canter merrily along for many a year because it has an appeal which cannot fail to capture new readers.

Though we might not have found the elixir of youth, we have a wonderful substitute in the little magazine which arrives in the post each month.

So, a final, grand doff of the cap to the "Story Paper Collectors' Digest" itself, the publication which, by its very nature, can never grow old.

And here's to the next 50 years!

AS THEY WERE

by Ted Baldock

A Kaleidoscope of Greyfriars Memories.

When the grey streets shut me in again in the days that come after,
When no more I shall see the blue, glittering sky,
Out of my storehouse of dreams I shall take the love and the laughter,
The scents and sounds and colour I now lay by.

T. Stowell. *Dreams*

"Yaroooh."

Billy Bunter is in full flight, his fat features crimson beset with well founded apprehension. Harry Wharton and Co. are in hot pursuit, whooping vengeance. It is an old and familiar story. A cake is missing from Study No. 1 in the Remove passage. What could be more natural than instantly to suspect William George Bunter, whose insatiable appetite, instinct for discovering the presence of comestibles and unerring skill in abstracting them, make him at once a prime suspect.

Clues abound. However, fragments of cake and traces of jam adhering to his fat features, and plenteous crumbs bestrewing his ample waistcoat provide evidence which is hardly needed, at least not by the Famous Five, the lawful owners of the missing confection.

Nemesis for Bunter is ever at hand in the shape of the business end of Bob Cherry's boot. Thud. Bunter flies. A wild yell floats back. In a few words by Charles Hamilton a complete picture is created, and we visualise the scene. We see Bunter fly, we hear his howl but know that all is well in the world of Greyfriars.

Beneath the elms, outside the tuckshop, Horace Coker is engaged in heated argument with his bosom friends Potter and Green. To make a judgement based upon their long suffering, indeed savage, looks one might not consider this an amicable relationship.

Yet there remains this bond between this Fifth form trio: "Old Coker is not such a bad fellow really, Greeny - an ass of course, but then, there's Aunt Judy ..."

"Just so Potter, old man. She's a dear old thing. I wish I had an Aunt like her."

There exists, of course, a strong association between Aunt Judy and 'tuck hampers' on the grand scale. One wonders just how much this influences Potter and Green. Would their loyalties be quite the same without Aunt Judy's largesse?

Herbert Vernon Smith, the 'Boulder' of the Remove, is seated on one of the old benches which surround the old trees in the vicinity of the tuck-shop. He is deeply immersed in a paper, which appears to have the pinkish tinge not unconnected with certain racing journals which are so essential to and beloved by the ever-hopeful punter. Smithy, whose reckless acts are legion, seems quite unconcerned by the fact that he is in full view

of many windows from which he could be seen in this most compromising of situations. His whole career at Greyfriars has been spent in 'sailing close to the wind'; he has, however, managed by adroit manoeuvring to survive - although 'close calls' have not been infrequent.

In the distance, beneath the windows of Masters studies, an angular figure is pacing, hands locked behind his back, his gown gently undulating in the slight breeze. Mr. Quelch is enjoying a well earned interlude of peace in the early sunshine. To the keen observer, his usually crusty features are a little less severe on this glorious Spring morning.

These brief moments between classes are periods of treasured relaxation, and there can be little doubt that if any member of Dr. Locke's staff is in need of such moments that gentleman is Henry Samuel Quelch. Only this morning he has had occasion to cane Bunter,

an exercise which has given him no pleasure whatever - certainly it has not afforded much to Bunter either. Bunter had been obtuse. He frequently is: far too frequently in Quelch's view. This morning he has surpassed himself, necessitating Quelch's familiar sharp order to 'bend over', protestations from the Owl, and finally six of the best administered with the form-master's usual thoroughness and expertise. But to what lasting effect?

Sad to say that after the initial stinging effects of the castigation had worn off it was simply "business as usual". William George Bunter's tight trousers have been the target area for countless whackings, all more or less severe, from Quelch's expertly wielded cane. Dust has risen, yells have reverberated, echoes have been awakened in the form-room and beyond, throughout the fat Owl's school career - with what tangible result?

This in no small way may account for the extreme acidity of the Remove Master upon occasions. It must be provoking indeed to observe one's corrective methods producing such small returns in terms of improved conduct. Bunter would appear to be a lost cause. It may be assumed that he has never been other than such. Thus it may be reasoned that no fall from grace has occurred. It is an unchangeable and unredeemable fat Owl.

Elderly scholastic gentlemen are not immune from the frailties which beset mankind. Paul Pontifex Prout, Master of the fifth form at Greyfriars, possessed his fair share of such weaknesses, being inordinately fond of the mellow cadences of his own voice. A fondness not shared to any great degree by his colleagues who, when assailed, were apt to remember appointments elsewhere, and would hurry away with well simulated appearances of annoyance at their temporary lapses of memory. Poor Prout. How many gems of eloquence have been lost to posterity by such craven conduct?



— HERBERT VERNON SMITH —

Mr. Prout, though ponderous and self-opinionated, is nevertheless a rather likeable old fellow whose 'boomings' have been an integral part of Greyfriars life for many years. One of his greatest pleasures is to 'tea' members of his form from time to time. These 'honours', it must be admitted, receive a rather mixed appreciation from the recipients. Yet it clearly demonstrates that 'old Pompous' has his heart in the right place.

Even Gosling, the irascible 'keeper of the gate', asserts that Mr. Prout is a 'Genel'man'. There exists a certain theory that such praise may be linked to the fact that Prout is always very liberal in his appreciation of any little service rendered. Perhaps we should banish such unworthy thoughts!

Mrs. Mible, stout, motherly, comfortable and presiding at the counter of the tuckshop, is kept very active during 'break' periods dispensing a diverse selection of foodstuffs and, according to the season, cooling - or warming - beverages.

A few stools placed by the counter are hotly contested for, as they offer admirable vantage points from which to issue repeat orders. The two small tables placed by the window are sacrosanct to lordly members of the sixth form, who may sustain themselves there in comparative comfort and a degree of dignity as befits their status. Horace Coker has been known to contest the right of occupancy of these tables from time to time, with the result - which never varies - that he is cast forth in a sadly dishevelled condition, to the great disruption of other fellows endeavouring to enjoy a quiet repast between lessons.

Would that we had an apparatus which could enable us to hear once more the echoes which have, over the years, reverberated through the old quadrangle of Greyfriars, through the passages and landings of the school buildings. What a medley of sounds we would hear. Voices, sounds of battle, strife, uproar and laughter. Solemn intonations would not be lacking: serious words from Dr. Locke to an assembled school condemning some less than commendable conduct; endless pontifications from Mr. Prout to a seemingly patient but sighing fifth form. Sharp words from the direction of the Remove form-room, and possibly the unmistakable sound of swishing as Mr. Quelch's celebrated ash metes out justice and punishment accompanied by roars of temporary distress.

And we might listen to catch grimmer echoes of an earlier time, before the old foundation became a Public School. Echoes from as far back as that period in time we refer to as the age of 'Merrie England'.

Such sounds might prove disturbing. We have reason to believe that hearty good King Hal had a darker side to his nature to which many of the religious orders in the land could testify, as evidenced by the ruined buildings, empty niches and shattered stained glass windows that resulted from a policy of intolerance. Then Master Cromwell and his puritan supporters could not be held entirely blameless for later wanton destruction of fine old carvings and arches in ancient parts of Greyfriars.

Those were turbulent times filled with the sound of battle, thundering hoofs, ambushes and narrow escapes. Stirring times, all of which left vibrations and echoes which gradually merged with sounds of more recent activities. Thus has Greyfriars acquired a rich atmosphere that to the perceptive ear continues to provide romance and ample food for thought.

Hardly romantic or thought-provoking would be the conversations of Gerald Loder and his friends, Walker and Carne, while they were engaged, behind a carefully locked study door, with cards and certain illicit refreshment on view, and the atmosphere thickly impregnated with blue cigarette smoke. A precious picture of a shady trio, measured by any yardstick. Yet all have managed so far to escape just retribution. One may see in imagination the three faces bent over the cards, un-naturally flushed by greed. To the general view, however, they manage to lend a tinge of albeit dingy colour. They proceed along an extremely narrow edge, and if they were to overstep in the minutest degree it

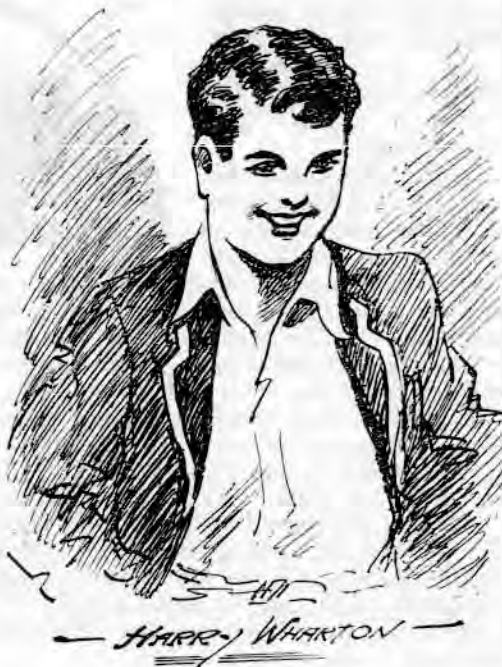
would mean the 'sack' very swiftly and the first train home. And for us, the watchers of the drama, their departure would paradoxically mean a dimming of the scene.

The old school buildings are dark and silent. The quadrangle is dappled with cold light and deep shadow cast by a high sailing moon. All Greyfriars is safely wrapped in the arms of Morpheus - all, save perhaps a restless head tossing and turning in the 'Sanny' and, yes, there is a glimmer of shaded light coming from one of the Sixth form studies where some lonely senior is bending over his books with pallid brow, burning the midnight oil.

All else is black and still: the world of Greyfriars seems to be holding its breath, pausing for a while until the dawning of another day will see all its activities stirring into motion again. One more day, so small and insignificant in the monumental sum of years and centuries which have passed over the old place.

One more day of laughter ringing down corridors, doors banging to awake reverberations which eventually loose themselves in remote corners of the house. Snatches of conversation, scuffles and running footsteps.

Finally, let us pause for a moment by the school gate before we leave, and take one last look at the world which, although it exists only in our imaginations, is nevertheless for us a very real entity. Go where we may, there in the background will be that ephemeral yet solid world of Greyfriars. A still centre in an ever-changing universe.



Where are the boys that once I knew
 In the years which have long since gone,
 In faded photographs I view
 Their faces - and hear the song,
 The song of youth which has no end
 While old time drifts way,
 Whatever the passing decades send,
 The melody will stay.

WANTED: Toy and games catalogues from the 1920s, 1930 and 1940s. BEN BLIGH, 55 Arundale Avenue, Hazel Grove, Cheshire, SK7 5LD.

ON A PERSONAL NOTE

by J.E.M.

Sexton Blake was one of the last heroes of my youthful reading so, not surprisingly, he was one of the first attractions of the Digest when I became a regular reader thirty years ago.

A generation before that, I had arrived at Baker Street just as Blake was moving from the Union Jack to Detective Weekly. Both these periodicals captivated me at once. Then, after only two or three years, the demands of School ended all such light-hearted pleasures. Though I knew Blake was not just for juvenile readers, I also realised, as most of us did, that there were other literary roads still to tread. So, around 1935, I bid Sexton Blake au revoir - though not goodbye - and moved on to other things.

Came the Second World War and that famous essay by George Orwell to remind us that what we read when young left an indelible stamp on us. (Not that I was an Orwell worshipper; before his death I wrote a critical essay on the man and his work which led to some lively correspondence in one of the political-literary journals of the day.)

As I've mentioned, I did not discover the Digest until twenty years after its birth, when a feature in a Sunday newspaper supplement introduced me to this remarkable magazine and its then Editor, Eric Fayne. I promptly became a subscriber and lost no time in acquiring back issues where, once again, I met Sexton Blake, but this time with accounts of his many chroniclers whose lives were often more incredible than the stories they wrote.

Though naturally celebrating an earlier period of Blake, the Digest of the Fifties and early Sixties also regularly featured the Sexton Blake Library, still being published. One of the leading reviewers was Walter Webb who sometimes went over the top in his praise - no doubt hoping to boost the SBL's circulation which certainly needed a lift. The late Josie Packman who conducted Blakiana at this time, was usually less than enthusiastic



The NEXT MOVE



By . . . Robert Murray, Anthony Shene G. H. Tsed . . . and . . . Gwyn Evans.
With, as referee of the match The Editor.

about these latter-day offerings. For her, Blake's "golden age" ended with the War and, it has to be said, her criticisms struck a sympathetic chord with many readers. She was, for instance, probably right in thinking that the earlier giants, G.H. Teed, Anthony Skene, Gwyn Evans *et al* were not always matched by later authors. Certainly many of us felt that the creation of "Organisation" Blake, with his swish headquarters and sexy secretaries, had become absurdly distant from the traditional image of our detective; (just imagine Sherlock Holmes teamed up with Irene Adler or the Baker Street Irregulars smartened up as office boys!).

