

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL.51

No.609

SEPTEMBER 1997



THE BOUNDER



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THE BOYS' REALM ONE PENNY OF YEAR 1904. SCHOOL, ADVENTURE, CIRCUS, DETECTIVE AND WAR STORIES FROM FAMOUS EARLY CENTURY AUTHORS AND AS THE HEADING STATES: "A BRIGHT UP-TO-DATE PAPER FOR ALL BRITISH BOYS AND YOUNG MEN" 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134

UNION JACK OF YEARS 1923-1927 THESE ISSUES LACK THE DETECTIVE SUPPLEMENTS BUT THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT THE SEXTON BLAKE STORIES ARE ALL COMPLETE. 1004, 1010, 1011, 1012, 1015, 1016, 1019, 1021, 1025, 1026, 1027, 1029, 1030, 1031, 1056, 1057, 1058, 1059, 1063, 1064, 1065, 1066, 1067, 1068, 1069, 1071, 1073, 1074, 1075, 1076, 1077, 1078, 1079, 1080, 1081, 1128, 1157, 1160, 1178, 1201, 1207, 1257

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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OUR ANNUAL

Although I am writing this editorial on a truly sweltering summer day, my thoughts are projected to the season of snow and holly and cosy Christmas reading, for it is time to start work on our Annual.

Several readers have already sent me excellent articles for this, and now is the time for further contributors to put pens, typewriters and word-processors to paper and let me have an abundant crop of articles, stories, pictures and poems.

As you know, I try to make the Annual a good balance of the most popular aspects of the hobby - Hamiltonia, Sexton Blake, Nelson Lee - but there is always room in it for byways as well as highways of our reading and collecting interests.

Enclosed is the order form, and I would appreciate its return to me as soon as possible please so that I can estimate the number of Annuals to be printed. As ever, I have tried, despite rising production costs, to keep the price as low as possible. Next month I shall begin to trail our Bumper Book's 'mouth-watering' contents.

BILL LOFTS

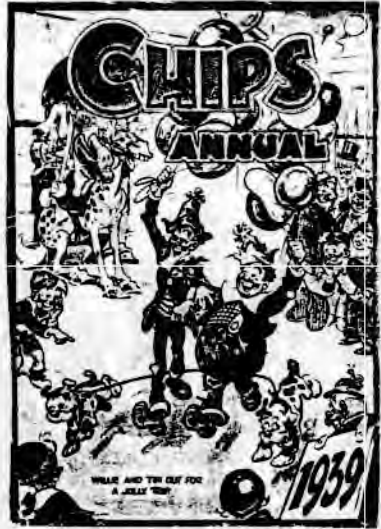
You will see that this issue of the C.D. includes several tributes to Bill, whose loss is deeply felt by many readers. Bill was such an enthusiastic and prolific contributor to the C.D. that I still have a small supply of his articles and, as I am sure he would have wished these to be used, his work will continue to grace our pages from time to time.

ERIC FAYNE

Tributes to Eric, which are still coming in, underline the enormous regard which C.D. readers had for him. WATCH THIS SPACE in our next issue for details about a lasting memorial to him.

Happy browsing.

MARY CADOGAN



A ST. JIM'S "RELATIONS" QUIZ

by Peter Mahony

Name these relatives of leading "SAINTS".

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Eric Kildare's cousin | 11. Ralph Cardew's uncle |
| 2. Mick Mulvaney's uncle | 12. Monty Lowther's guardian |
| 3. Mr. Linton's nephew | 13. Bernard Glyn's sister |
| 4. Gussy's female cousin | 14. Leslie Clampe's cousin |
| 5. Uncle to Talbot and Crooke | 15. Ralph Cardew's grandfather |
| 6. Clarence Tompkins' uncle | 16. Dick Julian's uncle |
| 7. Philip Rushden's married sister | 17. Levison's sister |
| 8. Tom Merry's American uncle | 18. Lumley-Lumley's father |
| 9. Aubrey Racke's father | 19. Mr. Railton's nephew |
| 10. "Paul Laurenz's" father | 20. Jack Blake's footballing brother |

(Answers on page 14)

A Boys' Cinema Memory

by Bob Whiter



Barbara, one of our twin daughters, had asked us (Marie and myself) to pick up a certain video; her working hours preventing her from so doing. Whilst Marie searched for the required movie I wandered over to the Western section. Looking through their large and varied selection, my eyes suddenly alighted on a couple of titles! "The Man from Monterey" and "Somewhere in Sonora". There they were, resplendent in their colourful jackets, showing pictures of John Wayne the featured star.

By way of interest, on "The Man from Monterey" label, Wayne's rival Francis Ford is shown menacing him with what looks like a Colt cap & ball pistol, either an 1849 Pocket Dagoon or an 1851 Navy. As the story is set circa 1850s this would be correct. So many times a Western movie starts off with a subtitle:- Wyoming or some other state, "1860" and the actors are armed with 1873 Frontier model Colts (sometimes you'll see a few comparable model Remingtons). In other words some form of cartridge loading pistol is featured before Smith & Wesson purchased the Rolin White patent in 1856 - Colt was not able to use this loading method for quite some time; the earliest being the converted 1860 Army.

But to return to the videos - the years suddenly rolled away - I was back at school, and a boy named Kendrix from one of the higher forms had approached me with three copies of the *Boys' Cinema*, complete with the free gifts given away with them, these consisted of postcard size tinted photos of cowboy stars; namely John Wayne, Tim McCoy and Buck Jones. We soon arranged a swap, I think I gave him *Wizards* or *Skippers*. This was my first encounter with the *Boys' Cinema*, and I couldn't get home fast enough to devour them! Even at that age I was already a film buff. One of the film weeklies had the story "Secret of the Blue Room", illustrated with stills from the movie. This starred Paul Lucas, Lionel Atwill and Edward Arnold; Gloria Stuart providing the feminine lead. The story always reminds me a little of the famous Cavendish Abbey Xmas series, with the chase through the sliding panel and secret passage sequence which forms the conclusion, as it were, to both stories. The other two copies had - yes, you've guessed it: - "The Man from Monterey" and "Somewhere in Sonora", both starring the Duke.

Needless to say, after reading the stories and looking at the stills, I couldn't wait until they were showing at our local cinemas. In those days they were:- The Palladium, Wood Green Empire (this one even had a Saturday morning show for threepence) and the Palais de Luxe. The Wood Green Gaumont had yet to be built. Whilst reading the "Man from Monterey", I was mystified by the word "guitar". I asked my mother (I had reckoned it was some form of musical instrument) but I mispronounced it, and it wasn't until I showed it to her in print, that the mystery was solved!

Coming back to the present, I bought the two videos - of course they are what John Wayne himself called "three-day wonders" and are classed as B Westerns, nevertheless I enjoyed them. Call it sheer nostalgia if you like, but it was a wonderful trip down memory lane. If anyone had told me then at the age of nine, that sixty-three years later I would watch those same movies 6,000 miles away and would visit the actual sites where they were filmed - I would have said they were crazy!

I can only quote Mr. Chips at the farewell speech:- "Haec olim meminisse juvabit".



BABBLINGS OF BARDELL

Selected by Vic Colby

(These extracts are taken from a C.D. of over 40 years ago.)

"Excusing me, Mr. Blake, but if it's cold enough for a fire, I'll -"

"It isn't, thank you, Mrs. Bardell," the detective said. "We are quite warm."

"For which I'm very glad to 'ear you say it sir", the old lady said, obviously relieved, "seeing as coals is so short, which they calls 'em black diamonds, and I'm not surprised. Worse'n lump sugar as used to be, and that's a fack. All because of the strikes and things, and the miners won't work. And more's the pity which it's not to be wondered at, having to crawl to work on all fours, pore men, like worms - though worms haven't got legs, I suppose - and in some dreadful places under the ground 'aving to lie on their stummicks and bite the coal off, as the milkman told me only this morning - though he's an awful liar, as everyone knows".

Later Mrs. Bardell tapped at the door, and came in diffidently.

"Excusing me for protruding, sir," she said, "but when you are misengaged there's a young lady below as wishes to see you important".

"I will see the lady now Mrs. Bardell," said Blake after a while.

"Oh, sir!" she gasped, "but you can't! She's gone! 'The bird has flowed!' as the saying is. She just took one sort of frightened look up the stairs, sir, and the next minute she was off - off like a jug handle - which she was scared about somethink as is plain, Mr. Blake."

"Oh, sir", she panted a few minutes later, "what a place this is! She's back again, Mr Blake. Playing a game of tippet, or somethink. Shall I show her up?"

(U.J. 815 "*The Strange Case of the Naval Lieutenant*")

"Which as how, Mr. Blake," said Mrs. Bardell volubly, "you live an' learn as the sayin' is, and it's a wise man who knows everythink - and a wise woman neither for that matter, which men 'ave got more brains, I serpose; though wimmen has instink - like pigeons".

"But you wouldn't compare the instinct of a pigeon with that of a woman, would you?" asked Blake.

"Yes I would", said the old lady, "being as which I've knowed plenty that looked like doves, and cooded like 'em, too, which turned out to be pigeons - and carrion pigeons at that - always carrion-on, in a manner of speaking, and gallivanting about miles away from their proper 'en-coops, as the saying is, and never learning nothing".

