

The Collectors

Vol. 11 No. 130

Digest



OCTOBER
1954

Price 1s. 6d.

(This review had to be held over last month)

BILLY BUNTER AFLOAT
Reviewed by Jack Wood

With this latest issue from the House of Cassells, Bunter achieves his majority. This is the 21st in the series of novels, and has Frank Richards and C. H. Chapman in good holiday form.

It is a story which is an echo of the famous Water Lily series, but which tells of a boating holiday on the Thames from a different angle. This time, Bunter is the unexpected host, having fatuously "boned" Coker's well-stocked boat for the occasion and invited the Famous Five as his guests.

Frank Richards keeps the story moving pleasantly and nostalgically, though one fancies with the more commercialised Thames of 1957 that a boating party would now hire a motor boat and not a cumbersome rowing boat. Coker and Co. and Ponsenby and Co., help to liven the familiar proceedings.

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"CASTLE DANGEROUS" by Victor Gunn
Reviewed by F. Vernon Lay

Edwy Searles Brooks' latest effort under his "other" name of Victor Gunn is a more pedestrian effort than usual.

Our old friends Chief Inspector Bill Cromwell and Sergeant Johnny Lister investigate a murder at Gleniston Castle, an old ancestral pile perched on an island at the lower end of Gleniston Water in West-norland. The Castle is accommodating paying holiday guests and one of them is very reminiscent of Handforth, especially when he determines to solve the case single handed with disastrous results. The story is more typical of Agatha Christie than Victor Gunn, but the plot is quite well thought out, the characterisation good although the murderer seemed a trifle too obvious. The blurb calls it "A Victor Gunn Special" but "A Victor Gunn Also-ran" would be more accurate.

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Annual Articles Just Received

The Morcove Story by Leonard Packman
 Turn Back the Clock by Eric Fayne
 1930 - 1934 The Golden Age of the Magnet by
 Roger Jenkins

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—THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST—

Vol. 11 No. 130

Price 1s. 6d.

OCTOBER, 1957

Editor: HERBERT LECKENBY,
12 Herbert Street,
Hull Road, York.

or

c/o YORK DUPLICATING SERVICES,
12A The Shambles, York.

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

THE HAPPY WANDERER. Happy the man who has a hobby to prevent his being bored in his "retirement." I'm one of those men. Once again I'm back home after my September week in London; once again a week as perfect as those that have gone before. Once again my amazing luck held; fine weather and every appointment kept and dead on time. The hour is late but I must get a brief account down whilst it's all fresh in my mind.

There's always someone to meet me on arrival at King's Cross, usually Len Packman, but this year he was prevented; instead my oldest hobby friend, Harry Dowler, was there. Harry's holiday was drawing towards its close but we were able to spend three days together. We made the most of them, with visits to Len Packman's, Bill Lofts', Jim Swan's, Frank Lays and the Club Meeting at the Folkestone home of Frank Koeling.

Uncle Ben will be telling you all about the grand affair. I'll just say that it was a worthy successor to those at Brighton of happy memory. For me it was a great occasion, I had the pleasure of meeting for the first time H. V. Roberts, John Wernham and Eric Lawrence.

Present too, from distant lands were Bill Hubbard and Leslie Rowley. My sincere thanks to Frank and his good lady for a happy day.

Another outstanding event was a visit, accompanied by Len and Josie to the home of Mr. F. Addington Symonds, who launched the

"Champion" on its long voyage. We listened enthralled to the stories told of his days at Fleetway House.

There were the other occasions to which I always look forward with keen anticipation - lunch dates with Jimmy Stewart Hunter, Eric Landy, George Mell and Mark Johnson and in addition to those I've mentioned, evenings at the homes of Derek Adley and Eric Payne. Also present at Eric's were Bill Lofts, Bob Mortimer and Stanley Smith. They were there for the first time and they thoroughly enjoyed inspecting a part of Eric's wonderful collection and discussing such events as the coming Greyfriars Jubilee.

A grand surprise fixed for me by Len Packman was a meeting with Granville Waine whom I had not seen for ten years. The two hours we spent together sped like a couple of minutes.

Then too, there was a journey to Bob Whiter's to discuss the Annual cover. Ere long you'll agree the journey was worth while.

On the final morning I had the luck of another interview with the Editor of the Sexton Blake ~~Blake~~ Library. Among other interesting things, Mr. Howard Baker showed me Blake stories in several foreign languages including Norwegian, Swedish and Spanish. The Norwegian ones were particularly attractive, being about the size of the Corgi books. I also had the pleasure of being introduced to Mr. James Stagge, one of the popular Blake authors.

Yes indeed, a well spent week. Each day I was up in the morning early and strolling along High Street, Kensington on my way back to my digs round about midnight. Not bad for a fellow nearing the allotted span.