Some of the immediate post-war stories by writers like Lewis Jackson did manage to retain the old image while depicting a much-changed world but others, clever as many of them were, did not quite strike that old unmistakable chord.

But back to the Digest itself, in my own relations with which I feel rather like Raymond Chandler who once said that he had never met many of his best friends. He was, of course, referring to people with whom he corresponded over long periods but, for one reason or another, never saw in the flesh. Most of my Digest correspondents fall into just this category, though I have enjoyed meetings with the redoubtable Bill Lofts. His contribution to my own knowledge of Blakiana is, perhaps, matched only by Josie Packman's and that of author pop lit expert, Jack Adrian, with whom I have had some of the most stimulating correspondence of my life.

A word to all Blakians, newcomers and old hands alike: for a foundation course in the history and background of Blake and his most famous authors go back, if you can, to the earliest Digests. Here, in the writings of Len and Josie Packman, Bill Lofts, Walter Webb and a number of others you will find much to excite and entertain you. Last of all, for an introduction to vintage Blake stories, you will not do better than *Sexton Blake Wins*, a collection brilliantly edited by Jack Adrian in Dents Classic Thrillers series.

Beyond the Blakian field, this Fiftieth Anniversary is a unique opportunity to send thanks and warmest good wishes to Eric Fayne to whom the Digest owes so much; to Len Hawkey who has an unrivalled knowledge of popular illustration which he has so generously shared and who, of course, has made some distinguished contributions to the Digest itself; to Jack Adrian and Bill Lofts already mentioned and, of course, to our present Editor who has not only developed this magazine along new and exciting lines but has also personally pointed me towards other literary horizons. The kindness and generosity shown by so many of you whom I haven't named has been heart-warming indeed. To all Digest readers and contributors, in fact, a *happy, happy anniversary*.

WANTED: original artwork W.E. JOHNS related, Biggles, Worrals, Gimlet, Space, drawn by H. Leigh, Stead, Studio Stead or of course by Johns. **Christmas cards or prints** advertised in *Popular Flying* in the 1930s illustrated by Johns, Leigh or Stanley Orton Bradshaw. **Playing cards**, with Aircraft design signed Johns. **British Air League** albums illustrated by Leigh. **Skybirds** magazines, models. **Skyways** magazines. **Murder at Castle Deeping** by W.E. Johns, J. Hamilton Edition. JOHN TRENDLER, 4 ASHENDENE ROAD, BAYFORD, HERTS, SG13 8 PX. Tel: 01992 511588.

THE STORY SO FAR

by Lance Salway

One of the highlights of my childhood in a small dusty town in central Africa was the regular arrival each week of a tantalising package from my grandfather in England. The contents were always the same: the *Oldham Chronicle* and *John Bull* for my parents - and *The Wizard* and *The Champion* for me. And so it was that Rockfist Rogan and Danny of the Dazzlers became my constant companions during those years. When I was later sent away to school in South Africa the papers were posted to me there, providing a reassuring link with home.

ROCKFIST ROGAN, R.A.F.



By Hal Wilton

I was also a keen collector of the Sexton Blake Library and it was my admiration for the great detective that was to inspire my own literary debut. I suggested to my friend Peter Lucas that we write a story together, a rip-roaring saga about an ace detective called Benford Head and his trusty assistant, Barton, unashamedly based on Sexton Blake and Tinker. I wrote Chapter One ('Terror from the Balcony'), leaving our heroes at the end facing death from an obscure poisonous gas. Peter then wrote Chapter Two ('Death Strikes'), which started with Head and Barton being rescued in the nick of time from their gasfilled room and ended with the gallant pair facing another perilous situation for me to sort out in Chapter Three. Peter then wrote Chapter Four and I followed with Chapter Five. And so began the saga that we called *The Bloody Hand*.

We gave the characters the names of teachers at our school - the arch-villain was called Edmund Price, after our hated Latin master - and the story started simply enough, with a mysterious young woman calling on Benford Head in his Baker Street flat to ask for his protection from kidnappers. But then, as our enjoyment and confidence grew and the chapters became steadily longer, so the story developed into an elaborate, action-packed epic in which Benford Head and Barton set out to defeat an evil conspiracy intent on world domination, masterminded by aliens from outer space. The action ranged from the Himalayas to the Antarctic to South America and New York, and there was a cast of thousands, including a mob of Aboriginal Snowmen, a lost Inca race, a monastery of Tibetan monks, the Bolshoi Ballet, the Venezuelan navy, and the Liverpool University Potholing Club. Constant characters, apart from Benford Head and Barton, were the villains: Edmund Price, Earth representative of the interplanetary League of the Bloody

Hand, and his equally evil sister, a mad nun called Gladioli. A significant part was also played by Benford Head's innamorata, a reformed Russian spy called Susan Smirnoff.

It all seemed a bit of a joke to start with, something to do in the school holidays to pass the time, but such was our enjoyment of the idea and such was the inspiration of Sexton Blake and the other heroes of the story papers that the saga only ground to a halt four years and 121 chapters later, by which time I was studying in Johannesburg and Peter was at university in Liverpool. We had exchanged our alternate chapters by post for most of that time. I can't remember when we stopped writing the story but the last chapter ('The Battle of Caracas') was written by Peter and so I must have been the one who gave up. By then we both no doubt thought ourselves far too adult and sophisticated for such childish pursuits, and perhaps this was why the story petered out and we lost touch. But I have always regretted that we didn't carry on with *The Bloody Hand*; it is a story without an ending, and I would dearly like to know what happens next.

I still have the five closely hand-written volumes of *The Bloody Hand* and, as I page through them now in middle-age, I am fascinated not just by the extraordinary story that Peter and I wrote all those years ago but also by the way in which it seems to reflect our youth. For *The Bloody Hand* is almost an autobiography. The music, fashions and ephemeral crazes of the 1950s, as well as our developing and changing interests and obsessions are all mirrored in these hand-written pages. This may be one of the reasons why I take a greater pride and pleasure in those battered notebooks that I do in any of the glassily dustwrapped 'real' books that I've written since. And *The Bloody Hand* is a tribute too to Sexton Blake and Dixon Hawke and Colwyn Dane of *The Champion* and all the other story paper detectives I devoured when I was young and who inspired this first literary adventure.

In saluting the first fifty years of *Collectors' Digest* - and welcoming the next - we also honour all the papers and books that nourished our childhood imaginations and the hundreds of anonymous, pseudonymous and unknown authors who laboured each week to produce so many thousands of words for our delight. Some critics might call such authors hacks, though it seems to me that the description 'professional writers' would be more accurate, for these were men and women who, week after week, turned out stories to order of exactly the right length and level and theme. They were an inspiration to me in my own efforts to become an author, and the very existence of *Collectors' Digest* is evidence of the lasting pleasure that these unsung and undervalued writers gave to generations of young readers, a pleasure that lingers still.

So, Peter Lucas, if you're out there somewhere, do get in touch. It's my turn to write the next chapter of *The Bloody Hand*.

THE COMPLETE **MAGNET** COMPANION 1996

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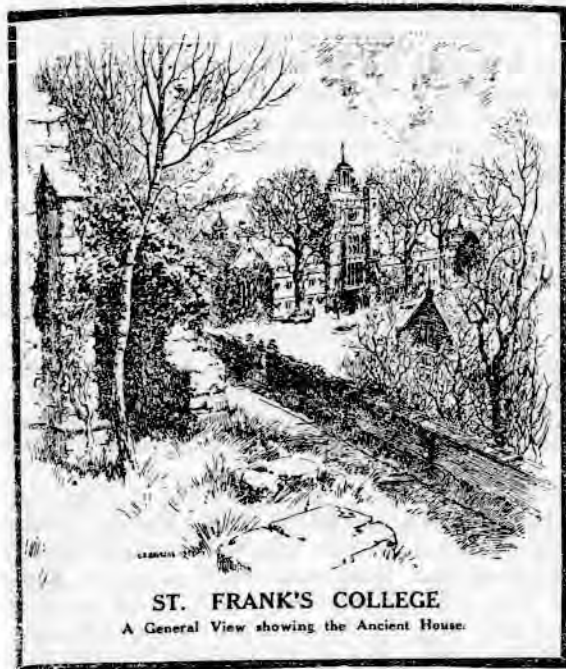
THE MAGNET COMPANION?
HAVE ONE ON MY DESK BY
THIS AFTERNOON!



NELSON LEE AND THE FIRST COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUALS

by E. Grant McPherson

The first C.D. Annual was issued in 1947 and cost the princely sum of six shillings (in real money). As most readers will probably know, it was the brain-child of Herbert Leckenby and Maurice Bond.



ST. FRANK'S COLLEGE

A General View showing the Ancient House.

comprised lists of Magnets, Gems, Lees and other boys' papers, with not many articles of the type we know today. They also contained a "Who's Who". Numbers 1 and 2 both listed 79 names, but by number 3 this had risen to 138. This issue also contained the first article by Bob Blythe, the acknowledged authority on the Nelson Lee, whom I met and with whom I became very friendly. Bob's article was, of course, about St. Frank's, detailing the order in which the various new boys arrived at the famous college. (This article was repeated in his excellent book on St. Frank's, published in 1963 and updated in 1967, which has always been regarded as the Nelson Lee Bible. Mark Caldicott recently produced a further version of this work, its main addition being an updated list of the later works of E.S.B. written as Berkley Gray and Victor Gunn.)

Enthusiasts of the Nelson Lee will probably be very interested in the following item from the first

I met and got to know Herbert very well when I was stationed at York during the war. I was in the R.E.M.E. and he was a telephonist. However, it was not until several years later that we met again, and became involved with the C.D. and, eventually, the Annual.

I am the proud possessor of a complete set of the Annuals as well as a complete set of the C.D. monthlies, including the rare number 3A. I am aware that this might not sound impressive by today's standards, with the avidity of the modern collector, but I wonder how many folk with large collections actually bought their copies as they were issued.

The early Annuals mainly

WHO'S WHO AT ST. FRANK'S!



EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH.

Remove Form.

Study D.

Big, burly and clumsy. Very aggressive, and ever ready to punch anybody on the nose. Yet for all that one of the best, and generous to a fault. A great sportsman, if not very brilliant in other spheres.

C.D. Annual about earlier gentlemen named Nelson Lee...

TWO NELSON LEES OF ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

We are sure all Nelson Lee admirers will be interested in the following extract from "Answers to Correspondents" in "Reynolds Miscellany" 1849. It was kindly passed on to us by Mr. Hugh W. Fennell, 4 Dixon Road, South Norwood, London S.E.25.

"DRAMATICUS. - Nelson Lee is indisputably the best and most prolific pantomime author of the present day, rapidity of action, and drollery of the most genuine description are his stock in trade, and he discloses liberally of it at Christmas time to the delight of thousands, both old and young. The name of Nelson Lee is considered by every schoolboy as a certain forerunner of a really funny pantomime, and we are delighted in being able to announce to our juvenile friends that no less than five of these popular performances will be written and arranged by their old favourite at the following theatres: The City of London, Surrey, Olympic, Astleys and Marylebone."

Now for a strange coincidence. A few days after I had written the above a number of ancient American boys' papers came into my possession. Glancing through one of them of a date in 1885, I pulled up short when this caught my eye:

"Heroes and Outlaws of Texas. Nelson Lee's Escape!"

The article is too long to publish in full but it explained that Nelson Lee was a scout, and the adventure related took place in 1842. Here is a paragraph:

"Nelson Lee was the Scout who carried the dispatches to the Rio Brazos, when General Somerville was given command of the volunteer army who were ordered to rendezvous at San Antonio and pursue the enemy into Mexico."

Later it described:

"Although his revolver was empty, Lee determined to capture these men. His position was most desperate. Without hesitation he drew his harmless revolver and bowie-knife, and with one of these in each hand rushed, with a terrific yell, upon the two herders, cutting them off from their guns. They dropped to knees in abject terror and screamed for mercy."

It would appear that this actual Nelson Lee had the same exciting sort of time as the fictitious one created by Maxwell Scott just over fifty years later.

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. Tel: 01923 232383.

GOLDEN JUBILEE GREETINGS

From Dr. Peter McCall, Chairman of the Friar's Club: My wife and I have just returned from celebrating our Silver Wedding Anniversary. And now we celebrate another very important landmark — the C.D.'s Golden Anniversary.

This essential reading for aficionados or serious researchers of the Old Boys Papers goes from strength to strength as Mary fills the Editor's throne with as much distinction as her revered, respected and much loved predecessors, Eric and Herbert.