The old lady took a quick gasp to replenish her wind.

"As I've just learned about this rabbies what the police-notices are about, 'aving read about the chief Rabbis in the sinnygog, and never dreaming as how they had anythink to do with this awful hydriphobia".

(U.J. 825 "*The Case of the Decoy*.)

Tinker had broken the news gently to Mrs. Bardell of Blake's and his own proposed trip abroad.

"So it's Canada this time are it?" she wailed. "The land of the scalloping Indians and wolves, and fierce man eating buffaloeses! And you, Master Tinker, who never will put on flannel next to your skin unless I almost puts it on for you - you goin' to a country where the temperament is a hundred degrees below Nero in the shade. You'll catch your death of cold".

(U.J. 950 "*The Fur Thieves*".)

Mrs. Bardell smiled. "In course we can put Mr. 'Anson up, Mr. Blake. The spare room's in happie-pie order, and I'm sure I'm delighted to 'ear that there American gentleman's coming over. It must be awful for 'im to live in a country where cowboys is always shootin' innercent gals and tying 'em to sawmills and sich".

Tinker chuckled. Mrs. Bardell's ideas of the United States were a trifle coloured by her frequent visits to the cinema.

(S.B.L. 2nd series 149 "*King of the Underworld*".)

"Morning Mrs. B., what's on the menu?"

"Develled kidneys and bacon, Master Tinker, 'though why develled I don't know. Casting nasturtiums on a good breakfast dish like that by bringing ole Nick's name into it. I was allus taught at Sunday School that sich langwidge weren't fit and proper for the well behaved".

(S.B.L. 2nd series 164 "*The Case of the Jack of Clubs*".)



MARTIN HOLT, MULTI-MILLIONAIRE DETECTIVE

by Bill Loftis

The Surprise that came out in 1932 was a companion to the more famous blue-covered *The Bullseye* and was published by The Amalgamated Press. Who can forget *Bullseye*, with its ghostly sensational stories such as "The House of Thrills" and "The Phantom of Cursiter Fields" - almost classical stories, well remembered in our field of literature.

The Surprise followed in a similar pattern, but one stronger element was the huge wealth involved with misers and eccentric millionaires, which must have made the working class readers green with envy. Martin Holt was once a penniless tramp on the road. He became involved with six millionaires, and they had handed over to him all their securities. Later they all died in an earthquake - so he became the richest man in the world. His assets totalled about a thousand millions, so he could buy anything he liked.

Not for him a spending spree on priceless jewels, yachts, fast cars, aeroplanes, or wine, women, and song, however. In his luxury mansion in Park Lane, he operated a detective agency where his assistant was a very clever detective named Pyefinch, plus yet another junior detective and page-boy, named Bill Brewer.

Rugged, with bronzed features from his early life on the open road, and with clear grey eyes, Martin Holt was very successful in all his cases, due mainly to the unlimited wealth at his disposal.

Many years ago I met a former member of the staff on *The Surprise* in the shape of Phil Davis (later editor of *Film Fun*) who gave a lot of inside information about the stories, and authors.

THE SURPRISE Stories are the Best

No. 1

SOMETHING ENTIRELY NEW IN STARTLING STORIES



THE LARGEST SUM OF MONEY EVER COLLECTED IN THE WORLD LAY ON A TABLE TOP—A THOUSAND MILLION POUNDS! AND THAT TUFFEYBROOK WAS PLUSH TO A PERIL! HE SUDDENLY FOUND HIMSELF POSSESSED OF MONEY BEYOND IMAGINATION'S WILDEST DREAM—MONEY FOR GLITTERING JEWELS, LUXURIOUS CARS, FLASHING YACHTS, BRIMMING AIRPLANES, SCOUTING FOOD—MORE MONEY THAN THE WILDEST ENTERPRISE COULD WASTE IN A LIFETIME! WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE WITH SO MANY A POUND? WHAT WOULD YOUR TEAM DO WITH IT? LEARN NOW HE USED IT IN THIS COLOURFUL, NEW-STYLE STORY! "THE MAN WITH A 1,000,000,000!"

THE 'TOFF' - THE CALL OF THE PAST

by Peter Mahony

Part 3

The reformed Talbot's control of the situation does not last. The next yarn of this series finds the 'Professor' turning the tables. The 'flu has decimated the football XI. Tom Merry, reduced to fielding some inadequate reserves, relies on his fit regulars, among whom is Talbot, to carry the side. Marie, in touch with her father once again, suspects that an attack on the 'Toff' is being planned. She sees Talbot, by appointment, in the Head's garden - after dark! (Talbot, despite his reform, is quite ready to break House bounds to meet his girlfriend - this tryst being one of a regular series. I wonder what Dr. Holmes would have thought if he had discovered them?)

At this meeting, Marie makes Talbot promise "not to go to Abbotsford". Instead of applying the obvious remedy to the problem - inform the police and let them arrest Rivers & Co. - Talbot weakly gives in to his wheedling 'lady love' and, as a result, lets Tom Merry & Co. down badly.

He compounds the offence of leaving the beleaguered footballers in the lurch by refusing to give a coherent reason for his defection. Telling Tom the truth would result in the arrest of Rivers - and probably of Marie. Talbot will not lie to his friends (full marks for that!), but his reticence irritates them. His popularity and prestige take a dive.

(Readers who see in Talbot a rival to Tom Merry as the leading light at St. Jim's should note their respective roles in this saga. Talbot tries to do right, but he dissipates a lot of effort seeking compromises with the forces of evil. And, as is usual with compromises, disaster results for him. Tom faced with similar dilemmas later, sticks to the rules - and retrieves Talbot from a sticky end. There is no clearer demonstration in the whole Hamilton/Clifford canon of Tom's rock-like integrity - when the chips are down, he leaves Talbot floundering in the rear. And Hamilton meant it that way!)

The team, with Levison - a very doubtful quantity at this stage - in Talbot's place, cycle to Abbotsford. Rivers, scouting in a car for Talbot, engineers a slight accident which leaves Blake crocked. From Abbotsford, Tom sends a telegram to Talbot to come post-haste as a replacement. (Why there was no travelling reserve with the Saints is hard to understand. Undoubtedly, Talbot's quality as a player would make him preferable to the run-of-the-mill reserve, but sending for him meant a lot of hanging around for both sides. Hardly acceptable by public school standards!)

Of course, Talbot never makes it. Blake, returning to St. Jim's by taxi, passes him en route, but Talbot is afterwards waylaid by Rivers and 'Nobbler'. Chloroformed, he is taken, bicycle and all, to London.

St. Jim's, a man short, are thrashed 5 to 1 by Abbotsford. Bad feeling against Talbot is rife until Blake reveals that he was on his way to join the side. Concern for the Toff's safety replaces resentment. Enquiries draw a blank. Tom Merry suggests that his old confederates may have kidnapped him, but the Head and Mr. Railton are dubious.

Rivers puts pressure on his prisoner to rejoin the gang - the price of freedom. Talbot steadfastly rejects his blandishments. Rivers claims that he is not a "thief" but a "redistributor of wealth"; there is no difference between a Stock Exchange speculator and a cracksman - "they both get hold of other people's money without doing any work"; "the whole world is run on a system of thievery"; "there are only two classes - the looters and the looted". (Hamilton/Clifford/Richards pushed these themes, directly and indirectly, throughout the canon. His opinion of 'self-made men in the city' was always jaundiced: Messrs. Vernon-Smith, Bunter, Racke, Catesby's uncle etc. The landed gentry who did no work, e.g. Sir Hilton Popper, Sir Rupert Stacpoole & Co., were another of his targets for

criticism and censure. Rivers, and others of his ilk, were openly criminal - and perhaps Hamilton preferred them to the sharp practitioners who kept within the law.)

Talbot's reply is classic.

"There are lots of rotten things going on, I know that. But a decent fellow's business is to do his little bit to alter it, to make things better. And his business is to begin by being honest himself. . . . Let every fellow make up his mind to be honest, and all the evils you have talked about will disappear of their own accord. The wrong-doing of others is no excuse for one's own wrongdoing." (A very sound exposition of the Christian ethic 'Do unto others'!)

The Professor, thwarted by Talbot's determination to 'do right', resorts to chicanery. While Talbot is a prisoner, a robbery is to be staged at St. Jim's and clues left which will effectively 'frame' the Toff for the crime. Talbot, threatened with this calamity, still defies the Professor; but, in the privacy of his prison, he succumbs to despair.

If that was where the story ended, Talbot's future would be sealed - for the worse. But the author has a twist or two left. First of all, Marie starts suffering pangs of conscience. Secondly, Tom Merry & Co, get in on the act - to some purpose. Third, Talbot escapes from London, but does not return to a life of crime as Rivers expects. These ingredients feed the plot for one of Martin Clifford's greatest stories - 'Loyal to the Last', the third of this superb trilogy.



Taggles came down to the gates, lantern in hand. He almost dropped the lantern as he peered through the bars of the gate and made out Talbot's face.