TAILPIECE. Oh, I must tell you this one. Bill Lofts, Harry Dowler and I journeyed back from Folkestone together. We had almost reached the platform exit at Charing Cross when Bill exclaimed, "Oh, I've left my case in the carriage." He turned, dashed back just as the guard was about to wave the train out on its way to the sidings. Bill returned with the case and a beaming smile, for, let me whisper, the case contained his mint Magnet No. 1 and several other valuable items! Can you picture what his face would have looked like if he hadn't recovered his case? I can.

And now I must to bed, it's early morning.

* * * *

THE ANNUAL. All continues to go well, orders are well up to last year at this time and I have had some good adverts since my appeal last month. But very soon now I shall have to decide how many copies to

order, so I shall be greatly obliged if those who have not sent their forms along will do so within the next week or two.

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TO THE FORGETFUL FIVE. This refers to another Annual - the last one. Regretfully I must say there are five of you who have not yet paid up. I should be so sorry if you didn't get one this coming Christmas (especially the two who have had one since the beginning) but can you really expect me to send one when you still owe for the last? So do slip a postal order or a cheque into an envelope and take a load off my mind.

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THOSE POSTAL INCREASES. The increased charges came into force on October 1st. They won't affect a normal sized C.D. under printed paper rates, fortunately. As for that threepence for letters, I know some of you have to count your pennies. So to those who usually pay monthly I'd just like to say I don't mind if you paid every second month if you thought it would help you a bit.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY

FOR SALE: Jack Sam & Pete Stories, 60 in 13 volumes Boys' Friend Library, also full set Greyfriars Annuals 1920-1941 - Offers
FOSTER, 47 VICTORIA ROAD, LONDON, W.8.

FOR SALE: Xmas Numbers of the following papers: Nelson Lee, old Series 342, 2nd New Series Nos. 98, 138, 165, 188, 189 (1923-29) Xmas Double Number Gem - 510, 1917. Xmas Double Number Magnet, 723 and 513. Any reasonable price accepted.
LOFTS, 56 SHERINGHAM HOUSE, LONDON, N.W.1.

WANTED: Sexton Blake Libs. 1st and 2nd Series. Any numbers. Reasonable price paid. Also Union Jacks 1917 to 1933. Boys' Friend Libs. 1st Series - No. 669. 2nd Series - No. 79
JOSIE PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, E. DULWICH, S.E.22.

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Blakiana

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E. 22

As stated in September, No. 2 of Walter Webb's new series "ON TOUR WITH SEXTON BLAKE" will appear in Blakiana next month. The title is "THE GREAT CANAL PORT".

Another selection of TWELVE FAVOURITE U.J. (BLAKE) STORIES will also be published. These will be the choice of Charlie Wright.

I am pleased to say that the Sexton Blake Circle Feature for this year's C. D. Annual is taking shape. We already have Eric Copeman's contribution, and Walter Webb is now engaged upon his article. Bill Loft's is 'cooking up' something special, and both Len and myself have our contributions mapped out. Others who are 'piling in' are Frank Ley, Ben Whiter and Charlie and Olive Wright. Goodness knows how we are going to get it all in. However, it will all work out all right (we hope!) This much I can say, there will be a real good feast of Blake reading for all of you.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to Margaret Cooke for her kindness in presenting the four branches of the O.B.B.C. with a number of Sexton Blake Libraries. I cannot speak for Hamiltonia, but where Blake is concerned we certainly have some grand chums who are not mercenary-minded. Both Len and myself have had many instances of this, such as the recent arrival of a package of Blake papers from a certain "G.B." in New Zealand - as a gift. (In fairness to Hamiltonia I must add that this was followed by another parcel of Hamiltonian papers from the same generous friend). Let me make it quite clear, neither I nor anyone else expects or even anticipates being the recipient of free gifts or purchases at 'give-away' prices, but, generally speaking, it is a fact that those disposing of papers pertaining to Blake do not batten on his name!

JOSIE PACKMAN

* * *

TINKER'S DOUBLE

HAVE YOU SEEN THE EFFIGY OF SEXTON BLAKE'S ASSISTANT?

Most of us admire originality, and we get it in large doses in

Mr. Reuben More, the most versatile 'al fresco' entertainer in the United Kingdom. Who was it gave a freshness to open-air entertainments in introducing a troupe of Black Pierrots? - Mr. Reuben More. Who was the first to realise that Tinker, the young assistant of Sexton Blake, Detective, would make a more popular character for a ventriloquist than any other ever heard of? - Mr. Reuben More.

Tinker has appeared in over five hundred stories of Sexton Blake, and that is sufficient to explain why he is greeted rapturously as a very old friend wherever Mr. More presents him....