It is incredible that any Journal survives 50 years - let alone flourishes - and yet in that time has only had three luminaries at the helm.

To paraphrase the poet "'Mags' may come and 'Mags' may go - C.D. goes on forever" - please!

FROM THE EDITORS OF THE ENID BLYTON LITERARY SOCIETY MAGAZINE: Fifty years ago a few collectors thought to dispel the gloom of rationing with a magazine devoted to their hobby, and *Collector's Digest* was born. Initially devoted to Bunter, Blake and Lee it has, over the years, widened its horizons and featured articles on Biggles, William, Enid Blyton and many other favourites of childhood. Fifty years on it still continues to flourish. So here's a toast from *The Enid Blyton Literary Society* (in ginger beer, of course) to *Collectors Digest*, the most robust little magazine of them all. Long may it prosper and may the EBLs still be around in another fifty years time to wish CD a happy hundredth birthday.

NORMAN WRIGHT, TONY SUMMERFIELD, E.B.L.S.

FROM THE SOUTH WEST O.B.B.C.: Congratulations to the Collectors Digest on the 50th Anniversary - what a wonderful achievement. Greetings from the South West Club.

FROM NAVEED HAQUE: I will begin by stating the obvious: fifty years for any publication is quite an achievement. When one considers that the C.D. is an amateur magazine, published every month without fail (1946 onwards), the mind boggles...

On a personal note, the C.D. is an important part of my life. Every month I look forward eagerly to its arrival, and every year - like Bunter and his postal order - I expect the C.D. annual. Unlike the Fat Owl, I am not disappointed.

Here in Canada we do not have the O.B.B.C. clubs and this lack of personal contact with other enthusiasts intensifies the need for the C.D. I was introduced to the magazine some-time in 1989, appropriately enough by its former (second) editor, Eric Fayne, with whom I have had a prolific correspondence, and whom I met in 1992.

To my mind, Eric was the 'missing link' to that remarkable author, Frank Richards, whom I never had the opportunity to meet. He is also a writer of merit as anyone who has read the Mr. Buddle stories and his 'Let's be Controversial' column in past issues will agree.

I feel that my encounters and friendship with hobby personalities and others all over the world has been made possible by the C.D.

Long may it live - and perhaps on its 100th Anniversary some future readers will look back to this issue and echo our sentiments.

FROM PROFESSOR JEFFREY RICHARDS: So, the C.D. is fifty. But it remains as fresh and vigorous and youthful as ever. As Shakespeare would have said if he had had the chance: 'Age cannot wither nor custom stale her infinite variety'. Heartiest congratulations on achieving the half-century and here's to the next fifty years.

FROM BETTY AND JOHNNY HOPTON: Long may the C.D. continue, with Mary at the helm, doing such an excellent job and bringing such a lot of pleasure into all our homes every month.

FROM REG ANDREWS: In this Golden Anniversary year of the publication of the Collectors' Digest I would like to record my sincerest thanks and congratulations to everyone who has contributed to its success.

My own introduction to the 'CD' was by way of the article which was published in the weekly supplement of the Daily Telegraph in, I believe, November 1964.

I well remember arriving home from work on that momentous Friday afternoon. The first words with which my wife greeted me were: "There is an article in the Telegraph magazine which **MIGHT** interest you". The magazine was already opened at the appropriate page and there (if my memory serves me correctly) among the many displayed Magnets, Gems, SBL's, etc. was a photo of the late Josie and Len Packman.

To say that I was interested in putting it somewhat mildly. (I had kept all the Magnets, SOL's, SBL's, etc. that I had collected in my youth and my wife knew that I treasured these.) I went post haste to the local library to track down the name and address of the editor of this strange sounding publication, in order to obtain a sample copy as soon as possible.

Very soon after writing to Eric Fayne I received the CD issue for December 1964. There on the front of the pink cover was a portrait of Gussy, skating in a snowstorm. The contents were, to me, truly amazing and I have received every CD monthly and annual since that date. As, I imagine, with so many hobby enthusiasts, it has become a very pleasurable part of my life and long may it thus continue.

FROM J. RANDOLPH COX: Fifty Years. This seems a long time to some, not so long a time to others. It all depends on how much of it you have lived through yourself. *C.D.* is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary this year. How many magazines like it can boast a similar longevity? How many of us have been with it for its entire run? My own relationship to the publication goes back about 30 years, to the date in 1965 when I received my first issue by mail. I no longer remember just how that came about, but the volumes, bound in blue stand on the shelf in my own editorial office as mute testimony that it is so. Later I acquired scattered early issues and can even boast of owning copies of volume one, numbers 5, 6 and 7 (May, June and July 1947)! Those early issues were edited by Herbert Leckenby with lively contributions by his successor Eric Fayne. Most of the issues on my shelves were, of course, published during the Eric Fayne years. I dropped my subscription after a dozen years to pursue other interests, but returned last year soon after I became editor/publisher of a companion publication, *Dime Novel Round-Up*, now celebrating its 65th year of existence! It seemed appropriate that I not only keep track of the American scene, but also the British.

We try to cover dime novels, juvenile series books, and pulp magazines, and celebrate the joy of reading as well as the fascination of research: finding out just who really wrote a given story hidden behind a pseudonym. In addition, it has always been of interest to me to recognise the parallels between the American and British worlds of popular fiction described here. The American dime novel (in its nickel weekly format of 36 pages) really died out with the first World War, to be replaced by the pulp magazine. The cloth bound juvenile series book continued with stories to suit the then current age. In Great Britain you could still find the stories of Frank Richards and Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee in much the same format as before. (With interior illustrations, something the dime novel often lacked.) The first decade of *Dime Novel Round-Up* (1931-1939) and its predecessor and companion *Happy Hours Magazine* (1925-1936) often advertised for sale

copies of *The Bullseye* and *The Thriller* in ways to entice the reader of the long defunct *Boys of New York* to try something that would remind them of the glory days of yore.

I am inclined to think that the format as well as the content of *C.D.* had an unconscious influence on me when I began designing the new *DNRU*. The separate departments (The Reference Shelf, Letters, Notes & Queries and the occasional columns such as Adventure Parade, Fulminations, Convention Report) owe something to Blakiana, News of the Old Boys Book Clubs, Nelson Lee and ESB, even A Word from the Skipper (now Between Ourselves) and the Forum. This sort of division of the variety of content helps the reader to find the particular section of greatest interest. (I am told that many of our readers read *DNRU* from back-to-front, starting with "Notes & Queries".)

At any rate, I am delighted to be able to add my words from Northfield and Dundas, Minnesota, USA (where Jesse James was defeated in 1876) to those others sent in from the readers of *C.D.* Fifty years is not so long a time at that when good stories, writers, and artists are being discussed. Here's to the next fifty years!

HALFWAY HOUSE

by Una Hamilton Wright

Fiftieth anniversaries are always golden occasions. On congratulating Collectors' Digest on attaining its fiftieth birthday one must pause to consider just what fifty years' development in a person or an enterprise actually comprises. Is it an occasion for looking back well satisfied, an excuse to rest on one's oars, or should the looking be forward, a vision of the future, perhaps tempered with some imagination and wishful thinking?

Charles Hamilton was fifty in 1926 and he was approximately halfway through his writing life. Thirty-three years earlier he had had his first story published and he was to go on writing for another thirty-five years. Although he may not have realised it he was, in 1926, in the golden years of his writing life and the *Magnet* was also in its golden years. His life was undergoing changes both in lifestyle and in relationships. Looking back, he could recall all his pleasure in Continental travel, which he now felt unable to continue, and his enthusiasm for that past life spilled over into his work and produced the great travel series. He had become an armchair traveller but his characters took over where he had left off and had travelled much more widely. Looking forward he now had a new relationship unfolding, the pleasure of guiding a small niece, his sister Dolly's daughter, (me), into all the cultural pleasures that he enjoyed so much himself. New types of story, new homes and new interests were all waiting to catch his fancy and keep him busy until the very end of his life.

1926 was a changeover year for Charles Hamilton. The last echo of the First World War was swept away - he parted with Broughton Farm Cottage between Tring and Aylesbury that he had used during the periods of the full moon when the German Zeppelins came to drop their bombs. He turned over the page on to the beginning of the second half of his writing life, he bought the house which became the most famous of his addresses: Rose Lawn, Percy Avenue, Kingsgate, Kent. It was chosen for him by his housekeeper, Nellie Beveridge, who was sent down to Thanet where the author believed the freshest sea air to be and instructed to find a house large enough for him to work in accompanied by his sister and family. I had proved to be prone to coughs and colds and holidays by the sea were recommended.

The house was got ready for occupation with great enthusiasm and the furniture from Broughton Cottage arrived, followed a little while afterwards by a consignment of furniture from France - the contents of his villa in Menton, furnished for him (and bought for him) by Grace Hancock, Dolly's best friend. He was in the process of bidding farewell to the Continent, although he did still cherish a hope of staying there occasionally, it was

to be about four years before he gave up his cottage at Wimereux near Boulogne. Miss Beveridge hated staying in France as she didn't speak the language and had no wish to learn. My uncle was so scared of losing her that he let the Wimereux cottage go, very regretfully.

Unable to live abroad - his confidence had waned during the recent war and he was gradually becoming a recluse - he poured out his soul into his stories and lived again those glorious travels of the Edwardian period. He took his characters to all the places he knew well and then took them farther afield to countries he had never visited. The India series came in 1926, later the schoolboys were to visit Egypt, China, Africa, the United States and the South Seas. The Rookwood stories came to an end in 1926 after eleven years in the BOYS' FRIEND. Charles wrote "After Hinton's time, Maurice Down edited the BOYS' FRIEND, along with the GEM and the MAGNET, but changes were made in the middle twenties: and the paper went to another editor; and as I thought I ought to stick to my chief, I ceased to write Rookwood. I was sorry to part with Jimmy Silver."

In about 1925 Odhams wanted to start a new paper if Charles Hamilton would write for it. He refused, as he wrote to his sister, "because it would have meant a row with the A.P. and I couldn't afford to row with them." The BOY'S FRIEND finished the year after Charles ceased to write for it, but other opportunities opened. Two years later he introduced the Rio Kid and later the same year Ken King of the Islands featured in the MODERN BOY, a story of adventure on the South Seas. The MODERN BOY was a new paper and Ken King was created specially for it. Charles broke new ground by using his own name, Charles Hamilton, instead of a pen-name. The MODERN BOY was the only boys' weekly paper to be allowed into Rugby School by the then headmaster, Dr. Lyon.

The GREYFRIARS' HOLIDAY ANNUAL which appeared just before Christmas each year was started in 1919 and ran until 1939. Charles was commissioned to write special stories for this, and in addition selections from tales of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood, the Rio Kid and other items of Charles's work were used to fill it up.

Finally, after the First World War the paper restrictions were eventually lifted, and this enabled Charles Hamilton to expand his MAGNET stories and develop his characters to the full. His literary quotations and Latin tags flourished as never before. He could give free rein to his interests and thoroughly enjoyed being himself to the full.

In the mid-twenties Charles was also interested in writing Westerns and, full of enthusiasm, wrote to sister Dolly encouraging her to try her hand. He wrote the first section of three thousand words of KID PETER OF THE BAR-O. She followed on with a chapter or two but couldn't keep it up. The material was eventually used in Charles's post-1945 novel THE LONE TEXAN.

There was one more category of story which he was to try with marked success: the bed-time fairy tale for his newest niece. When I had grown out of Red Riding-Hood and Beauty and the Beast my uncle started making up stories about the fairy Silverwings and her trips down to earth where she visited the Great Green Forest to see what good she could do to poor, suffering mankind. Usually the humans were the victims of the wily animals such as the fox or the wolf, and she would gently discipline them to make them become a *good* fox or a *good* wolf. Years later I managed to persuade him to type them out, but they have never been published.

Charles Hamilton was intensely happy during the twenties. He enjoyed family life as never before and was thrilled to have the opportunity of influencing the upbringing of a child right from the start. He was so enthusiastic about this that he wanted to adopt me, but my parents would not hear of it, naturally. I am sure some of uncle's joy overflowed into the stories, he seemed to have an inner fire that made them glow. Being my godfather gave him a genuine moral responsibility and he made the most of it.

The young (fictional) Frank Richards - and the real life Charles towards the end of his life (as portrayed by C.H. Chapman)



The mission-hall was crowded; in the glow from the swinging lamps dozens of couples glided merrily over the smooth floor—but Frank Richards slipped quietly away from the lights and gaiety, to the old typewriter in Mr. Smiley's study.