Marie, worried by Talbot's disappearance, accosts Tom Merry in the quad and pumps him for information. Tom, who is nobody's fool, discerns that she knows more of Talbot's strange behaviour over the Abbotsford match than she is willing to disclose. When Marie returns to duty, the strain on her conscience becomes too great - she has to retire to her room. Certain that Talbot is her father's prisoner, she decides that she can 'do nothing', otherwise Rivers will be arrested. (This turmoil of father versus boyfriend is a vital cog in Marie's own reformation. Clifford certainly knew how to wrack the emotions!)

The planned burglary takes place and the evidence points to Talbot. Only the Terrible Three

refuse to believe the evidence - Tom Merry, greatly distressed, is loyally supported by Manners and Lowther - the maturing process is affecting all three of them. The rest of the school accepts the 'proof' - Talbot's reputation falls to rock-bottom.

A little later, Talbot is allowed to escape. He trudges from London to Sussex - a major feat in itself - dreading what he will find at St. Jim's. Arriving there, he is advised by Taggles, the porter, to 'cut off' before 'they' call the 'perlice'. Talbot insists on seeing Dr. Holmes, and encounters disaster. His benefactor, outraged by the burglary and Talbot's apparently barefaced denials, refused 'to be taken advantage of' again. He orders the Toff to leave St. Jim's "unless you wish to add more shame to your villainy by being arrested within the walls of your school!"

Talbot stumbles away to the gates. Tom Merry follows and tells him the details of the burglary. His promise to work for Talbot's vindication is the Toff's only comfort as he wanders off into the dark countryside.

Later that night, Tom Merry breaks bounds and searches for Talbot. He finds him - worn out - in a nearby barn; gives him cash, an over-coat - and a 'pep talk': "The truth must come out some day (one of Hamilton's regular themes) and then you will be cleared. But - if you should fall back, then it would be useless to clear you. At any price, you've got to stick it out."

Talbot reassures Tom that there is no danger of him backsliding. He gives Tom a message for Marie - "Tell her I'm safe". The vagueness of his remarks about his connection with Marie set Tom's suspicions working again - if Talbot is 'straight', as he believes, then Marie is not - their relationship obviously stretches further and deeper than the friendship of a schoolboy and an innocent 'Little Sister'. Tom does some hard thinking.

He decides that Rivers is the real culprit - and sets out to get proof. The 'haul' made by the Toff (as everyone except the Terrible Three believes) was small; Tom surmises that the St. Jim's 'crib' will be cracked again. A letter from Talbot to Tom confirms this fear. Tom and his friends keep watch in turn for several nights.

Marie, too, knows that her father is bent on more mischief. He tries to involve her; she refuses to be his accomplice - but remains silent. (The author's clever exposition of her difficulties makes excellent reading. Offered a permanent post at St. Jim's, she is faced with either exposing her father or betraying her employer. Her anguished vacillation is brilliantly described.)

Inevitably, matters come to a climax. Rivers is spotted by Tom; he warns Mr. Railton; the Professor is caught red-handed. He denies the earlier burglary; Tom insists that Talbot was 'framed'; Railton guardedly grants that "it is possible". Rivers is locked in the punishment-room to await the police.

The Terrible Three are determined that Talbot should be cleared. Tom Merry is prepared to let Rivers go in exchange for a signed confession. Armed with a duplicate key to the punishment room (acquired in pre-Talbot times), they go down to confront Rivers - and catch Marie breaking into the School House! Amazed by her behaviour, Tom questions her - and the whole miserable story emerges. She tries to enlist their aid in helping Rivers to escape, but Tom is too hard-headed for her. He insists that Rivers confesses; the crook refuses. Marie, desperately distressed, turns on the tears; the Terrible Three stand firm. At this impasse, Mr. Railton arrives.

Marie tells Railton the whole truth; vindicating Talbot; incriminating herself and Rivers. (Even during this fraught passage, her 'feminine' smugness comes through: "Talbot would never have uttered a word to harm me." Only at this juncture, with retribution looming, can she say a word to clear him! The traffic in this friendship is a bit

one-way!) Rivers, realising the game is up, agrees to write a full confession. Then he is left, in an unlocked room. By morning, he has made his escape.

Talbot is cleared, but missing. Marie is kept out of the picture when the incident is revealed to the school. A search for Talbot proves unsuccessful; eventually, Tom Merry & Co. get a week's leave to seek him in London. Their search is depressing and, seemingly, futile. Poverty-stricken areas; homeless vagabonds; miserable weather - all combine to dash their hopes of success. Each night, they patrol the Embankment; and, in drizzling rain, they spot a "ragged, tattered figure, looking down at the river" - one among many. It is Talbot - "thin, wan, emaciated - a face of death." He has been starving; he is on the verge of a major illness.

They get him to their hotel; he is not able to eat; a doctor is called; Talbot collapses; he awakes delirious. An ambulance is hired; he is taken to St. Jim's. Marie nurses him through a crisis of life and death. He recovers; is reinstated on the old footing; Marie remains as a permanent member of staff - and all is calm and bright.

The last chapter of this story is one of Clifford/Hamilton's finest. Entitled "Through the Valley of the Shadow", it describes the dismal, dirty, desperate condition of London's seamier areas during World War I. The hopelessness of the poor wretches living 'on the streets' is depicted in a style worthy of Dickens and *Oliver Twist*. The dialogue is vivid: here's a sample:

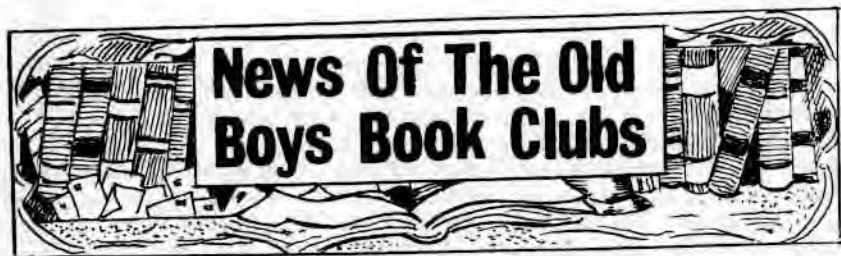
"These are hard times," said Talbot. "When my money was gone - the money you gave me, Tom - I had to sleep under arches, in brickyards - anywhere I could get for shelter. And that soon settles a fellow's clothes. You can't ever get clean with that kind of life. They talk about the poor being dirty. How are they to keep clean, Tom?"

Charles Hamilton rated "The Housemaster's Homecoming" as his best *Gem* story. I would submit that this trilogy, particularly Part 3, is better. Talbot's strengths and weaknesses are grippingly displayed; Marie Rivers' sweetness is emphasised, while her deviousness is subtly indicated; Tom Merry's tough Christianity - no compromises with wickedness - provides the foundation for the eventually satisfactory outcome. Other strands are developed - further signs of Levison's reform; Marie's gradual realisation of a 'better way'; Manners and Lowther maturing like their leader. All in all, a grand saga, full of drama, emotion and great promise for the future. A reprint of the full Talbot story is long overdue. (To be continued)

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.

WANTED: The Hornby Book of Trains, also any Hornby or Meccano literature, badges etc. Bob Bligh, 55 Arundel Avenue, Hazel Grove, Cheshire SK7 5LD.
Telephone: 0161-483-7627.

WANTED: Howard Baker Volume No. 24 "The Kidnapped Schoolboys", in any condition. Reasonable with D/W preferred. Buy or exchange for Baker nos. 49 or 58 (excellent condition with D/W). Andrew Miles, 7 Bower St., MANLY NSW 2095, AUSTRALIA



LONDON O.B.B.C.

The August Chingford meeting took place on a blisteringly hot day . . . the sort of day when one would feel happiest sipping a ginger pop outside Uncle Clegg's in Friardale. However, members of the London OBBC were to be found frowsting indoors, taxing their brains and perspiring freely at a meeting mainly featuring mind-taxing quizzes, covering many diverse topics.

Our composure was restored by a fantastic tea provided by The Potts, notably including the most delicious jam and cream scones I've ever tasted. Yummy!

Next month: Our annual luncheon at The Bull & Crown, Chingford, on September 14th at 12 o'clock.

Internet Update: Riding the crest of the great wave of interest in this new electronic medium is our own Dave Marcus, who has proudly announced the foundation of the London OBBC's own web-site, which can be located at this address:
<http://www3.mistral.co.uk/dmarcus> VIC PRATT

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

A small turnout for our free and easy August meeting - planned thus, because of many people being on holiday. Those that were holidaying in Great Britain should certainly have been having good weather.

We were pleased that Keith had got home safely to Thailand and we look forward to his being with us next year.

A brief discussion took place on the possibility of changing the name of the Club to enable the title to incorporate more aspects of quality literature for children and to enable females to associate to the Club more. We realised this suggested change of name was easier said than done so we came to no conclusion.

Paula Johnson spoke on her love for the Chalet School stories, and as well as talking about the books, was able to answer questions on the life of Elinor Brent-Dyer. Darrell had brought along his small collection of first edition Chalet School books with dust wrappers.

Our next meeting is on September 13th with Mary Hanson speaking on her research into "The Sheriffs of Yorkshire" and Derek Marsden from Liverpool on "The Blue Bird: a D.C. Thomson Boys' Paper in Disguise?" JOHNNY BULL MINOR

THE NORTHERN O.B.B.C. ABROAD

A section of the Northern O.B.B.C. recently held a "mini-branch" meeting in Thailand and Australia!