No doubt many readers of Blakiana would like to know where this ventriloquist and his model of Tinker may be seen and heard; as a matter of fact I should like to know too! You see, the above is taken from the PENNY PICTORIAL (Summer Double Number) dated 3rd July, 1909 - and that is why the quotation marks have deliberately been omitted.

It would be interesting to know if any reader of Blakiana ever did see Mr. More and Tinker. I am afraid that so far as I personally am concerned it doesn't 'ring a bell', because at that particular time I - ah, but that's telling!

JOSIE PACKMAN

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UNION JACK TITLES - YEAR 1918 (JULY - DECEMBER)

No. 769	The Shirker	W. N. Graydon
" 770	The Stolen Negative (Lawless, Kew, Carlac)	A. Murray
" 771	The Mystic Cipher (Lee)	E. S. Brooks
" 772	The Mystery of the Appeal Tribunal (Plummer)	M. Osborne
" 773	The Clue of the Food Card	W. N. Graydon
" 774	The Dual Detectives (Lee)	E. S. Brooks
" 775	The Case of the Clubfooted Man	R. Murray
" 776	The Case of the Mysterious Book	W. N. Graydon
" 777	The Flashlight Clue (Lee)	E. S. Brooks
" 778	The Vanished Police (Mr. Reece)	R. Murray
" 779	Suspended from Duty (Mr. Reece)	R. Murray
" 780	The Only Clue	R. Murray
" 781	The Case of the American Soldier	E. S. Brooks
" 782	The Steel Claw (Mr. Reece)	R. Murray
" 783	Behind the Lines	W. N. Graydon
" 784	The Crooks of Rapid Hollow (Lee)	E. S. Brooks
" 785	The Ten-mile Champion	A. Murray

No. 786	The Terror of Trevis Wold (Lee)	E. S. Brooks
" 787	The Silent Partner (The Bat)	R. Murray
" 788	The Studded Footprints (Lee)	E. S. Brooks
" 789	Foes in the Dark	W. M. Graydon
" 790	The Amazing Affair at Clannere Mansions	R. Murray
" 791	Dirk Dollands Redemption (The Bat)	R. Murray
" 792	The Kystery of the Missing Bolshevik	W. M. Graydon
" 793	The Case of the Hollow Dagger	E. S. Brooks
" 794	Waldo the Wenderman (<u>First Waldo Story</u>)	E. S. Brooks

(Number 769 is dated 6th July, 1918 and Number 794 is dated 28th December, 1918).

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FROM LAUNDRYMAN TO POPULAR BLAKE WRITER
by W. O. G. LOFTS

During a recent visit to the Essex coast I had the pleasure of meeting Donald Bobin, son of the late John Bobin, one of the most popular writers of Blake stories of his time and better known to our readers as MARK OSBORNE.

In the course of conversation, Mr. Bobin told me a number of interesting things about his father, including some information hitherto unpublished, and this information Mr. Bobin has most kindly permitted me to release in the Collector's Digest for the benefit of readers of *Blakiana*, and I therefore have much pleasure in sending this little article to Josie Packman for that purpose.

In his early youth John Bobin was the owner of a laundry near a famous seaside resort, and in those days before the advent of the motor car he used to drive a horse and cart round the streets, collecting and delivering the washing of his customers.

Like many other young men of his time young John Bobin used to enjoy reading of the exploits of Sexton Blake as related in the *Union Jack*, having been a good writer himself when at school the idea came to him to try his hand at writing one or two Blake stories. He was also quite good at drawing, and thought of illustrating his stories as well. He did both, and then hopefully submitted the manuscripts to the publishers. In due course he received a reply requesting him to call at Fleetway House, and at the subsequent interview the editor told him that his stories were good, but as the illustrations were not quite up to the mark he would be advised to stick to the stories only.

This John Bobin did, and with very great success - as many of us know.

John Bobin was a steady, plodding type of man, quite contented with his work and the money he received. In addition to his Sexton Blake stories he wrote extensively for the Girls Paper market, under the names "Adelo Ascott" and "Gertrude Nelson." A number of serials in the Boy's Friend by "Victor Nelson" and "John Ascott" were also the work of John Bobin.

As is now known - thanks to Walter Webb - John Bobin took over the character George Marsden Plummer on the death of the original creator. Mr. Bobin did, however, create another very popular character of that time - Aubrey Dexter.

John Bobin was very fond of sport and wrote a number of stories featuring horse-racing and dog-racing. He died at the early age of forty-five on 19th April, 1935.