In this decade he became more socially aware and was truly horrified at the miserable social conditions of the inter-war years. The General Strike of 1926 had awakened his interest and he regarded the million unemployed as an indictment of the governing classes. He felt that they had failed the country. Although he hated paying taxes, he nevertheless welcomed the suggestion of a tax on bachelors and wrote to the Daily Sketch saying that it would be "both just and necessary". He felt that more should be done for the needy at home and rather less for our overseas commitments. It was in the twenties that Billy Bunter was first caned for calling coloured people 'niggers'. Charles saw that a person's skin-colour was no laughing matter and certainly not a subject for snide humour. Attitudes which are today labelled 'politically correct' to him were matters of simple justice, free to everyone.

Several of his comic poems were written at this period while he was still recovering from the shock of the First World War. In his IMPERIAL HERITAGE POEMS he contrasted the glories of empire with the hunger at home, ending with:

"Leave, O leave me my Empire so wide,
 Leave, O leave me the world at my feet!
 I am great, I am glorious,
 Haughty, victorious!
 Though I wish I had something to eat!"

Little comments on social conditions and snobbery found their way into the stories and have continued into the Bunter Books.

Looking on Charles Hamilton's life as a whole one can recognise the fiftieth anniversary of his birth as a truly golden period when the successes of the past were making way for all the new opportunities and ideas which were to lead him into an even more glorious future. Perhaps the purchase of Rose Lawn in this year was to symbolise his arrival at the halfway house.

(Copyright Una Hamilton Wright)

WANTED

THE ROVER

comics 1940 to 1944 inclusive

The WIZARD

comics 1940 to 1942 inclusive

Minimum one year runs preferred

Bound volumes or good copies suitable for binding.

Please telephone Martin Trowse on 0181 330 4810

FORUM

From MARTIN WATERS: We very much enjoyed the recent C.D.s'. Items which feature the worthy Mr. Quelch are always welcome, and we liked Jemima's latest adventure as related by Marjorie Woods.

I was most impressed by the article on 'Dr. Syn' by Brian Doyle. I had often wondered about the name 'Dr. Syn' on the RHDR locomotive, now I know its origin. Oddly enough I saw the film the 'Night Creatures' in Borneo in 1963, though I had no idea that it was a Dr. Syn adventure. You will understand that an improvised cinema in a jungle clearing is not the best place for the serious enjoyment of culture and refined taste - the comments from the audience were usually the best bit. I have made enquiries at Wellingborough Library, and most of the Dr. Syn novels are held elsewhere in the county, so I am looking forward to reading them.

From DENNIS BIRD: I was very interested in the Dr. Syn article... I read all seven books when they came out in paperback about 25 years ago. I particularly remember Dr. Syn having an escapade with a girl in one book, and then having an identical one with her daughter in another - shades of Thomas Hardy's "The Well-Beloved"!

From J. RANDOLPH COX: The September issue of C.D. arrived and has been read almost at a sitting. The first in the new series by Brian Doyle particularly caught my eye because I am a long-time reader of the Dr. Syn stories of Russell Thorndike. I bought the entire series in the Arrow Books edition in 1967 and continue to read and re-read them every so often, usually around Hallowe'en.

I was introduced to the character through the Walt Disney trilogy on American television and sought the book that was said to be the basis, *Christopher Syn...* and found it! It was listed right there in our *Books in Print* for 1964 and I believe I ordered it through the bookstore at the college where I worked. The title page reads: *Christopher Syn*, by Russell Thorndike and William Buchanan, with an introduction by James Mason. New York: Abelard Schuman. The copyright date is 1960 and the copyright page says that it was "adapted in part from 'The Further Adventures of Doctor Syn' by Russell Thorndike, first published by Rich & Cowan, Ltd., in England." 254 pages with jacket and title page illustrations by Harry Horner.

I had always thought the television version had appeared before the feature film, but the date given in all filmographies reverses that sequence. I've never seen the Peter Cushing film so cannot make a comparison between the two. I have seen the George Arliss film, as it has been available on video for some time.

I look forward to the next instalment in the series about "Yesterday's Heroes".

From TED BALDOCK:

I have just been admiring the illustration on the cover of the September C.D. Dear old Gussy, an unchanging and wonderful character embodying all that is best in the conduct of a 'gentleman'. The illustration accompanying Tommy Keen's article is equally pleasing. Gussy immaculate as always raising his 'boater' to a village 'yokel' (somehow I am not too happy with the term, appropriate though it may be). Would such conduct were more apparent today!

FIFTY YEARS OF PLEASURE

by Tommy Keen

Although, unfortunately, I am now unable to attend any of the Book Club meetings, or even send many articles for publication in the Collectors Digest, my interest is still as strong as ever in the world of Greyfriars, Morcove, St. Jim's and Cliff House.

Club Member, and very good friend, Bill Bradford keeps me informed of events and C.D. articles which he knows will interest me and, as we see each other frequently, I still feel as if I belong. Early in the year, Bill has told me that 1996 will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Collectors Digest - Fifty Years! 1946 was its beginning, which reminds me of an incident in that long ago year.

I was still in H.M. Forces (Army) and working at the War Office, 'residing' in a bed-sitter in Victoria, due to be demobbed in the July. Walking through Pimlico one day in early summer of that year, I passed a Second Hand Bookshop (at that time it was of no interest to me) and on a small table outside was a pile of Holiday Annuals, marked at two shillings each, but I did not even look at them. I paused for a moment or two, thinking back to the days of my boyhood when a Holiday Annual was a prized possession and Greyfriars and St. Jim's seemed a part of my world. I then walked on, forgetting about it all immediately, little thinking that in 30 years time I would be back in the world of the 'Magnet' and 'Gem' again.

Then, in 1974, I read a letter in the Evening News from a certain Bob Blythe, regarding the old magazines of long ago, and stressing his interest in the 'Nelson Lee'. I contacted Mr. Blythe and arranged to meet him one evening at Baker Street Station. Then he asked me which had been my favourite stories and I promptly said Greyfriars in the Magnet, and St. Jim's in the Gem, adding almost guiltily that the stories of Morcove School in the Schoolgirls Own held a special place in my memories of the past. Then, he said, 'Oh, you should meet Mary Cadogan.' This, I did, meeting her one day at the corner of Praed Street and Edgware Road, and over a coffee and cheese roll we soon discovered we had mutual interests.

So I joined the Old Boys Book Club and became an avid reader of the C.D. How interesting it has all been. I had, maybe intended to write a few more 'Morcove Miniatures' (Naomer Nakara, Cora Grandways and Grace Garfield) and a few more 'Who Was'? (Harry Hammond and Clifton Dane of St. Jim's, Dick Rake and David Morgan of Greyfriars and Vivienne Leigh and Augusta Anstruther-Browne of the School Friend's Cliff House), but these were not to be forthcoming.

IN THIS ISSUE: "THE MYSTERY OF BRENDA RAVEL" A SPECTACULAR STORY OF THE GIRLS OF MORCOVE SCHOOL



No. 54, Vol. 4, PUBLISHED EVERY TUESDAY (Week Ending September 8th, 1922)

Congratulations to you Mary, and to Eric Fayne for all the good work you have done. Carry on for another fifty years!

(Editor's Note: Because of failing eyesight Tommy has for some time been unable to read. We are glad, however, that he has recently managed to produce some articles for the C.D. by dictating these to a friend. Perhaps we shall still receive the items in the 'Morcove Miniatures' and 'Who Was' series which he mentions.)



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"A MATTER OF LOGIC"

by Anthony E.L. Cook

Part Three (Conclusion)

Christmas Eve came in with another cold and overcast sky and a sense of anticipation. Colonel Wharton had agreed to attend the Christmas activities in the village hall and invited his guests to join him and meet Sir John Hazeldene. The children, having been entertained, would sit down to a substantial meal late in the afternoon. War or no war, a great deal of food had found its way into the kitchens. It seemed that everybody in the food trade had been cajoled into supplying meat and grocery items, promising a first class function for the children, and no doubt some of the helpers concerned.

The party from the Lodge went by foot. On their arrival they were greeted with a great deal of noise, the youngsters being immersed in games, while what seemed a vast army of adults were preparing the tables for the meal. Sir John Hazeldene and his wife made their acquaintance of the Colonel's guests. As they sat in a corner drinking tea Mr. Quelch looked around and took stock of what was going on. He saw the familiar faces of the Famous Five, who seemed quite at home entertaining the children, as well as some girls of about the same age, one of whom he recognised as Marjorie Hazeldene. Harry Wharton, glancing over at the guests, removed his party hat and made his way over to his uncle. It was only on a second glance that he recognized his form-master because Mr. Quelch was not in his usual formal attire but wearing a smart tweed suit, was looking a far more benevolent personage than usual. A rather untidy leader of the remove presented himself to offer seasonal greetings.

"A very commendable effort Wharton. I feel sure that you and your friends will be much appreciated here today" replied Mr. Quelch.

"Thank you sir. It is rather good fun. The children seem to be enjoying it."

"Quite so. Perhaps you will be kind enough to convey my compliments to Miss Hazeldene. I hope you all have a very enjoyable Christmas. Oh! I notice that there are only five of you."

Harry seemed puzzled at this remark until he suddenly realised the import of Mr. Quelch's remark. He grinned. "Oh, you mean Bunter, sir. The truth is that the fat owl - I mean Bunter - rang my guardian to say he was spending Christmas with his cousin in Derby."

Mr. Quelch could not suppress a smile.

"Indeed. How thoughtful of him."

Harry made his escape but not before Bob Cherry had pounced on him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Slacking again, old lad." He suddenly noticed to whom his friend had been talking, and with hurried apologies both boys disappeared back in the crowd.

Suddenly a thought entered the form master's head. What was it that Wharton had said? Bunter was spending Christmas with his cousin in Derby. There was a sudden glimmer of light and he was transported back to the Cherry Orchard tea-room on the day of his arrival. At that moment someone banged loudly on one of the tables and Sir John welcomed the children and their parents and announced that the meal was about to be served. And what a meal it turned out to be! There is no doubt that the various benefactors had turned up trumps and it looked as though both children and parents would do more than justice to it.

The Wharton Lodge party made their way homeward soon after the commencement of the meal. As soon as they arrived home Mr. Quelch took his host aside and asked if he would be kind enough to contact Ferrers Locke yet again as some urgent matters needed attention. The Colonel showed his respect for his guest by asking no questions and doing as he was requested. Captain Locke was soon in the library with Mr. Quelch laying certain facts before him and his host. Locke and Colonel Wharton went out of the room

and it was half an hour before they reappeared. No questions were asked and Mr. Quelch made no reference to the matter.

Christmas day saw a late breakfast because the company had attended the midnight service at the village church. After the meal presents were handed out in front of a roaring log fire in the great hall in an atmosphere of warm congeniality. Mr. Quelch gave the Colonel his usual box of favourite cigars and handed a large box of chocolates to Miss Wharton. He had been warned by the respective suppliers that these might be the last of such gifts he would be able to purchase for some time to come. The Colonel and his sister in turn presented Mr. Quelch with a magnificent pen and pencil set, engraved with his initials. For most of the day the hall rang with the laughter and conversation of the company. Had anyone cared to notice, Mr. Quelch and Lady Carstairs were to be seen in long and deep conversation. She was, as Mr. Quelch had discovered, intelligent, interesting and possessed of a sparkling wit.

Dinner that evening was almost on the lines that one would expect both in quantity and quality. Perhaps there was less fruit in the Christmas pudding but it was a delightful spread by wartime standards. At the end of the meal Colonel Wharton requested the presence of cook and extended to her the thanks and compliments of the entire company.

It was late in the evening when the Colonel received a telephone call which he took in his study. On his return he informed the company that Captain Locke made his apologies for not having joined them for dinner as previously arranged, but that he would return on the following afternoon. He also said that the case of the missing papers as well as the picture had been resolved.

There was a general buzz of conversation after this news while Mr. Quelch indulged in a smile of great satisfaction. Boxing Day followed the usual Wharton Lodge pattern. There was a relaxed atmosphere with each member of the party following his own interests. No sooner had lunch been taken than Ferrers Locke arrived, tired and hungry after a considerable journey. Wells produced some sandwiches and coffee for him and after consuming these the detective gathered the whole company together.

"Now for an explanation, ladies and gentlemen. From the outset I want you to know that I did not really solve the case, and in all probability would not have done so without the help of Mr. Quelch. You see, when I asked you all to jot down anything out of the ordinary which might have occurred, there seemed nothing that I could pin down to provide a clue. It was only when Mr. Quelch passed on some information on Christmas Eve that things began to take shape. The odd scraps added up to a sequence of events. Let me put the cart before the horse, so to speak, and tell you what happened.

"It is all because of a pro-German group of supporters - not paid spies - who were fortunate enough to find someone with similar views in my own department. The plan was to steal the papers, the nature of which I cannot reveal, except to say that in the wrong hands these could have done a great deal of damage.