I represented the Club as I stayed with Club Member Keith Normington, now living near the holiday resort of Pattaya, Thailand. An extremely pleasant two days were spent with Keith and his wife. Not having a profusion of hobby friends visiting Thailand from England, Keith, as can be imagined, spent a great deal of the time discussing the hobby with me. Some of his collection is at his new home and he will soon be arranging to have

more sent to him. With the aid of his computer, Keith is about to scan various items and retain them on disc. Because of the humid atmosphere, our old papers don't fare too well in his part of the world. With regular correspondence going back and forth between Great Britain and Thailand, Keith is being kept up to date with things here.

Then I had two weeks with Jack Hughes in Pimlico, Queensland, Australia. Jack is a keen reader of the C.D. What a super collection he has! It would be the envy of many British collectors and, as Jack has acquired all the items "down under" or through applications for books to be sent from the U.K., this is a remarkable achievement.

It is not often that Jack has the opportunity of having a hobby friend staying with him, so readers can imagine the amount of time that was spent talking about hobby matters. We chatted for hours sitting in the garden, sheltering from the sun, and in the car, as we travelled from one interesting place to another, and also round the meal table - perhaps to the boredom of Shirley, Jack's lovely wife who looked after me and made me feel so welcome.

One thing I have learned through twenty years of being in our hobby is that our hobby knows no bounds. I have made so many friends throughout the world, and it is through their kindness that I have, on occasion, been able to pay them visits. The Northern Club now has a new type of corresponding member - those on the Internet, so our monthly meetings do not just have "correspondence" on the agenda, but also the E-mail that has arrived since the previous month!

Those readers of the C.D. who live in Australasia may like to contact Jack. It is realised, of course, that in being such a vast country, with hundreds of miles between major cities and towns, it is not easy to have regular meetings, but there is the use of the postal service. There used to be the Golden Hours Club in Australia - so there may be a chance that this may be resurrected even if just by mail.

DARRELL SWIFT

(Editor's Note: Andrew Miles of 7 Bower St., Manly, NSW 2095 would also like to be in touch with other Australian C.D. readers and collectors.)

ANSWERS TO ST. JIM'S QUIZ

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Micky Kildare | 11. Lord Lilburne |
| 2. Mr. Phelim O'Toole | 12. James Lowther, J.P., M.P. |
| 3. James Carstairs | 13. Edith Glyn |
| 4. Ethel Cleveland | 14. Lieutenant Frank Leslie, R.N. |
| 5. Colonel Lyndon | 15. Lord Reckness |
| 6. Mr. Samuel York | 16. Mr. Moses |
| 7. Gertrude Bainbridge | 17. Doris Levison |
| 8. Mr. Gabriel Poinsett | 18. Mr. Lascelles Lumley-Lumley |
| 9. Sir Jonas Racke | 19. Victor Cleeve |
| 10. Commander Durrance, R.N. | 20. Frank Blake |



It helps the C.D. if you advertise your 'wants' and 'for sale' items in it. (4p per word, or displayed ads. at £20 full-page, £10 half-page and £5 quarter-page.)



BILL LOFTS

I was first introduced to Bill Loftis in late 1977 when I attended my first meeting of the Cambridge Club as a member. I recall the speaker was cartoonist Terry Wakefield, but Bill was present and his name rang a bell in my memory. On arriving back home I realised where I had come across him before: "The Men Behind Boys' Fiction". I had purchased this wonderful mine of information by Bill, and Derek Adley, in a Manchester bookshop early in the 1970s soon after I started collecting boys' papers again. I was living in North Cheshire then and working in Manchester. So, to suddenly find myself several years later in the presence of one of the greatest researchers our hobby will ever know, was a great occasion. I came to know Bill so well with his four or five a year visits to the Cambridge Club. Whilst the Collectors' Digest is a link with the other clubs, Bill was a link in human form, as he regularly toured the various clubs around the country, often making long and trying train journeys to these. At Cambridge we made him President - after all he was the co-founder, and he usually gave a contribution in the form of a talk whenever he attended one of our meetings. He also formed individual links for exchange of information. He was the central point of reference and would put people in touch with others when they sought information. He certainly directed many to me who wanted details about the "Boys' Own Paper", which was my particular forte.

Despite his deafness - the result, I understand of a wartime explosion (we all must have experienced the oscillating hearing-aid!) - he managed remarkably well to carry out his researches, interviews, and deliver his talks. His last visit to the Cambridge was in March 1997 when he talked on advertisements in boys' papers. He hadn't been to visit us since our 25th Anniversary gathering the previous June because of ill health, and he had lost weight and looked quite gaunt. We were devastated on hearing about his severe stroke and subsequently his passing on.

We will always remember Bill, as the last original member still attending, who was in at the beginning of the Cambridge Club. He provided our figurehead, and, to a large extent, it was his insistence that we held the 25th Anniversary which turned out to be such a joyful occasion. We were proud to have Bill as our President and feel as though the backbone of our Club has suddenly gone - it will take some time to restore.

Keith Hodkinson
On behalf of the Cambridge Club

W. O. G. (BILL) LOFTS - AN APPRECIATION

by John Beck

I first met Bill in the 1960s, when as a member of the London OBBC I attended meetings and was able to listen to his very knowledgeable and well researched talks on artists, writers and editors of the Boys' and Girls' papers published between the wars. It was in the 1990s that our friendship developed, when I asked him when he was planning to do an update of the very popular Rupert Index he had produced with Derek Adley. He said they had no plans but if I wanted to undertake the task they would sell me the copyright of their book and research. This was duly done, and from then on he became a regular visitor to Lewes when we would discuss many and varied subjects related to the hobby which had led to our original meeting.

Bill last visited in April and was in good form, having fully recovered from a bout of ill-health he had recently suffered, so it came as a great shock to hear of his stroke.

I am sure he has now teamed up again with Derek and is able to talk to all those authors and artists who had slipped off this mortal coil before being tracked down by the pair. I look forward to reading further Lofts and Adley Indexes when my time comes. The Hobby owes a lot to him and he will be sadly missed.

(John Beck is the Secretary of the "Followers of Rupert". Bill Lofts had been a honorary member of the Society for a number of years, elected in appreciation of his early research in Rupert which resulted in the production of the original Rupert Index.)

J.E.M. WRITES:

Bill Lofts' passing so soon after Eric Fayne's is another dreadful blow to us all. Their dedication to the Hobby is a loss that will be hard to repair, though their immense erudition remains.

It is probably true to say that no one had a greater range of systemised knowledge than Bill. What he didn't know he was always promptly and doggedly prepared to track down. He was rightly proud to call himself "a sort of detective" and his feats of investigation were prodigious. Tracing the widows of old Sexton Blake writers for a TV company which wanted to pay royalties on a Blakian series it was making, was only one of Bill's investigative triumphs (see Digest No. 464).

My personal memory of Bill is of a visit to my home in Brighton a number of years ago. His happy, shining face as he ate his way through an enormous tea reminded me irresistibly (and affectionately) of Billy Bunter! Not a bad memory to keep of a man whose abiding interest in those wonderful old story-papers enriched all our lives.

FOR BILL

We have suffered yet another very sad loss with the death of Bill Lofts. His contribution to our knowledge of the story papers is virtually immeasurable and his generosity in sharing that knowledge will be greatly missed. I for one will never forget his friendly response to my requests for information about authors. Rest in peace, dear Bill, affectionately remembered always.

Margery Woods

I personally only knew Bill Lofts for a far too short five years through membership of the South West O.B.B.C. In that relatively short time I came to enjoy his enlightened knowledge of the world of old boys' papers such as the *Magnet* and the *Gem*, together with his always fascinating facts on short-lived papers like the sf-based *Scoops* and the free gifts from within their pages and so on. Seeing him speak gave life to his well-researched articles in the CD, particularly the delightful vignettes in "Other Favourite Detectives" - always entertaining with a touch of dry Loftian humour.

I loved the good-natured repartee between E. Grant McPherson and Bill at our meetings as they argued the relative merits of their two great schools, Greyfriars (Bill) and "a *real* school" like St. Franks ('Mac'). On a personal note I will miss the bonus of those stolen extra minutes of chat with Bill as I drove him to the railway station after the meeting.

I will also miss the presence of one who gave so much of himself to our hobby. I hope he's in a schoolboy heaven of the Hamilton variety!

Laurence Price

BULLDOG DRUMMOND

by Brian Doyle

Part 2

Sapper's writing style was breezy, easy-to-read, full of action with touches of humour, and was basically enjoyable, as it swept you along. What readers may not notice as they lose themselves in the easy-to-digest yarns, is Sapper's sometimes careless writing and occasional unintentionally-hilarious inconsistencies. Some of Drummond's friends may marry in one book, then appear as bachelors in the next. His cook-housekeeper, Mrs. Denny, may be dead in one book, but alive and cooking in the next. The Sports Club, in St. James's Square, London, is also variously called the Junior Sports Club, the Senior Sports Club and the United Sports Club As critic Jack Adrian once pointed out: ". . . he frequently had trouble with his characters' identities, especially those of his heroines, whose names sometimes change during the course of a single chapter"

Clichés appear regularly. A girl may have a skin 'like the bloom of a sun-kissed peach'. Villain Carl Peterson snarls a lot, in fact he snarls far more than he actually speaks - especially when he's addressing Drummond. He and other crooks tend to 'sneer' incessantly too. Oft-repeated phrases include ". . . and then it happened . . ." and people were forever producing 'wicked little automatics' - whether guns or washing-machines was not made immediately clear.