"The main cog in the wheel was an art dealer in Derby who thought that he might as well make a little more money on the side as well as safeguarding the main item, the stolen papers. The papers disappeared the same night as the painting. This was taken out of the library through the cloakroom windows and it made its way to Derby. The papers were concealed in the back of the painting."

"Why did anyone bother to do that?" Colonel Wharton interrupted.

"Ah! Well you see Colonel, the plotters were afraid they could have been caught, either in the house or outside. Either way, the papers would have still been concealed and made available at a later date."

"Extremely well planned" murmured Sir Oliver.

"Exactly. Now Mr. Quelch remembered one or two important items. Wells had found the cloakroom window ajar the morning after the theft. Very careless. He had also

thought that he had heard the west wing door creak as he was getting ready for bed, which no doubt he had. It was perhaps unfortunate too that they had chosen that particular painting known so well by Mr. Quelch. The last item which came to light was concerning a conversation which took place between Colonel Wharton's ward, Harry, and his form master in which he spoke of Derby, thereby triggering the memory of another conversation heard in a tea-shop in Wimford. Having tied the facts together, I contacted the Chief Constable of Derby, an old friend of mine and made arrangements to go there immediately. It did not take long to find the whereabouts of the right art dealer for he was known to be pro-German and in any case had been under close inspection for other activities in the area. It was, having said all this, perhaps very lucky for us that the picture was still on the premises or else we should not have recovered it. Their contact down here has already been arrested and we must see that such a situation never arises again. Are there any questions?"

It was Sir Oliver who spoke. "Why bother to substitute the picture?"

"Had they not done so the theft would certainly been discovered almost immediately. On the other hand, having put up a replacement the chances were that it might have gone unnoticed for some time." "What about the conversation in the tea-shop? Could that not have been a forewarning?" Colonel Wharton asked.

Ferrers Locke nodded towards Mr. Quelch.

"Captain Locke and I looked into this aspect in retrospect, but as far as I was concerned at the time it might well have been a business transaction between some respectable looking persons and yourself." Everyone began talking at once. At last Ferrers Locke asked for silence and congratulated Mr. Quelch. The Colonel shook his hand. "Please", said the form-master, looking most uncomfortable. "It was as Captain Locke suggested, no more than a matter of logic."

At this there was general laughter, with Mr. Quelch taking off his spectacles and making great play of polishing them.

Lady Carstairs said in her own disarming way, "You know, Henry, you should discard your spectacles more often. It softens your character."

Her husband, seeing the discomfiture this remark caused Mr. Quelch, chipped in: "Trust a woman, especially my wife, to be honest but disconcerting."

Meanwhile Mr. Quelch, having regained his composure, thought that Diana, Lady Carstairs was in every respect far above most of the women he had met. In fact, he hoped that before the vacation was over he might have the privilege of more conversations with her. Henry Samuel Quelch was very pleased with life. Changes in abundance there might be, but there was no doubt that some were better than others.

TEAM EFFORT

by Reg Hardinge

In that excellent publication *Sexton Blake Wins* which contains a selection by Jack Adrian of some of the great sleuth's outstanding adventures, my attention was drawn to a paragraph at the bottom of the Bibliography relating to its contents. The *Collectors' Digest* was mentioned and the address of its then editor, Eric Fayne, was given. As a result of my writing to Eric at Excelsior House, I was sent an introductory copy of C.D. which so whetted my appetite that I became a subscriber straight away. I was able to purchase some earlier editions of the C.D. as well as a couple of C.D. Annuals from Eric, so reading matter I now had in plenty.

Eric's editorials during his twenty-eight years at the helm were very often headed 'A Word from the Skipper', and were punchy and topical, and his regular contribution, 'The Princess Snowee's Corner' was full of whimsy. His notes on the monthly 'Danny's Diary'

feature were most informative, and displayed his depth of knowledge of the subject matter. Eric has an enormous bound collection of the old papers, the largest and best of Hamiltonia etc. in the world. Always a keen film enthusiast, he installed the first cinema at his school. On one occasion he met Dame Agatha Christie at the Wimbledon Theatre, and they corresponded until her death.

Mrs. Mary Cadogan took over the reins from Eric Fayne in February 1987 (C.D. No. 482). As an established author (my favourite is her 'Women with Wings'), reviewer and broadcaster, she was well-suited to follow in his footsteps. With her specialised knowledge of Richmal Crompton's 'William' books, Hamiltonia, Girls' periodicals and other similar topics, she soon widened the parameters of the C.D.'s scope. Perhaps her most important achievement has been to brighten the magazine by the introduction of some really lovely illustrations of old and much loved publications. The other thing she has done is to cater for the tastes of the lady subscribers with features on the activities of the Cliff House Girls, the Morcove Schoolgirls, Valerie Drew and others.

In August 1990 (C.D. No. 524) the now popular feature 'Other Famous Detectives' commenced, and in September 1993 (C.D. No. 561) the Nelson Lee Column was renamed 'Nelson Lee - and E.S.B.' In January 1994 (C.D. No. 565) 'Forum' was started. Also Biggles, Rupert, Sherlock Holmes and other old favourites have appeared from time to time. Mention must also be made of the ever-popular eagerly awaited C.D. Annuals, brimming with Yuletide cheer, produced year after year by both Mary and her predecessor Eric.

What about the contributors? Without their efforts and enthusiasm there would be no C.D. to look forward to every month. Three cheers for every one of them, too numerous to be mentioned individually - writers, poets and artists. Consider the hours of research that they put in, with no thought of remuneration, giving of their best to entertain and amuse, and supporting their editor to the hilt.

And then the printers in York and their role. What an excellent end-product they reward us with! 'All ship-shape and Bristol fashion', as they say, - a lovely little magazine!

The Old Boys' Book Clubs too must not be over-looked. They provide the social gatherings for groups of people drawn together by a common interest - nostalgia for the literature of youth.

I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation for the efficient and friendly manner in which the following advertisers have from time to time supplied the additions I have needed for my small collection: - Bill Watson, Mac (E. Grant-McPherson), Norman Shaw (R.I.P.), Darrell Swift of 'Happy Hours', Mary Camidge of The Portman Bookstore, M.J. Shipley, John Beck, George Mann, Alex Baker of the Greyfriars Bookshop, and Colin and Patricia Crewe of Canvey Island. It is people like these who are instrumental in encouraging and sustaining the zest for rediscovering the pleasures of a bygone era.

In essence, the C.D. is the result of a wonderful team effort from a large band of dedicated participants who have kept it going for a very long spell. A complete run of the magazine should, in my opinion, be preserved in archives somewhere for posterity. What a tremendous insight this would give future generations into the things that we today value and cherish. It could even be one aspect of the various contributions to the millennium.

(Editor's Note: I endorse all that Reg Hardinge writes about the team spirit which inspires and perpetuates the C.D. Without the dedication of so many people - and, of course, the tremendous loyalty of readers - our little magazine could not have survived for even half of its long run. With reference to Reg's last point, I understand that the British Library holds a complete run of the C.D., and it would certainly be a service to posterity if at some

time further complete runs could be given or bequeathed to libraries such as the Bodleian at Oxford, and other notable public collections.)

MEMORABLE D.C. THOMSON HEROES

by Des O'Leary

When the Dundee firm of D.C. Thomson burst on to the scene of boys' storypapers, it changed the face of juvenile publishing for ever.

When ADVENTURE appeared in 1921, MAGNET and GEM were already well established. Their stories, firmly based on the popular tradition of public school tales and written by the amazing Charles Hamilton, had already created a gallery of vivid characters among whom was one destined to be the most well-known in all boys' literature, Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School.

As well as E.S.B.'s St. Frank's yarns, the contemporary love of detective fiction was well catered for with Nelson Lee, Sexton Blake and a multitude of other sleuths.

But the arrival of ADVENTURE brought a new wave of fast-moving stories which in their pace and backgrounds remind us that the nineteen twenties saw the rise of the cinema to greater and greater heights of popularity. The editors of Thomsons were like the producers and directors of films; they suggested plot outlines and characters to their writers and artists, and organised their talents to forge a recognisable and attractive "house style". The price paid was, of course, the rule of anonymity. When names were attached to stories, as they usually were in the Thomson annuals, they were almost invariably "house names" used by a number of writers (although Gilbert Chester, that well-known Sexton Blake author, was credited by name in a number of the various annuals).

Just once, to my knowledge, did these weekly story-papers name famous boys' author Percy F. Westerman when ADVENTURE in 1925 serialised one of his stories, "Pete of the Pacific" (published in book-form as "The King of Kilba"). In this case the writer's name was proudly credited.

Amalgamated Press struck back in 1922 with the CHAMPION which had an astonishing success, soon reaching a circulation of half a million copies. But Thomsons had further cards up their sleeves. ROVER and WIZARD joined the fray also in 1922, to be followed in due course by SKIPPER in 1930 and HOTSPUR in 1933. A poll in 1938 showed that WIZARD was the most popular story-paper in the U.K.

"Clicky-ba" has more heads to crack in this complete story of the Burma war.



The ultimate ambition in popular fiction is the creation of a memorable hero or heroine. Sherlock Holmes, Tom Merry, Nelson Lee, Miss Marple, Tarzan, the list is endless. Once having successfully created this character, the fortunate author and publisher can count on a faithful public who will seek out the latest adventure of a Sexton Blake or a Norman Conquest.

The pressure is greater in the more ephemeral story-papers in their extremely competitive market.. D.C. Thomson were, of course, aware of this and, indeed, Dixon Hawke detective hero of ADVENTURE, had actually appeared some years earlier.

The 1930s and 1940s must be considered the era when D.C. Thomson created that array of heroes which still raises echoes in the memories of so many Britons. Strang the Terrible, Red Circle's Mr. Smugg, that enlightened schoolmaster the Big Stiff, the Wolf of Kabul, the Red McGregor, wise football manager Baldy Hogan, footballers Limpalong Leslie and Cannonball Kidd, Alf Tupper the Tough of the Track, the Iron Teacher and many, many others.

With the utmost difficulty I have selected just four to represent what I consider characteristic traits of the typical Thomson hero: patriotism, unorthodox, sturdy resistance to petty discipline, extraordinary talents, independent thinking, indomitable determination and, of course, the heroic stature evidenced by the reactions of all around him. They are: the Wolf of Kabul, Nick Smith, footballer, Wilson, super-athlete and Braddock, Master of the Air.

These all had that extra something which ensured a long-lasting fictional career, first in the story-papers and then in picture strip form.

The first on the scene was Bill Sampson, the Wolf of Kabul, in the WIZARD in 1930. A slim, insignificant figure in dishevelled European clothing, his mastery of disguise and native languages made him feared all along the lawless North West Frontier of India. Any trouble-making mullah or khan would find himself facing the cold blue eyes of Sampson in his Pathan disguise. As well as the twin daggers that the Wolf could handle so expertly there was Chung. This was his amazing hill-man servant, a blood-thirsty savage whose weapon, a reinforced cricket bat, his "clicky-ba" as he called it, cracked many a rebel's skull in defence of his master and the British Raj.

These two ill-assorted figures, the astute British agent and his barbarian companion, set against the background of the Khyber Pass carried on a long tradition of English adventure fiction. India, the "Jewel in the Crown" of the British Empire, had inspired a huge volume of stories and films, but never with a Chung! I guess that it was his "clicky-ba" that caught the imagination of boys so strongly that even in the 1950s Tony Hancock and Sid James held a long discussion about these heroes in one of their never-to-be-forgotten radio programmes. Reinforced by the popular success of films like "The Lives of a Bengal Lancer", "The Drum", "King of the Khyber Rifles" and even perhaps "Carry On up the Khyber!" the Wolf and Chung continued for many years. When Corgi Toys produced in the 1990s a range of Comic Classics vans featuring Thomson character illustrations it was the Wolf of Kabul and Chung who represented the WIZARD. (The others pictures were: ROVER, Alf Tupper, the Tough of the Track; HOTSPUR, Willie Wallop, the cricketer; SKIPPER, the Hairy Sheriff, a gorilla! and ADVENTURE, Peter, the English boy of the French Resistance.)

Like most of these heroes, the Wolf and Chung took on the Axis Powers in the Second World War and "Clicky-Ba" took a fearsome toll of Italian, German and Japanese skulls!

In 1945 ROVER introduced Nick Smith who was, for me, the best of all footballing heroes. "It's Goals that Count" was the title of this account of how a young footballer learns his craft.

In the first story Nick at inside-left heads in the winning goal in the Cup Final at Wembley. His cunning old head, "going a bit thin on top" had done it again! Nick thinks back to his early days as a young boy in a circus. His act of heading a football with a pair of sealions attracts the flashing manager of Hamcaster United who signs him on as a publicity stunt.

Building up his strength by training with the circus strongman, his shooting by constant practice, Nick finally manages to get away from his stunt-crazy manager to join a decent club.

Like the Wolf of Kabul, Nick, though always respectful of genuine experience-based authority, had no time for what he considered ill-conceived and pompous managers. Once he and his friend Reg Bolter played truant from a formal dinner before a game to go and get some fish and chips. When found out they escaped retribution by playing a brilliant game! Such cheekiness with resultant success, to say nothing of working-class fondness for fish and chips, was typical of Thomson heroes! Although willing always to give of their best, they turned "bolshie" when treated in a high-handed or patronising manner. And Nick's long-time team-mate Arnold Tabbs was even more unyielding in his resistance to unworthy leaders!

Matt Braddock was the same. He was a genius in the air with his eagle eyesight and the photographic memory which enabled him to identify enemy aircraft at a glance. Although a constant problem to land-based authority, he was a stickler in the air for correct drill and discipline in his crew and, especially, in his navigator George Bourne, narrator of most of his adventures under the title "I Flew With Braddock".

Braddock made his bow in ROVER in August 1952. His rank stayed as Sergeant-Pilot since he resisted promotion and walked out of the only Officer-training course he attended. His clashes with authority were legend. Always being pulled up for sloppy

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dress, disregarding irrelevant rules, showing insolence to superiors, he invariably came out on top because of his phenomenal talent as a pilot.

Colin Morgan in his full and indispensable study of Braddock in *GOLDEN FUN* 13 (1983) points out what a chord this attitude must have struck with lads on National Service at that time! Unlike most of them, however, Braddock could count on the support of the "higher-higher-ups" who appreciated his unique talents.

Our hero was determinedly working-class. He had been a steeple-jack, self-reliant and working with his hands. He rode a motor-bike and read only Westerns. His sport was darts.

Although convinced that bombers would win the war, he flew a wide range of planes, including Blenheim and Lancaster bombers and American Flying Fortresses as well as Beaufighters, Spitfires, even a captured German Focke-Wulf! But one aircraft for which he really had respect was the Mosquito, perhaps Britain's finest and most versatile warplane. His adventures were retold in picture-strip form after the demise of the story-papers but he also starred in two *books* published by Thomson, the hard-back *I FLEW WITH BRADDOCK* and the Red Lion paperback *BRADDOCK AND THE FLYING TIGERS*. This is a unique distinction accorded to no other Thomson hero. He was surely not just the supreme war-hero but, as Colin Morgan rightly says, "(Braddock) was the only lasting hero created by the Thomson story-papers after the fruitful forties".

Now we come to a figure who in my opinion and that of many others is the most memorable hero ever created by a modern story-paper.

Wilson was the super-athlete who burst like a bomb-shell on to the gloomy war years of the 1940s. "The truth about Wilson" in the *WIZARD* of 1943 was a revelation to me as a ten-year-old. Its pre-war setting, the superb accuracy of the athletic details, the convincing narration by a believable reporter with the authentic-sounding name of W.S.K Webb, all contributed to conjure up an atmosphere of verisimilitude. Was there really someone who could run a mile in three minutes? I was vaguely aware that the great Sydney Wooderson had taken the world record with a time something like 4 minutes 6 seconds. Had I missed something?

As William Wilson's mysterious background was gradually unravelled by Webb, my incredulity grew. As I remember the original stories, Wilson had been born in 1795 and befriended by a Yorkshire hermit who confided to him the secret of an elixir of life which enabled him to live on into the twentieth century!

But the important thing is not this fanciful background. Wilson restores the credibility of British athletics, a point repeatedly stressed in the stories. Although a definite "loner" in his approach to his own feats, Wilson proved ready to train and inspire British athletes in many series. (I remember how disillusioned I felt when the *WIZARD*'s

STARTS TO-DAY—*The thrill-packed story of the wonder athlete of the age and his astounding secret!*



series "Wilson seeker of champions" proved such a disappointment when the 1948 Olympics came to London and British competitors achieved little success!)

What was different about the Wilson stories? In the first place, they made youngsters realise how serious big-time athletics and its essential preparations were. Next, the range of sporting activities undertaken by Wilson was immense. As well as track and field events, he indulged in cycling, weight-lifting, mountaineering, not forgetting boxing and, especially, cricket, where his fast bowling devastated the Australian Test team!

The influence of the Wilson stories on boys can only be called inspirational. International athletes like Bruce Tulloh openly acknowledged their debt, and Bill Lofts has recorded that many others have attributed their initial interest to Wilson. And author-athlete Tom McNabb has recounted on radio the enthusiasm kindled in working-class lads by these stories and the encouragement they provided to train hard and live cleanly.

So I think we may claim for D.C. Thomson an array of heroes who embody the best virtues of the British working-class. They are loyal, patriotic and self-reliant. Given leadership they respect, they respond with unlimited effort. "Jumped-up" authority is resisted and evaded. Once convinced of the true worth of their goals, they are unstoppable.

Whether defeating anarchy, winning a football match, defeating the evil of fascism and defending their country or inspiring respect and a spirit of healthy sporting competition, these larger-than-life heroes give a fine example to any youngster.

(Illustrations to this article are Copyright D.C. Thomson)

THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS

by Ernest Holman

On an occasion such as the present Anniversary, I am quite sure that there are many long-established readers of CD, as well as many far more knowledgeable on Hobby matters than myself, who will do real justice to the time now with us. So I myself will ask permission to take a casual stroll or ramble through those past years.

1946, when CD commenced, was a red-letter date - but regretfully, I was not to learn of its existence for a further 25 years. I suppose I shall really remember 1946 as the time when THE AUTHORITIES decided to return me to civilian life. Nowadays, looking back to that year, I always look back a little further, to 1940. In the very final issue of the Magnet, in his very last Editorial chat, the Editor mentioned a Canadian Newsagent who had been giving a display in his shop of many of the Companion papers. His name was William Gander. That was, then, the starting point for CD - that last issue of the Greyfriars paper. Bill Gander later started Story Paper Collector and then CD came into being - I believe the two overlapped for a while. From that time on, Herbert Leckenby and Eric Fayne took the Magazine on and built it up into the great epic that nowadays continues to flourish under the Editorship of Mary Cadogan.

The remaining years of the 1940s were to produce many treasures - the Bunter Books, the Tom Merry Annuals and, as the years went on, Tom Merry hardbacks and Bunter Annuals. My own favourites of those times, though, will always be the Goldhawk paperbacks, with their continuous episodes of Tom Merry and Co. Later came all those Howard Baker reprints and then the past began to be with us again - and very welcome too!

In no time at all, I have now arrived in the early 1970s. Upon being informed by Ross Storey, Howard Baker's most efficient Administrator, of the existence of CD and of the Editorial name and address, I was pretty soon revelling in the find. It was after inserting an advertisement for a copy of a 1930 Nelson Lee Library that I had quite a

surprise. The issue I sought contained a 'one-off' story of St. Frank's, without the name of the usual writer. I was shortly to hear from Bill Lofts that he had been trying to track me down for some time, as I was the author of the only St. Frank's story to appear in the N.L. that was not written by E.S.B. Later, after reading many articles in CD and CD Annuals, I finally realised that I was one of those dreadful creatures known as 'substitute' writers!

All the same, from then on I became an ardent reader of CD and an occasional and irregular contributor. I was also able to receive great service in borrowing Magnets and Gems from Roger Jenkins and, later, from Bill Bradford's stock of Nelson Lees. These startled me somewhat when I sometimes encountered extracts from my letters to ESB quoted on his weekly page!

Unhappily, I had to give up borrowing from the Libraries when my eyes could no longer cope with the very small print. Similarly, with the Howard Baker reprints. However, I now have quite a collection of hardback and paper back reprints from the old papers which I can still manage to wade through, if only by close peering and slower rate of progress.

My casual ramble has already brought me to 1996. Fifty years, is it? Well, that's only a start - there is no logical reason why it should not go on to reach its Centenary. Tennyson's Brook, like the High Priest of Shangri La, went on forever - and S.P.C.D. will undoubtedly be hitting its hundred, although many of us by then will have handed in our 'dinner pail'. What more is there to say - keep on keeping on, what?

FIFTY - NOT OUT!

Brian Doyle reflects upon the 'C.D.' reaching the age of 50

At 50, one is halfway to a goal, a landmark, a century, and a 100.

George Orwell wrote: "At 50, everyone has the face he deserves." The 'C.D.'s 'face' is its cover, which has usually been eye-catching, apt and worth a second glance or two - or fifty. Every issue has the face, or cover, it deserves - but you can't tell a book or a magazine only by its cover, so after all those glances, turn the page and discover the riches inside...

An old proverb says that 50 is the age by which one is supposed to be rich. See above - the 'C.D.' is rich, in content, in contributors, in its editors, and, of course, in its loyal readers.

Napoleon once said that, at 50, one can no longer love. No wonder he lost the Battle of Waterloo. Leaving aside any other aspects of this remark, I don't think it's too much to say that regular readers of the 'C.D.' love, and have always loved, this unique magazine and what it contains. As the song says, "Love Is a Many-Splendoured Thing", and so is the world of old boys', girls' and children's books, magazines and papers. There are many splendoured things there and the 'C.D.', in its time, in its fifty years, has covered, if not all, a lot of them - a helluva lot, as the late John Wayne might have said.

Mark Twain says somewhere, something about people being "increasingly softened and weakened by the weather of age, after 50." Well, maybe one's nature becomes a little softer, a little warmer, as the years go by, but that just puts one in a nice, cosy mood to read and enjoy - and indeed, to learn from - the good old 'C.D.'; and even if the eyes have weakened a little (and that print *does* seem to get smaller as you get older) you can just put on a pair of spectacles to read it...

Biology dictates that there may be a decline in the sense of taste at 50 and after. That doesn't apply to the 'C.D.' - it helps you maintain a high taste and a good taste for the good things in literature for the young, and for the not-so-young; taste is surely a matter of

flavour - and the Flavour of the Month, of *any* Month, is the 'C.D.'.

Fifty is also apparently the age when body height often begins to diminish, as part of the 'shrinkage' of advancing age. The 'C.D.' has suffered only two 'shrinkages'; in its life as far as I am aware: one was in September, 1951, when its height decreased by half-an-inch (probably because of the vagaries of paper supplies and sizes at the time), but it continued to 'walk tall', and the only other compression it has since experienced was in January, 1989 when, for economic and paper printing reasons, its width was reduced by six-eighths-of-an-inch; but this new streamlined look seemed to suit the magazine, probably due to its healthy diet of good reading material and no fatty content (except, perhaps, for Bunter).

An appropriate and timely glance back at Issue No. 50, of the 'C.D.' (February, 1951) shows that it had (as usual) many good things in it, one of which was the mention, in the Report of the monthly meeting of the London Old Boys' Book Club, at Wood Green, that one Peter Cushing, a 'postal member', had won a copy of the latest Bunter book, in a draw. This was some years before Cushing became a big movie star in all those Hammer horrors, of course...!

Finally, take note of the late poet Philip Larkin's words on reaching the half-century: "Really, one should ignore one's 50th birthday. As anyone over 50 will tell you, it's no age at all! All the same, it is rather sobering to realise that one has lived longer than Arnold of Rugby..."

And one might add to Arnold, such people as Alfred the Great, Captain James Cook, Errol Flynn, Lady Hamilton and Tsar Nicholas II, who all died at 50. Not that the 'C.D.', I hasten to add, is anywhere nears its demise. And we must, I think, ignore Philip Larkin's advice to ignore one's 50th birthday.

On the contrary, let's raise a glass to that great little marvel, the 'Collectors' Digest', on its 50th Anniversary - and let us also hope and trust that, in due course, it sails safely and in good spirits into the snug harbour of its 100th Anniversary.

The chances of its successfully doing that? Fifty-fifty, I would say...!

BIGGLES & Co.

The W.E. Johns Quarterly Magazine

First published in October 1989, Biggles & Co is a non profit making A5 sized illustrated magazine, in full colour covers, with forty-four pages of articles and stories by and about W.E. Johns, the creator of Biggles. Now in our seventh year, the Winter 1995 edition (number 25) included a complete Biggles story and a non-fiction article by Johns. The Summer and Autumn 1996 numbers are now ready.

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John Trendler, 4 Ashdene Road, Bayford, Herts. SG13 8PX.

IN DEFENCE OF POLICE CONSTABLE TOZER by Martin Waters

From time to time in the pages of the 'Magnet' and the 'Collectors Digest' we see occasional references to P.C. Tozer, the representative of law and order in the vicinity of Greyfriars School. From these brief mentions one forms the impression that he is not a particularly intelligent man; on one occasion he is referred to as a 'typical thick village constable'. I think that it is only fair to try and set the record straight.

In the pre-war era the police constable was very much the prince of working men. His job not only provided an above average wage, but also security and a pension that were not usually available to a member of the 'blue collar' sector in those days. Until recent times the vast majority of senior officers in the police force came up from the ranks. The police service was thus one of the few employers to provide the opportunity for a man of modest origin to rise to a senior position. Although the vast majority of policemen would end their careers as constables, some did manage to climb slowly to the highest ranks.