But Sapper is represented by at least one passage, in the august *Oxford Book of Modern Quotations* (published in 1991): "Hugh pulled out his cigarette-case. 'Turkish this side - Virginia that.'" (from *Bulldog Drummond* (1920), Ch.8.)

And it was reported that Sapper took 'immense care' with his writing, and once threw a manuscript of 5,000 words on the fire in disgust, as he felt it fell below the standard he had set himself!

The name of Gerard Fairlie looks large and important in the Bulldog Drummond saga. Fairlie, like Sapper, had a successful and distinguished career in the Army (in his case, mainly in the Scots Guards) and he, too, retired as a Lt. Colonel. They were close friends for nearly twenty years, until Sapper's death. Sapper once said, in the BBC Radio programme *In Town Tonight*, that he had modelled many of Drummond's qualities on Fairlie's. But another story suggests that Drummond was based loosely on one Colonel Stapleton-Cotton, whom Sapper had met during World War One.

It was Sapper who encouraged Fairlie to write, and when he was dying at his home in Sussex, in 1937, and the two men were writing together a stage play *Bulldog Drummond Hits Out*, Sapper suggested that Fairlie 'take over' the character of Drummond and continue to write books about him; he was worried about his wife, Violet's, financial future, and the costs of educating their two sons. It was agreed, with the approval of Sapper's publishers and his agent, that Fairlie should complete the stage play and continue with the novels, including a new one, for which Sapper had drafted the general story. Sapper finally died in August, 1937, aged only 49.

The play was produced in London later that year (more of that later) and was followed, in 1938, by Fairlie's first Drummond novel *Bulldog Drummond on Dartmoor*. The title-page read "A novel, based on a story by Sapper and written by Gerard Fairlie". Subsequent Drummond novels by Fairlie were 'By Gerard Fairlie, Following Sapper'.

Gerard Fairlie wrote six more Drummond novels 'following Sapper': *Bulldog Drummond Attacks* (1939) (titled *Bulldog Drummond At War* in the USA), *Captain Bulldog Drummond* (1945), *Bulldog Drummond Stands Fast* (1947), *Hands Off Bulldog Drummond* (1949), *Calling Bulldog Drummond* (1951) and *The Return of the Black Gang* (1954). He also wrote over 30 other novels, featuring such characters as Johnny Macall, Victor Caryl and Mr. Malcolm, as well as two plays, other non-fiction books, and many screenplays. He made his Drummond stories more thrillers than spy novels, and also made our hero a more likeable and less prejudiced character. He also toned down the general violence. Fairlie had an exciting and distinguished World War Two (being parachuted into enemy-occupied France to carry out secret missions) and being awarded the Croix de Guerre. He worked in Britain and Hollywood, writing screenplays for numerous films between 1931-49. In his early days, he wrote one story and two serials for *The Thriller* between 1929-31, and also wrote at least one serial for the *Union Jack* (2nd series). *With Prejudice*, his entertaining autobiography (containing much about Sapper) was published in 1952. He died in 1983.

One other book which features Bulldog Drummond should perhaps be mentioned. *Combined Forces* by Jack Smithers (1983), sub-titled "Being the latter-day adventures of Richard Hannay, Bulldog Drummond and Berry & Co." was an amusing story, in which Drummond was 60 and a huge man, and his wife, Phyllis, had really run to fat and was huger still. They have various adventures in 1950 Portugal, and meet several old friends, including Irma Peterson, no less

And what of Bulldog Drummond on the stage? In 1921, famous actor Gerald du Maurier, who had scored such a huge success in the title-role of "Raffles" in 1906 (as well as in many other productions), achieved an even greater success (sensation might be a better word) when he portrayed the eponymous hero in the play *Bulldog Drummond*, which he also co-produced and co-wrote with Sapper, based on the original novel. It ran for 470 performances at London's Wyndham's Theatre and was, as they say, 'the talk of the town'. Algy was played by Ronald Squire, Carl Peterson was plump, balding Alfred Drayton (later to co-star in many of Ben Travers' popular farces), and Claude Allister (later to appear as Algy in many Drummond films) appeared as Hiram G. Travers. A.E. Matthews took over the role of Drummond when du Maurier was on holiday and also played it in New York. Du Maurier revived the production again at Wyndham's, in December 1922.

Du Maurier was honoured with a knighthood during the original run of the play and further royal approval came in 1932 when du Maurier was invited to put on a special Royal Command Performance of *Bulldog Drummond* before King George V and Queen Mary, in aid of charity. The one-off glittering cast included such theatrical luminaries as Cedric Hardwicke, Gladys Cooper, Edith Evans, Raymond Massey, Alfred Drayton, Gordon Harker and, of course, the great du Maurier himself.

Bulldog Drummond Hits Out, the play written by Sapper and Gerard Fairlie during the former's final illness, was produced at London's Savoy Theatre, in December 1937, with Henry Edwards in the title-role, Michael Shepley as Algy, and the lovely Judy Campbell as the heroine. It ran for only a few weeks. Edwards, though a popular movie star, was evidently no du Maurier

The next stage production (only loosely connected with the Drummond saga) can scarcely be mentioned in the same breath and is included here only for the record. This was a travesty called *Bullshot Crummond* and was produced at the Hampstead Theatre in 1974, later transferring, unbelievably, to off-Broadway in New York. One Alex Shearman was Captain Hugh Bullshot Crummond, and a feature film version was made (even more unbelievably) in 1983. It was shown on British TV in 1995, and was so dreadful and unfunny that I switched off after 15 minutes

Coming to the cinema screen, there were no fewer than 23 Bulldog Drummond motion pictures and there follows a brief gallop through the many celluloid 'Bulldogs'

In 1922 came the first British silent film in the series, *Bulldog Drummond*, with English matinee idol Carlyle Blackwell as the great man; in 1925, Jack Buchanan starred in *Bulldog Drummond's Third Round*.

In 1929, Ronald Colman was the first sound Bulldog in *Bulldog Drummond*. Sam Goldwyn produced and it established Colman as a top star; he went on to make *Raffles* and other famous pictures. He was nominated for a 'Best Actor' Oscar for his Drummond, and jointly for another film titled *Condemned* that same year. But the Award went to George Arliss for *Disraeli*. Claude Allister was Algy for the first time and Joan Bennett was Phyllis. The picture was quite good but marred by one unintentionally hilarious sequence set in a 'typical' English country pub (the size of a barn) and depicting what Hollywood imagined went on in such a place. Singing was what went on, apparently, with a large choir of seemingly perfectly-trained singers harmonising immaculately with the lead-vocalist in what amounted to a major production number. It was truly dreadful, but Goldwyn refused to cut it, even after a complaint from Sapper himself (who commented mildly and with commendable restraint that he thought the scene 'unauthentic'). The other blot on this movie landscape was Allister's Algy who played the 'silly ass' character to the point of extreme mental backwardness. The film turned out to be a big hit, however, and I suppose we must remember that this was 1929, after all

In 1930 came another Hollywood version, this time *Temple Tower*, with one Kenneth McKenna as Drummond and Cyril Chadwick as Algy. By all accounts, McKenna must be top of the list of the worst Drummonds in screen history - miscast, weak, unconfident and showing no dash or virility whatsoever. *Yorkshire Terrier Drummond* would have been a better title, it seems

In 1934, Ronald Colman struck back again in *Bulldog Drummond Strikes Back*, with Charles Butterworth as Algy, and Loretta Young as the lady-in-distress. Later that year came *The Return of Bulldog Drummond* with no less than Ralph Richardson as B.D. The embarrassing Claude Allister continued to make an ass of himself as Algy, Ann Todd was Phyllis (now Mrs. Drummond) and the marvellous Francis L. Sullivan was an ideal Carl Peterson. This was the first British Drummond talkie.

In 1935 came a curious but highly-enjoyable Drummond spoof, but exciting and action-packed as the real thing. *Bulldog Jack* starred Jack Hulbert as a chap who impersonates Bulldog Drummond (seen briefly and played by Atholl Fleming). Jack's real-life brother, Claude, was Algy, Fay Wray had escaped from King



John Howard and Louise Campbell in *BULLDOG DRUMMOND'S REVENGE* (Paramount, 1937).

Kong and crossed the Atlantic to play the heroine, and Ralph Richardson, evidently tiring of playing Drummond the previous year, now changed sides to appear as the dastardly villain, Morelle (not to be confused with Ernest Dudley's popular sleuth!). 'Wot larks!' as Dickens' Joe Gargery might have said. The funny thing was that, though a parody with plenty of comedy, this picture was shown in America with all the humour taken out and billed as *Alias Bulldog Drummond*, a straight thriller! Rumours that a Scottish version called *Bulldog Lock* was produced were untrue. The screenplay, by the way, was co-written by Gerard Fairlie.