The police force in the depression years could choose its men carefully, and it is worth mentioning that the Kent Constabulary had a very high reputation for many years. P.C. Tozer and his colleagues would have had to endure a very strict code of discipline and petty restrictions that would be unthinkable in more modern times.

Bearing in mind the 'timeless' air of Greyfriars, it is rather difficult to reconstruct the career of P.C. Tozer. He would almost certainly have had other employment before entering the force. He might have been a soldier or a sailor, but he could have been a fisherman or a miner (there were coalfields in Kent until recent times). He would still have been relatively young in 1914, so might well have served in the armed forces during the Great War, returning to the Kent Constabulary in 1919. By the late 1930s, P.C. Tozer would have completed thirty years' service and be able to retire on pension. However, with the approach of another war, he may well have been persuaded to remain in the service. Many older men served in the police force during World War Two, and many police pensioners returned to active service. In 1946 P.G. Tozer would have hung up his helmet for the last time, but he may well have continued to serve the police force in a civilian capacity as a clerk, storeman, vehicle mechanic, etc.

A SPECIAL NOSEGAY FOR THE C.D. by Ray Hopkins

It's a sobering thought to realise, all these many years later, that I may never have come across the fact that such a periodical as THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST existed and, without it as the key, a large part of my life would never have been spent perusing its evocative columns and pursuing avenues in children's fiction I would never have become aware of. It was also the key to realising that I was not alone in thinking with pleasure of childhood reading - but feeling unable to talk about it for fear of being regarded as an immature oddball who should have put childish things aside at the usual time - AND never returned to them! It was a pleasure doubled, too, to come across the first mention of the C.D. in my life in the company of my Dad, also a 'harker-back' to his early days when he revelled in those large-sized weeklies, THE BOYS' REALM, THE BOYS' HERALD and THE BOYS' FRIEND.

It was some time in March 1952, Charing Cross Road was thronged and we paused to look at some second-hand books at Foyle's that were in shelves outside the shop on the side street. We hadn't then begun to pick up hardback copies of school stories of such stalwarts in the genre as Gunby Hadath, Hylton Cleaver and Harold Avery and I, in fact, had never read any of these popular authors, even though I began to haunt, around the age

of nine, the book-shelves of my local Public Library in New Cross Road - sadly, now boarded up and dilapidated - where do locals go for their books now, one wonders?

Facing the door by which we entered Foyle's was a table containing new publications. Several piles of the same book drew us closer. This book was covered in a bright green dust wrapper with a photo of an old gentleman in a skull cap apparently playing chess with a cat! "Can't be our Frank Richards", I said in response to the title which proclaimed it to be that gentleman's Autobiography. "He must have gone donkey's years ago." "It is," my Dad said, "Look". And he pointed to a line beneath the author's name which stated 'Creator of "Billy Bunter".' When we got it home, Dad read the book first and suggested we try to find copies of the C.D. and STORY PAPER COLLECTOR (S.P.C.) mentioned in a list of articles on Greyfriars at the end.

What would these publications be, we wondered, and decided to enquire at the W.H. Smith's bookstall at Waterloo Station which, at that time, had an enormous counter containing more periodicals than one could believe they would ever be able to sell. They didn't sell the C.D. or the S.P.C. but suggested we get in touch with the publisher of the Autobiography who might know where, or from whom, they would be available.

A quick response from Charles Skilton gave us Herbert Leckenby's name and his odd address which sounded as though it had something to do with an Army Base. Yet another quick reply arrived from York where Mr. Leckenby lived, or was stationed, and enclosed a copy of the C.D. with a splendid drawing of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy on the cover which, as an old St. Jim's man, thrilled me no end. This was the April 1952 issue, and I sent by return post to the Editor, profuse thanks, one shilling and sixpence for the copy, and a subscription for further issues.

Also contained in Mr. Leckenby's letter was information as to where I could obtain the S.P.C. which turned out to be beautifully produced on a manual printing press in far



A C.H. Chapman picture from the 1960 C.D. Annual

off Transcona, Manitoba. He also told me of a group of people he thought I might enjoy meeting calling themselves THE OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB, and he informed me that a member lived in nearby Greenwich who could tell me more of the club. On Friday, 18 April, I rang the bell at 12 Ashburnham Place and met Charlie and Olive Wright, and two days later assembled at Waterloo Station with other O.B.B.C. members. We all travelled to Surbiton to attend what became my first meeting of this extraordinary club. The second one, on 18 May, was at Wood Green, home of the Robert Whiter whose drawing of Gussy adorned the April issue, and where I met - were these thrills never to end? - MAGNET artist C.H. Chapman and the actor playing Bunter in the BBC TV series, Gerald Campion. (I learned of these delights, my memory of specific events all those years ago having faded, by re-reading the reports of the various club meeting throughout England - they included the now sadly defunct Merseyside Branch - covering several pages in the C.D. every month.)

As the months went by I blessed the day my Dad and I, quite inadvertently, came across the Autobiography, for not only had I this monthly outing to venues at Greenwich, Wood Green and East Dulwich, as well as a nice day out at the seaside at Hove that first year, but the magazine itself became a fascinating reference work to which I have returned endlessly over the years.

I learned that not only had Frank Richards NOT departed but was writing monthly letters to Herbert Leckenby, giving information of new writing projects involving, among other things, a paperback series of new St. Jim's stories. The man was indefatigable! Reviews of these books were also contained in succeeding issues. Had I not read of these new publications in the C.D. it is most unlikely that I should have been aware that they were even in existence! They were not marketed as vigorously as they should have been. The dust wrapper of the Autobiography had already informed us that there were no less than nine new Greyfriars stories already in print.

There was a very active section of Blakiana edited from Cardiff from which it appeared that there was yet another group of O.B.B. enthusiasts known as the Sexton Blake Circle which met separately from the O.B.B.C. Of the lively, but not always well-supported, Nelson Lee Column I have written elsewhere. That first April issue introduced me to J.N. Pentelow and his Wycliffe School stories written under the name of Jack North. In later issues I would meet D.H. Parry, also known as Morton Pike, writer of historical stories, and T.C. Bridges. All these in a series entitled 'The Men who wrote for Boys.' Follow-on issues of the C.D. also contained another fascinating series packed with information called 'Popular Papers of the Past.' Many of these were new to me but not to my Dad.

There were many lively letters from readers. One from an Australian O.B.B.C. lady member excoriated Frank Richards for worsening, in the new St. Jim's publications, the character of the Cardew she fondly remembered in the GEM: also for omitting Levison entirely, and for leaving out of the Autobiography vital information on his early work. One of C.D. readers' early suppliers of O.B.B. wants, Bill Martin, related that the Queen's husband had returned MAGNETs and SOLs he had sent to him while he was confined to bed with jaundice. There's shining glory for you! This would have been at least forty-plus years ago. Nowadays, when it has been revealed that the Firm at Buck House are 'Jes' Plain Folks' like the rest of us, some of the shine would not be so bright.

Eric Fayne's previous application in regard to a revival of early St. Jim's stories in the GEM having been granted, a plea in the July issue from him to the A.P. to revive the MAGNET fell on deaf ears. As we now know, despite the success of the hardback Bunters, there was no move to provide a weekly paper of 'all-school-stories to read' at this time, when strip stories were taking over. But hope ever springs eternal!

I could continue in this enthusiastic vein for some time yet but readers in the queue behind me, armed with their own laudatory outpourings, are shoving me aside and, as I fall against the banisters, my last cry is "Thanks ever so to Herbert Leckenby, to Eric Fayne and to Mary Cadogan, and their many contributors, for so many years of reading pleasure."

MUSICAL TRIBUTES

OF TIMES GONE BY

by Ernest Holman

You must remember how
The Digest made its bow
And raised our spirits high
To read again of happy stories
Of times gone by

Now the readers greet
Their usual monthly treat
That you can't deny
The pages always speak to readers
Of times gone by

Those days of gladness
Never out of date
No time for sadness
Happy as we wait
All expectant
With postie at the gate
No, that we can't deny

It's still the same old story
Our taste for days of glory
To heights of joy we fly
For we shall always welcome stories
Of times gone by

(With apologies and, of course, thanks to 'AS TIME GOES BY'. This song was first written for a musical show in the 1930s, was played at times by the pre-war Dance Bands and later received a great new lease of life when it was sung by Dooley Wilson in the war-time film, Casablanca. E.H.)

THE PAGES OF THE OLD C.D.

A Musical Tribute

by Peter Mahony

(to the tune of "Old Father Thames")

Verse:

There's some folks who seek the 'Magnet',
And some folks who seek the 'Gem';
But in the world of book-collecting
There aren't so many left of them.
Let's not be too pessimistic
Don't pine for the 'Nelson Lee';
Be happy and optimistic
We've still got the old C.D.

Refrain:

Bunter in the 'Magnet'
Tom Merry in the 'Gem'
Rookwood in the 'Penny P'
Cedar Creek too,
Are waiting for you,
In the pages of the old C.D.

People who know;
People who care;
Something for you and me;
Write pieces on
Charles Hamilton
For editing by Mary C.

There are columns about old Sexton
Blake, and Morcove School.
Cliff House'll be in the next'un
And the Rio Kid calm and cool.

'Just William' has come;
Biggles has gone;
But their fame will always be
Living again -
They'll never wane
In the pages of the Old C.D.

HERBERT LECKENBY ... A Retrospection

by John Geal

With the Collectors Digest in its 50th year of unbroken production, it seems a good time to review the early days. I hope that this insight into Herbert, a complex but likeable character, as I saw him (others may have a different view - such is life) will revive some memories in the older reader of the C.D.; and give the newer members of our fraternity, something of the background to the man who made it all possible.

I was a subscriber to a collectors Circular called the "Bulletin" during 1945-6, in which the sales and wants of a group of collectors were listed, perhaps 40 or so names. Among these was a H. Leckenby. One day, out of the blue, I was sent a copy of NO. 1 Collectors Digest from Herbert, inviting subscription. I joined at once. Herbert later told me he had used the "Bulletin" list and some others he knew as the basis for the first trawl for subscribers, and that he had a 90% response, which got the C.D. off to a flying start. By issue 3 it had settled into a good format. At this time the widening interest in the hobby had attracted the attention of Con. Men, who started advertising bargain offers in EXCHANGE AND MART. Several C.D. subscribers had sent money and had been caught. Herbert, hearing of this, rushed out the now famous edition of C.D. No. 3a, (entirely out of his own pocket), to warn his readers of these shady practices, and thereby saved many more from being tricked, by these spurious adverts, into parting with their hard earned cash.

We corresponded regularly from the start, he wrote fast in a minute but perfectly legible hand, so that any page of his letter would have filled 3 pages in any normal sized writing. Never lost for words, he carried on a wide correspondence with a host of the readers of the magazine, all these letters being written between telephone calls whilst manning the switchboard of Northern Command Headquarters at York.

I met him for the first time at a meeting of the London Old Boys Book Club. Under medium height, swarthy skin highlighted by 2 bright pink spots on his cheekbones, and very bright eyes. A chain smoker, one cigarette lighted from the butt of the previous one. A fast talker; and, as the cigarette rarely left his lip, it would wobble up and down whilst he chatted. This resulted in a steady cloud of ash being deposited down the front of his jacket - which he ignored completely, so that from a distance he appeared to have been lightly sprayed from a can of light grey paint.

He had a remarkable memory - he could quote verbatim whole sections of stories he had read as a boy. Another example - he used to ring me during the quieter periods of the Exchange, and we would have lengthy discussions on various aspects of the Hobby. During these calls there would be several interruptions, when he would break off in mid-sentence to process a call. He would then come back and recommence the sentence at the exact word at which he had broken off the conversation. Never once did he say "Now where was I?" or "What were we discussing?". He'd switch from one activity to another with instant recall.

He was not a passionate admirer of Charles Hamilton or E.S. Brooks. His own devotion was to the Boys Friend, Pluck and the Boys Friend 3d Library. As to school stories, the ones he rated above all others were of WYCLIFFE SCHOOL, stories by Jack North appearing in PLUCK and B.F. 3d Lib. I have never read any of these so cannot comment on the quality of the stories, but to Herbert they were the best.

He did not revere the story papers at all - only the story mattered to him, so that he would part-read a magazine and then fold it into four and stuff in into his pocket to continue later. Under these conditions his own collection was very tatty. Woe betide you if you lent him one of your treasured possessions; it got exactly the same treatment. It was returned, of course, with comment on the story, but in that crumpled state. Most collectors treasure their magazines in the pristine state, this being as important as the contents. Not Herbert: the story first, the paper only a convenient way to get the story. I silently cursed

him many times at the return of treasured item until I learned to stop lending them to him. However, resentment evaporated the next time I saw him, and he gave his friendly grin of welcome, his eyes sparkling with pleasure at the meeting.