1937 was a bumper year in the Drummond screen saga, seeing a total of four films featuring three different actors in the role. The British one was *Bulldog Drummond at Bay* with John Lodge. *Bulldog Drummond Escapes* had Ray Milland in the role (with Reginald Denny as Algy). Next came *Bulldog Drummond Comes Back* - but when he came back he was a different chap, namely John Howard, who was quite a good Drummond. So good and popular, in fact, that he played the part in a further six films over the next three years in this new Paramount series. Each picture ran for only an hour and they were really supporting 'B' movies. For the record, the remainder in this series were: *Bulldog Drummond's Revenge* (also 1937), *Bulldog Drummond's Peril* (1938), *Bulldog Drummond in Africa* (1938), *Arrest Bulldog Drummond!* (1938), *Bulldog Drummond's Secret Police* (1939) and *Bulldog Drummond's Bride* (1939) in which Drummond married Phyllis (Heather Angel) - again! (The screenwriters were taking a few liberties with the order of events) All these pictures were made in Hollywood.

I disregard a film called *Bulldog Sees It Through* (made in 1940) starring Jack Buchanan as 'Bulldog Watson' a test pilot, since it has nothing to do with the Drummond screen saga. It was merely a routine 'B' picture.

In 1947 came a curious pair of Drummond films. *Bulldog Drummond At Bay* was a sort of re-mark of the earlier production with this title, but there was no Algy or Phyllis. In this one, Drummond was unmarried, but had a boy assistant played by young Terry Kilburn (the lad who said 'Goodbye, Mr. Chips' to Robert Donat at the end of that wonderful movie). Drummond was Ron Randell, as he was in *Bulldog Drummond Strikes Back* (again with boy assistant Kilburn). It bore no relation to the earlier film, or U.S. book, with the same title. Randell played Drummond as 'Bulldog Drummond - Secondhand Car Salesman' in both and was completely routine and instantly forgettable in the role.

In 1948, Tom Conway (having recently finished his tenth and last 'Falcon' picture) flitted nimbly from bird to canine when he took over the part of Drummond in *The Challenge*. Later that same year, he was B.D. again in *Thirteen Lead Soldiers*. Conway played Drummond exactly as he had played 'The Falcon' - the words that spring to mind are 'laid-back' and 'disinterested' (Conway, of course, was the real-life brother of George Sanders, famous in his time as 'The Saint' on-screen.)

Drummond was showing his age in the 1951 film *Calling Bulldog Drummond*, in which Walter Pidgeon portrayed the durable hero with a kind of tired resignation, as if everything was really too much trouble. He was, in fact, meant to be an ageing Drummond, called out of retirement. David Tomlinson was Algy (possibly the best) and lovely Margaret Leighton was an undercover agent. Gerard Fairlie co-wrote the screenplay, based on his own story.

There was a loud silence for many years on the movie Bulldog front, until 1967, with a film titled *Deadlier Than the Male* (an oft-used title), in which Richard Johnson played a character named Hugh Drummond (no mention of 'Bulldog'). He was a virile, handsome, action-hero, more of a Bond than a Bulldog, and there were many pretty, bikini-clad girls around. Nigel Greene was Carl Peterson. It was glamorous, empty nonsense and Johnson repeated it all in a follow-up picture, *Some Girls Do* in 1971. This time Carl Peterson was James Villiers. Again it was all more sub-Bond than sub-Drummond.

And that was it, really, so far as Bulldog Drummond's adventures on the silver screen went. Apart from a British film producer, Timothy Burrill, who announced in 1985 that he had bought the entire film rights to all the Bulldog Drummond books and was developing a £10 million production to start shooting later that year. His plans were apparently approved by Sapper's son and the publishers' agent. Burrill commented in the press: "Bulldog Drummond's a very big, rugged man - I'd really like to cast him from the second row of a university rugby football team," and that sounded reasonable. Then he had to spoil himself by adding sagely: "Drummond seems such a perfect subject for a film today that I'm surprised no one thought of it before me!"

But they did, Tim, they did

And, sadly, nothing more was heard of Mr. Burrill's plans.

But Hugh Drummond will probably be back one day. After all, he's one of the 'Bulldog Breed'

(Next in the series: The Scarlet Pimpernel.)

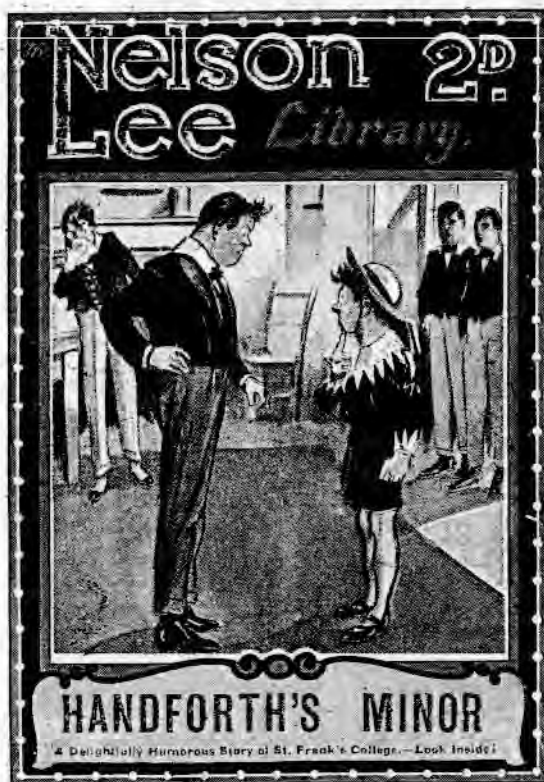
FORUM

Roger Jenkins writes:

Mark Caldicott's interesting article on Handforth brought back a number of memories,

including the occasion when Brooks informed the London OBBC that he had been instructed to introduce a Coker figure into St. Frank's. Handforth was the result and, though both had a bull-at-a-gate approach, Coker was amusing because he never got away with anything, whereas Handforth could be an utter bully. I believe it was in the Heath series when the trio were investigating mysterious events at a lonely house. Handforth discovered his sister had eloped and was living there, and ordered the investigation to stop, without giving a reason. When Church and McClure objected, Handforth battered them into submission like a young thug.

Bunter, of course, was in an entirely different category. It is certainly possible to hate Bunter, as Mark says, especially during the decade 1917-1927. With the Whiffles Circus series, however, the reader was invited to sympathise with him, and even to hope that he would get away with his outrageous behaviour, and of course that is just what he did.



No. 386

EVERY WEDNESDAY

OCTOBER 20, 1922

From Horace Dilley:

I look forward with tremendous pleasure to the arrival each month of the 'Collector's Digest' and I am not disappointed! Your readers owe a tremendous debt to the Editors over the years, who month after month have given of their time and talents to keep the circulation going.

I would also like to express our thanks to the contributors of articles.

I was particularly fascinated with Margery Wood's *The File on Vernon-Smith. Part 6 - Iniquity and Chivalry* July edition. I have read it several times. It reveals in a 'masterly' fashion what a complex character Vernon-Smith was. The good and the bad. He seems to wrestle with his own conscience and perhaps longs to be better. Now and again he succeeds and then the devil in him once again takes over.

A great article. I for one am very grateful.

From Jack Wilson:

I recently bought a collection of pre-war D.C. Thomson annuals from a chap who had emigrated to New York some years ago.

I was checking them for faults today, as I am currently preparing my 1997 Juvenile Catalogue, when I came across something that stopped me dead in my tracks!!

On the first page of a 1939 Rover annual is the following inscription:-

Chopwell West Council
Boys' School
Senior 2a and b.

This BOOK belongs to :-
Thomas Laverick.
Teacher's Prize for most progress
made during the year 1938-39.

H. Leckenby
Headmaster.

W.H. Bolton.
Class Teacher.
July 1939.

My immediate reaction was to approve of this forward looking headmaster who would give a story paper annual as a school prize, but then I re-read the signature and decided that this must be our founding editor!!

I know he was a Yorkshire man, so I looked up Chopwell in my motoring atlas. Chopwell is actually in the Humberside area, but close enough!

If I am right, is the annual just of passing interest, or is it a real find? Readers' comments would be appreciated.

My next catalogue is due out in October, and will be sent automatically to those already on my list. It will contain many rare items, including pre- and war time Thomson comics, story papers and annuals. If you are not on my list, but would like a copy, please write: Jack Wilson (Nostalgia Unlimited), 19 Dunbeath Ave., Rainhill, Prescot, Merseyside L35 0QH.

THE FILE ON VERNON-SMITH

Part 7 The Making of a Character

by Margery Woods

Of all the Remove characters the Bounder was the most adult, with a maturity far beyond his years. This showed in his ability to perceive the outcome of actions and circumstances, work out a plan of counter-action and carry it through with such audacity. Yes, he could be devious, unscrupulous, wicked even, but when did adulthood ever confer a sudden conversion to sainthood? Age, though, could bring the knowledge of experience to further the craft of evil-doing. But often the Bounder at his most devilish was working for good. There can be few of us who at some time or other have not longed to avenge some injustice and make the inflictor pay dearly, even if it meant defying all conventions. But most of us are conditioned from youth to have respect for the mores by which society is so precariously held together. And so there is a vicarious delight in following the exploits of a character who sometimes reflects some of our own secret desires, even those from our hidden dark side, for no human being is totally innocent in all thought even if in deed.

To be fair to the Bounder his attempts at reform were genuine. Earning the respect of Marjorie Hazeldene came to mean a great deal to him when he won that, then her friendship as she learned of the efforts he made to keep her brother out of trouble. Unfortunately Hazeldene and Skinner and the rest of the black-sheep company he had formerly kept lost no opportunity of playing traitor, with the result he sometimes found himself in trouble for misdeeds he had not committed. Given what he was honest enough to recognise in himself as the kink in his nature which urged him to indulge in shady pursuits he often despised himself for, he would lose heart and decide that if he was going to be branded as bad he might as well be bad. And the surfeit of wealth didn't exactly help. As Bob Cherry once summed it up: "There's the trail of Smithy's filthy lucre all over the school, like the track of a snail".

This was true but even Bob would have to admit that Smithy's money did come in useful for good deeds. For, in contrast to the way Wharton would only fight to right a wrong by fair means, Smithy epitomised the set-a-thief method and made no secret of the fact that he would fight foul with foul. And this was where the money undoubtedly helped! Smithy did not hesitate to use his shady pub contacts to produce the necessary evidence, and grease their hot little paws with suitable reward for the means of trumping the enemy's ace. Unscrupulous? Maybe. But many a victim had cause to be grateful when Smithy was prepared to fight fire with fire on their behalf. So far, so good, but how long before he was forgiven for the long, vicious crusade he waged against Harry Wharton during the Crusaders series?

After a bitter fight with Wharton outside the school's boundary he was set on by the South American, Diaz, an enemy of his father. Diaz beat the Bounder senseless, and later, after he is found and taken back to school, he accuses Wharton of the attack. Wharton is instantly expelled. This was surely the nadir of the Bounder's infamy. The truth comes out, unwittingly, from his own father and only the plea that the father had brought about his son's disgrace and would be the major sufferer saved the Bounder yet again from expulsion. There does seem to be a weakness in this particular bit of plot manipulation but his many escapes from disgrace had only one true explanation: he was too priceless an asset to be sacrificed. As an editorial blurb once announced: Greyfriars without Vernon-Smith would be like the Fifth of November without fireworks! Which aptly summed it all up. For characters like the Bounder are wonderful to work with . . . from the author's angle. They will often speak for themselves through pen or typewriter and bring about a strange paradox; that of the creation of the author actually creating for the author. Also, part of the alchemy of writing fiction is the hidden knowledge that may never be penned yet exists in the writer's creative process. Some authors have a saying about this: Scratch the page and

see what you find. If a vacuum, dump the story. So what was hidden in the Bounder's unwritten pages?

Part of the explanation of his wayward personality had to lie in his genetic heritage. Half of this is from his father, a self-made man of great wealth, whose methods of founding his millions had been judged by some critics not to stand up to close moral inspection. (Hamilton did soften this character to an extent in later years.) Samuel Vernon-Smith loved his only son and inspired great affection in return but plainly his ruthlessness of purpose and his independence passed to his son. But what of Smith's mother, provider of the other half of his genetic make-up?

Virtually nothing is known of her, of her nature, of her feeling for her son, or of the time she passed from his life. Her side held the Vernon family, aristocratic but impoverished, which prompts the speculation that Samuel Smith made a quite acceptable match for their daughter; wealth in exchange for a blue-blooded connection dating back almost to the Conquest. Samuel Smith was sufficiently ambitious and nouveau riche to add his wife's name to his own - with hyphen, naturally. So what was she like? We don't even know her name. Did she die in childbirth, or did she live long enough for her son to know his maternal parent and retain childhood memories of her? Was it from her that he inherited his wild rebellious streak? It seems likely that his strength and his courage - and his intelligence - came from his father and his arrogance from the Vernons.

By the evidence of the Bertie Vernon stories and the postwar Derek Vernon story Smith's maternal relatives were rather a grasping lot who seemed to consider that Samuel Vernon-Smith owed them a living. If this was not amply enough forthcoming they were quite prepared to go to illicit ends to get Smithy disinherited. In *Bunter's Last Fling*, a spin-off from the earlier Bertie Vernon series, we find that Smithy had at least ten Vernon cousins whom he loathed as much as they loathed and despised him - and his father - in return. The questionable genetic heritage from the Vernons was plainly discerned in the unscrupulous Captain Vernon of the first series, uncle to Bertie (who did repent in the end), and again in George Vernon, related to Derek, who was determined to get Smithy disinherited, and almost succeeded. George Vernon appeared to have been a professional card player and associated with the denizens of the Turf, and the price Mr. Vernon-Smith demanded for footing the bill for young Derek's education was that Derek should never see his shady relative again.

Poor Smithy; one begins to feel a certain sympathy and understanding of the reasons for his rebellious outbreaks. Despite the trappings of material wealth many odds were weighted against him from childhood: a snobbish, weak and grasping set of relatives who despised him, bequeathed from his mother, and a power-hungry, hard father who, despite affection for him and the provision of material benefits, was quite prepared to disinherit his only son or withdraw financial support, as he did on several occasions. This theme was exploited to the hilt several times, and not only by the original author.

Critics have not been kind to the substitute writers who kept Greyfriars going during Frank Richards' absences, in spite of the fact that at least two of them, Edwy Searles Brooks and Stanley Austin, were excellent writers, fully professional and popular in their own right. However, setting aside the for-and-against angle, the subs can't be dismissed without examination of three curiosities they left to future collectors of Bounder memorabilia. All were on the same theme, that of Vernon-Smith adrift, homeless, at times penniless, with only his own resourcefulness on which to rely. But Smithy was certainly one of the survivors of this world!

Samways gave us the series *Smithy In Exile* (622-625) in which Mr. Vernon-Smith, after reading a silly if well-meaning tract which advised the sending out into the world of all fifteen-year-old boys to make their living unaided, decides that this great experiment should be inflicted on the son he himself has spoiled rotten since birth. Smithy, being Smithy,

manages to fall on his feet after being reduced to his last shilling and spending the night in station waiting rooms (where he pens a heroic missive to Harry Wharton) or tramping the dark streets of London until he realises he is outside 17 Courtman Square. He is very tempted, but turns away. He does a good turn to a stranger, lands a job at which he is so successful that he finds himself back at Greyfriars in no time as the Head's temporary secretary - an extremely efficient one. Samways did tend to give the Bounder a soft centre.

A reasonable complaint might concern the subs not always getting their act together from a consistency point of view. An example of this begins with the Stanley Austin story (668) when Smithy and Redwing tangle with Sir Hilton Popper when they find him thrashing his dog unmercifully. Tom is injured in the encounter and Smithy is up for a flogging, which the sadistic Sir Hilton demands to view. So Smithy takes off and camps out up the river to await an expected visit from his father. Harry Wharton and the chums are backing Smithy all the way, bringing him blankets and offers of food or anything he needs. Then Smithy decides he will fight his own battle and confronts Sir Hilton, mentioning the RSPCA, cruelty to animals, Tom's injured arm and all the undesirable publicity that might just result should the press get a whisper of it all. (Smithy and his moral blackmail again!) Sir Hilton caves in straightaway, and Harry persuades Mr. Quelch that Smithy's story was quite true and all is well. Yet, only five stories later in Samways' *Ponsonby's Victim* (673) we find Smithy framed by Ponsonby and his Highcliffe hooligans, accused of throwing the Kent Shield match, put on trial by the Remove and pilloried to the point of sadism by Wharton and Co. Such a change of heart in so short a time!

No wonder Smithy decides it is time he went! Pursued through the darkness by search parties, he sees Bob Cherry and almost slips over a cliff edge. His shout of warning to Bob comes too late and Bob crashes over. Smithy can see no sign of him and in fear runs away.

This is where Smithy seems totally out of character. Hamilton's Bounder might wreak treachery on an enemy but he would never have fled in those circumstances leaving Bob to his fate. He heads for London and the story enters the realm of fantasy. He encounters his father's former secretary, a young man lately become independent, who 'makes him over'. Smithy is transformed, his hair dyed red, glasses to disguise his eyes, and his features artistically sun-tanned. He joins a local football team, the chairman of which is mightily impressed by this discovery and decides the youngster deserves a good education. (A reader might wonder about Smithy's speaking voice and diction, presumably a good one which would suggest an education already received.) No prizes for guessing the site of the good education, carrot-top, sun-tan, glasses and all! Amusing as long as one completely suspends all disbelief. And of course Bob is safe and sound all the time!

But the prize has to go to the author who sent Smithy to Borstal. (Possibly delaying Mr. Quelch's nervous breakdown a little while longer!)

To be continued.

(The author apologises for a topographical error in July's chapter, owing to a careless mismatch of notes. The Bounder left the boxroom, not the dorm, to rush to the ambush of Wharton.)



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YOUR C.D. ANNUAL**

WHEN DAYS WERE THRILLING

by Alan Pratt

In many ways the American "pulp" magazines of the 30s and 40s mirrored the story papers so popular in the U.K.

Their contents were, in fact, remarkably similar: stories of varying lengths, some by known authors and others written under "house" names, factual articles, readers' letters, news of forthcoming attractions from the editor and a raft of advertisements offering health, wealth and enduring happiness, often for less than a dollar!