His passion for the Hobby was not well received at home, so that running the C.D., collating articles, editing, writing many articles himself, addressing envelopes and posting, were all done in snatches of free time at the switchboard, and sometimes staying on after hours. Under these trying circumstances he never missed an issue, and the Collectors Digest dropped through my letterbox on the 2nd or 3rd of each month. A remarkable achievement under those conditions.

On his many visits to the London O.B.B.C. we would spend time together, and whilst out walking somewhere and chatting he would suddenly disappear into a newsagent shop he had spotted. He re-emerged with a copy of the local paper. This would be turned to the Readers Letter Page, and he would go through these with intense concentration then crumple it up and stuff it into his pocket. If in the course of our travels we went to other neighbourhoods, this action would be repeated, and his pocket stuffed with another paper, so that his macintosh was bulging with newspapers. I never saw him refer to the papers again. What happened to them eventually was a mystery. But this was the man, intensely interested in people's opinions about anything, even about subjects of which he had no knowledge.

So a complex man, a compendium of many characteristics, but I think basically a lonely individual who found his niche in the creation and editing of the C.D., and thereby expanded his horizons, revelling in the widespread friendships that resulted. He was very worried when the time came for him to relinquish the Editor's chair, fearing that his beloved C.D. would fold. He was beside himself with delight when Eric Fayne agreed to take on the task. His one desire had been met - the C.D. was secure and would go on serving the hobby that he loved. If Herbert could have been aware of the success of the C.D. in reaching 50 years not out, he would have been really "chuffed" - the C.D. was his life, and through it he lived it to the full.



Herbert Leckenby

13 years as Founder and Editor under these trying conditions was a tremendous achievement. The Latin language usually has a suitable phrase for all occasions, the following seems appropriate -

SIT TIBBI TERRA LEVIS (May the earth lie lightly on thy grave).

Or perhaps in a more modern vernacular -
"BLESS HIS COTTON SOCKS".

MAGNETS, LEES, MODERN BOYS, SOLS, etc for sale. SAE for list to Neil Beck, 54 Barons Way, Polegate, East Sussex, BN26 5JJ.

Story Paper

Collector's Digest

50

We love Jubilees! Especially those of Gold!

Congratulations to COLLECTOR'S DIGEST, which has brought so much pleasure and happy nostalgia to devotees of a great hobby. (And thanks to this jolly mag that has given US a new lease of life!)

Here's to the Diamond one!

With love from the Cliff House girls.

Jemima Cartwright Barbara Reafem. *Leila Carroll*
Blaise Buxton

Janet Jordan P. Primrose *Clara Trevlyn*

M. E. Bullivant *Julia Crossendale* *Mabel Lynn*

Marcelle Biquet *John Cartwright* *Diana Poynton-Blake*

V. Charmant *Marjorie Hazeldene*

Rosa Redworth *Margery Woods* *Mary Cadogan*



MEA CULPA

from J.E.M.

Ouch! But thank you just the same, Reg Hardinge, for a well-deserved kick in the pants (C.D. October). To have overlooked Mlle. Yvonne's impressive scientific attainments was unforgivable. I simply hadn't done my prep, had I? (Which must say something about *my* education!)

And what about all those other Blakian ladies I implied were academic under-achievers? In mitigation, I did say that it might have been feminine modesty which concealed their educational credentials. I now tremblingly await revelations that Dr. Huxton Rymer's associate, Mary Trent, held high medical qualifications; that Marie Galante long ago did a Ph.D. thesis on Haitian Voodoo; that Fifette Bierce was a star graduate of the French Academy of Dramatic Art before joining up with Leon Kestrel, the greatest male actor in the Blakian saga; and then there was Mlle. Roxane who was clearly a latter-day incarnation of Yvonne ... I've just remembered. She too had a fully-equipped laboratory on her luxury yacht, so she too must have been an accomplished scientist ... Help!

THANKS TO THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST

by Bill Lofts

Some years ago, a subscriber wrote to me to the effect that the C.D. must owe a lot to me for my contributions to it. Very flattering, no doubt, but I always look at this in reverse. If it were not for the many, many people who have given me so much inspiration and encouragement in the hobby, I feel sure that I would not have made a name for myself in the literary field and world of research.

Today I am consulted by publishers, universities, museums, editors and authors. (I have even helped the British Library with queries.)

Unfortunately many old friends have now passed on (including Len and Josie Packman, Bob Blythe, Don Webster, Charlie Wright, Ben Whiter, Gerry Allison and Herbert Leckenby) and I feel a tinge of sadness that they are missing from our celebrations. But they are surely here in spirit. Special thanks to dear Eric, and of course to Mary who has carried on so successfully with old and new features over the last decade.

Frank Richards was once asked why he did not go on to better things than the writing of school stories. His reply was simple: 'There are no better things'. In the same context there are no better things than writing for the C.D.

I hope to write a similar piece to this on its Diamond Jubilee in 2006!

FROM THE EDITORS OF FOLLY

An Ode to the Story Paper Collectors' Digest on its Fiftieth Anniversary

The SPCD, the SPCD,
Has given us pleasure for half a cent'ry.
For Old Girls and Boys
It's one of life's joys
To flick through its pages and gurgle with glee.

The SPCD, the SPCD:
We can't do without it, I'm sure you'll agree;
It's quite indispensable,
Everyone sensible
Knows that it's wonderfully fine therapy.

The SPCD, the SPCD
Recalls the inhabitants of memory.
There's Bunter and Merry
And Bessie and Cherry
All part of our childhood's aristocracy.

The SPCD, the SPCD.
It's so full of snippets that make one jolly.
We're quite overawed
And must really applaud —
Signed: Sue and Belinda (you know, of *Folly*)!

FOR SALE: Howard Baker Greyfriars Library Nos. 1, 2, 3 - £5.00 each. Greyfriars Book Club No. 41 - £8.00. Gem volumes Nos. 4, 12, 13, 19 - £3.00 each. Nelson Lee Volume 2 - £4.00. Sexton Blake Library No. 12 - £2.00. Boys will be Boys, E.S. Turner (N.D.J.) - £5.00. Sergeant Bigglesworth C.I.D. (paperback) - £3.00. The Gem Story - £5.00. D.C. Thomson Firsts - £16.00. International Book of Comics - £15.00. All plus postage. ERIC SHEPPARD, 1 Forge Close, Bempton, Bridlington, YO15 1LX.

HOW I BECAME A "C.D." READER

by Dennis L. Bird

Fifty years of "Collectors' Digest" and only three editors! It is a remarkable achievement, since most of the material on which its writers discourse ceased to be published about 1940, and inevitably readers get older every year. Herbert Leckenby, Eric Fayne and Mary Cadogan deserve our gratitude for keeping "the hobby" vigorously alive over such a time-span.

I am a "Johnny-come-lately," for I did not start reading the magazine until 1988. Perhaps the story may be of interest.

Born in 1930, I had a sister four years older. She was an avid reader of the "Schoolgirls' Weekly", "Girls' Crystal", "Girl's Own Paper", and the little yellow books of the "Schoolgirls' Own Library". For me, they provided an extra source of reading matter - at no cost. To be fair, I offered my sister a reciprocal arrangement: she could see my copies of "The Aeroplane", "The Motor", and the "Boys' Own Paper". Curiously, she never took me up on that.

So I became entranced by the detective mysteries of Valerie Drew and Noel Raymond, the school adventures of the Cliff House and Morcove girls, and the more exotic serials about spies and the South Seas and Occupied Europe. When my sister gave up the weekly papers in 1941, I took them on, and although most of them eventually went for salvage, I collected all the Noel Raymond stories and some serials and (wielding needle and thread and cartridge-paper covers) I bound them up into much-loved books which I still have.

Then I grew up, and spent nearly twenty years in the Royal Air Force. Childhood reading became a fading memory. It was not until I found myself serving in the Egyptian desert that I returned to Noel Raymond, the debonair young man who solved mysteries. Having time on my hands (we worked only from 6.45 a.m. until 1 p.m. in the summer) I tried to develop my writing skills by producing his biography - not for publication, just for fun. I had no idea at that time that anyone else had any interest in the old papers.

Moving on to 1976, it was a drawing in "The Guardian" newspaper that caught my eye. "That's Valerie Drew and her Alsatian, Flash!" I thought. So it was - an illustration to a review of a book called "You're a Brick, Angela!". I had never heard of the authors - Patricia Craig and Mary Cadogan - but I thought it might interest them to know of my Noel Raymond efforts. I wrote, care of "The Guardian". The result was an invitation to call on Mary. So I made the first of many visits to that warm friendly house in Beckenham where there are books on every wall, on the floor, even sometimes on the stairs. Mary's cheerful enthusiasm was irresistible, and I later came to value the opportunities also to meet her husband Alex, who shares my interest in aeronautics, Victorian paintings, and other subjects.

I still had not caught the "C.D." bug, although Mary no doubt mentioned the magazine. It was when she became editor ten years later that I became a subscriber. Then she asked me to contribute - first, a Noel Raymond article for the 1988 Annual. Then I had an idea, inspired by Eric Fayne's long-running and popular "Danny's Diary". What about a similar series on the Schoolgirls' Own Library? So, in the autumn of 1989, "Denise's Diary" began anonymously, recalling the four books issued each month fifty years before, together with some reminiscences about contemporary events in those early war years. Mary wanted to tease readers into speculating on who this "Denise" was. Margery Woods? Marion Waters? Mary herself? Soon the secret was out, but we kept the title.

By now I was thoroughly enjoying researching and writing about the old stories. Articles in successive Annuals dealt with Arthur Ransome, Harry Wharton's double, Dorita Fairlie Bruce, and so on. In "C.D." itself, in 1991, I was able to write a three-part series on the Marise Duncan flying stories by Dorothy Carter (more information has since

come to light about the author, so I must do a follow-up). I was then able to give Mary some technical help with "Women With Wings", her fascinating 1992 book on female flyers in fact and fiction.

Writing for "C.D." has been an exhilarating development in my life, and I am grateful for the opportunities it has given me for research in the British Museum Library. And of course I also enjoy reading what others write. Somehow I never succumbed to Greyfriars when I was a boy, but I read Sexton Blake and enjoy renewing acquaintance with him every month. And I particularly look forward to Margery Woods' contributions, which revive many memories. Then there are the book reviews, the news of the clubs, and Mary's exuberant editorials. I owe many thanks to "C.D."

FROM YOUR PRINTERS

Dear Mary Cadogan,

Congratulations, as you say we have worked for all 3 editors. We started as York Duplicating Services and I am sure Eric Fayne will remember Ken Gore-Browne who was responsible in those days for producing Collectors' Digest on IBM typewriters and duplicating machines.

Now we set on PC, we can even scan in illustrations and then we print books and booklets on our litho presses. I know David Leckenby, an Architect in York, who knew Herbert Leckenby. One of David Leckenby's brothers knew all about Collectors' Digest as his Uncle used to call round with other Collectors and they would then stay for tea.

Enough printer's tales. May we do our best for your readership for many years to come. Well one more tale. We printed our first booklet for the Dean & Chapter of York Minster in 1704. It was the Sermon for the Thanksgiving after the Battle of Blenheim and it was 16 pages long.

From all at Quacks.

MICHAEL H. SESSIONS



MORE 'TRAILERS' FOR THIS YEAR'S C.D. ANNUAL

Several of the items which will appear in the Annual have already been mentioned. Other delights include THE COLOURS OF CHRISTMAS by Margery Woods, SEXTON BLAKE'S PARTNER by Derek Hinrich, a Bulldog Drummond pastiche by A.E. Sims, a Biggles feature, THE PRIDE AND THE PASSION, by Jennifer Schofield, an article on Film Fun by Bill Lofts, and CLIFF HOUSE GIRLS AND OTHERS by Dennis Bird, which pays particular attention to the illustrators.

There are further Hamiltonian items too - we are extremely pleased to be able to include BUNTER KNOWS BEST, a story by Frank Richards originally published in a 1957 magazine, as well as one of Les Rowley's atmospheric vignettes which deals with Quelch, Bunter and a cake.

Look out next month for still more trailers, and meanwhile if you have not already ordered your copy of the Annual please do so as soon as possible. The cost including postage and packing, is £10.00 for U.K. readers and £11.50 for those living abroad.



YOUR EDITOR, MARY CADOGAN, PICTURES BY BOB WHITER



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'PLEASE TO REMEMBER...'

**(It is not only the C.D. that celebrates with a big bang this month.
Below is a seasonable picture from GEM 1290, 5th November 1932.)**

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**Editor: Mary Cadogan, 46 Overbury Avenue, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 6PY.
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