THE FORGOTTEN LEGION



Thrilling Western was a good (and typical) example. The issue for December 1937 boasts "a complete novel" in *The Forgotten Legion* by Ed Earl Repp. Readers of U.K. papers will understand that a "novel" in pulp terms is a longish yarn that would probably have been described here as "a long complete story". Slightly shorter works were generally referred to in the U.S. as "novelettes" - there are two in this issue - and only those of insignificant brevity as "short stories".

Repp was a reasonably well known writer of westerns, much given to sensationalism and implausibility. For all that, his work is quite readable in much the same way as some of the yarns in the

Thomson papers with which it has an unconscious affinity. In *The Forgotten Legion* the hero, Tal Barker, is captured by the "legion" of the title, held prisoner in a cage for no logical reason, given thirty lashes as a punishment for nothing in particular then sent packing strapped to the back of his horse. Fortunately he suffers no ill effects from this cavalier treatment and in next to no time is sorting out the baddies in Vulture Valley and restoring stolen land to its rightful owners.

There are more superhuman heroics in *Range Racketeers* by Syl MacDowell (who?), a sort of gangster story with a western setting. Its hero, a G-man known as Flash Farrell, is sent by his boss at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (Grazing Division) to do some "racket busting" at a dude ranch. Here, I found the combination of western and hard-boiled

thriller remarkably similar to some of the stories that appeared in our own *Wild West Weekly*, notably those featuring The Phantom Sheriff.

Some effort was obviously made to introduce an element of variety into the magazine's fictional contents. One story offers some comic relief - "an uproarious Hooker Bros. story" - and another light romance. There is also an attempt at a 'twist' or surprise ending in *Pitch in Time* by someone called Dewey Colvin. The standard of writing, and consequently the readability, varies throughout, but this can, of course, be said of virtually any publication where copy was required to a strict deadline.

There is an article about Wyatt Earp attributed to Jackson Cole, ostensibly the author of the Jim Hatfield adventures in companion magazine *Texas Rangers* but, in actual fact, a house name, a quiz entitled *How Well Do Yuh Know Yore West?* and a section called *The Hitching Rail* in which someone called Buck Benson invites "readers and range riders to get together". This was, presumably, a popular regular feature as it includes an application form for Buck Benson's Range Riders' Club bearing the words "I'm rarin' to join your outfit. Here's my brand".

A quick flick through *The Swap*

Counter - An Exchange Service For Readers would suggest that many Thrilling Western regulars were philatelists, but there were goodies other than stamps on offer. A reader in Washington, anxious to obtain a back number of the mag, offered 50 gladiolus bulbs in return and another in Washington was keen to exchange "parts of a crystal set" for "a first baseman's baseball glove".

And then, of course, there were those wonderful over the top advertisements! These would make a feature in their own right but, for the purposes of this article, I will restrict myself to just a few choice items:

Samaritan Sam Rides



"Drop that rope," Sam snapped

**Sam Jones, Hell-roaring Saddle Tramp, Invades
the Outlaw-ridden Town of Tuckahoe, and Crosses
Six-guns with Black Barlow, Kingpin of Crime!**

By EDWARD PARRISH WARE

Author of "Guns Unleashed," "Long Riders' Luck," etc.

1. A half-page ad for product A describes constipation in a kind of graphic detail designed to bring tears to the eyes. Having set the scene, as it were, and created a feeling of semi-panic in the reader, it goes on to urge immediate use of A which "removes bowel congestion in HALF AN HOUR". Not a product accidentally to overdose on I would suggest!
2. Another ad, closely written and sensationally headed "AMAZING CONFESSION", ultimately turns out to be for an accountancy college. The poor chap "confessing" is stuck in a dead-end job at a bakery, struggling to support his sick wife, because he failed to enrol for a Higher Accountancy course. His brother, it seems, successfully completed the course, is now a big cheese in an automobile company and incredibly rich.
3. A small ad from a "laboratory" promises to "rid you" of freckles within three days but gives no indication as to how this will be achieved. Pretty sinister, eh? Shades of Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi perhaps?

HUBERT HENRY LANSLEY (1907-1997)

by **Dennis L. Bird**

Was there a schoolboy between the world wars who did not rejoice in his Meccano set? And for many of us, our enjoyment was enhanced by the monthly *Meccano Magazine*.

For a considerable period, almost every word of it was written by a young man who died recently (August 7th) just seven weeks short of his 80th birthday. Hubert Lansley was born in Barnet, and was given a Meccano set for his fifth birthday in 1912, and soon became an enthusiast. He produced a handwritten magazine in 1921, the *Meccano Engineer*; the 2d paper produced on a duplicator was selling 1,212 copies by March 1923.

Ellison Hawks, editor of the official *Meccano Magazine*, heard about this and was not pleased.

He summoned his 16-year-old rival to a meeting, chided him - and then offered him a job with Meccano Ltd. Lansley was soon writing almost everything, including a column supposedly by Frank Hornby, the inventor of both Meccano and Hornby trains.

In 1930, however, Lansley decided to leave the company to open a shop in Muswell Hill selling Meccano products until wartime shortages killed off all metal toys. Lansley then took up a new career in accountancy, as well as serving in the Home Guard. He lost touch with the Meccano world until 1973, by which time he had retired from business. At the agriculture show at Stonleigh Park, he discovered in the model section that Meccano was still being made. He was invited to become President of the Society of Advanced Meccano Constructors, and he visited the old Lines Brothers factory in Liverpool in 1978. It closed next year, but the Meccano plant set up in France in the 1920s by Frank Hornby is still in business, and the constructor sets are now made in Calais.



Hubert Lansley married at 19 on £5 a week; his wife Violet Marie Wright shared his life until she died in 1993. They had two sons and a daughter.

Meccano Magazine ceased publication in 1981. In the 1920s it featured a special column of technical tips by "Spanner" - in other words, Lansley, and when he published his autobiography *My Meccano Days* it was billed as the "First 'Spanner' of *Meccano Magazine*". He had written an earlier book called "Adventures in Meccanoland", with such characters as Captain Bush-Wheeler and Professor Flat Trunnion. Lansley had a sense of humour.

GEMS OF HAMILTONIA

from Pete Hanger

Temple breathed harder.

He was captain of the Upper Fourth, and he regarded himself as junior captain of the school. He captained the Fourth Form team in the cricket-field, and he prided himself on his play. Certainly in the Form matches, the Remove generally beat him. But that was, apparently, in Temple's estimation, a trifle light as air. He was a great cricketer - sometimes he had, in fact, compared himself with Wingate of the Sixth, and found the comparison not in Wingate's favour.

MAGNET 899

The field of wealth was bounded only by the possible exhaustion of the supply of bookmakers with money to pay out winners - spotted by Bunter. When all the bookmakers in the kingdom has been reduced to the workhouse or to carrying sandwich-boards for a living, then, no doubt Bunter would have to stop. Still Bunter was prepared to stop at that point - he was not greedy.

MAGNET 1068

"Catch Bunter hoarding!" chuckled Frank Nugent. "Bunter does all his hoarding in his waistcoat!"

MAGNET 1674

... Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed through his big spectacles at the sight of that big stack of comestibles. Bunter, of course, was coming to the spread. Nugent had forgotten to ask him - or, perhaps, he had not forgotten to ask him. But a trifle like that mattered nothing to Bunter.

MAGNET 1035

... For the self-esteem of William George Bunter was on par with his circumference. It was almost unlimited.

MAGNET 1197

Coker was an original fellow in many ways. He prided himself on being out of the common run. Even his spelling was on original lines; his football was a kind of football that was never played by any other footballer; his very features were cast in an uncommon mould, and were said in the Fifth to resemble a Guy Fawkes' mask that had been trodden on.

MAGNET 1129

Bunter, of course, was tired. He had walked a mile that morning. Bunter had more weight to carry than any other fellow; not to mention a larger breakfast.

MAGNET 1210

According to Bunter, he had completely outshone and outclassed anything in previous recorded history. Horatius at the bridge. Leonidas in the pass of Thermopylae, the Old Guard at Waterloo, the crew of the Birkenhead, the defenders of Lucknow - even the men who fought on the Somme - were, compared with Bunter, as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine! Being convinced of this, Bunter naturally did not hesitate to say so. He was not one of those fellows who hide their light under a bushel.

MAGNET 1182

"Yaas. It dates from Saxon times, or Norman times, or somethin'," said Mauly, rather vaguely. "I know it dates from some time or other. My uncle can tell you all about it - old Brooke's got a wonderful memory. But I know it dates from the reign of some king or other, or else a queen - I'm not sure which."

"When they tax the nobility out of existence, Mauly, you'd better get a job as a Cook's guide," said Bob. "You do it so well." MAGNET 1244

Bunter drew a deep breath. He was going to the circus. He still lacked the price of admission. But that was not an insuperable difficulty. By that time the performance would be beginning. An astute fellow might be able to creep round the tent, and insinuate himself inside under the edge of the canvas. That was not a new experience for Bunter. He had patronised a circus before in this inexpensive manner. MAGNET 1069



(From *Bunter the Caravanner*, recently reprinted by Hawk Books.)

The missing and 'shadowy' member of the Bunter family, Billy's mother, will be featured in our pages soon.

"DON'T BE SO LAZY, BILLY," SAID BESSIE



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