Donald Bobin, of course, met many of his father's Blake-writer colleagues in the 'twenties and 'thirties, and one of the interesting things I learned was that Lewis Carlton - one time editor of the Union Jack - worked with John Bobin for some years. This was in the 'thirties, when Carlton started writing again for the Sexton Blake Library, after a spell on the stage, in which he took the part of Tinker. Lewis Carlton, who is still alive - or was, up to a year ago, when he was seen by a friend of mine in Fleet Street - is the landlord of a hostelry in the West Country.

A number of stories appearing in the S.B. Library (second series) originally written by "Mark Osborne" were reprinted under the authorship of "Donald Stuart" (real name Gerald Verner). The explanation for this has baffled Blake statisticians for years... Donald Bobin knew Verner very well indeed, but whilst the reason for this 'change of authorship' may be conjectured I am afraid the actual solution must remain undisclosed.

Donald Bobin once met George Hamilton Teed, and - with all due respect to his (Bobin's) father - Mr. Bobin thinks Teed's work was undoubtedly the best in the Blake field. I was also informed that G. H. Teed died of a malignant disease in 1940.

Like his father, Donald Bobin is also a writer - and worked at the A. Press for some years during the later days of the Detective Weekly. He was the person who rewrote, cut and brought all those reprinted stories 'up-to-date'. Mr. Bobin says he thought at the time that many of the stories were very good as originally written, and he did not feel at all happy in doing this sort of thing; the cutting out of certain sections often made the stories far inferior to the

originals. He did, however, write one story himself for the Detective Weekly, although the author's name was not given. This was Number 344, entitled "THE BANKNOTE BANDITS."

Up to the time of the second World War, Mr. Bobin wrote extensively for the girls' papers "Girl's Crystal" and "Schoolgirl's Own Library" under the name of "Shirley Halliday". There was also a time when he worked for another man whose name is well-known to us - John G. Brandon, creator of "R.S.V.P." and "Big Bill Wibley". Brandon who was a likeable sort of man, used to dictate his stories to Donald Bobin whilst sitting on the bed, and more often than not there would suddenly be the sound of snoring - and dictation ceased until Brandon had finished his nap! John G. Brandon died during the early part of the last war. He has a son who is a playwright.

During the early part of the war - when practically all the paper market was suspended - Donald Bobin bought a second-hand bookshop, and he tells me that through the years many copies of the S.B. Library (1st and 2nd Series) have come his way. In literary value he thinks that many of these old paper-backed novels, priced 3d and 4d, are easily worth as much as the 7/6 or more, novels of today - to which we all say "Hear! Hear!"

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HOW'S YOUR MEMORY (No. 8)

By. E. V. Copeman

Previous articles in this series have described either Blake or Tinker (or both) in tight corners, but this time the method has been varied and I want to quote from more than one part of a story which was published in the SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY and which is doubtless in the possession of most Blakiana collectors. The following brief sequences might help you to identify the writer. On the other hand, they might not! Personally, I think this will be a "hard nut" to crack.

Firstly, some lighthearted remarks made by the Baker Street pair:

(1) Blake gazed thoughtfully at an inch-length of cigar ash. "You think it would be a good idea to take in supper and a cabaret?"

"I don't know that I had that in mind," lied Tinker, "but why shouldn't we make whoopee for once? We'd better hurry along to the Marchester before we get soaked! You can always leave if you get fed up."

"Then it's a safe bet I shall leave!" Sexton Blake warned him.

"I prefer a pipe and a book to a cabaret show, but have it your own way! If you get a kick out of watching a covey of half-dressed young females with synthetic smiles and vapid faces..."

Tinker was mildly shocked at such sacrilege.

And now a little flippancy from Tinker:

(2) Tinker strode across to the box office of the theatre and smiled nicely at the clerk behind the bright mahogany counter. She smiled nicely, too. She was pretty and young, with little blonde curls all over her shapely head; and Tinker liked them blonde. But business was business, especially when that business was murder....

Now I'm wondering if those two extracts have set some of you off to check up on Anthony Parsons? There have been many complaints that Mr. Parsons has made Tinker rather more precocious than he used to be and given him quite an "eye" for the opposite sex. So I'll save you some time. The author of this story was NOT Anthony Parsons. Nor was Tinker actually allowed much time for flights of fancy, for things quickly began to warm up, and the next four quotations are from the endings of four successive "action" chapters:

(3) There followed a tense stillness, then, "drop your guns, gentlemen," ordered the cultered voice of Ito from behind Tinker and his companion. "Hurry, please or I shall blow your brains out!"

(4) His gun clubbed, he struck two vicious blows. A smash took Tinker and Fenner at the base of the skull, and they were out to the world by the time they hit the floorboards, and remained ominously still.

(5) Blake crossed the thick red plush carpet and looked up and down the corridor before tapping discreetly upon the panel; then, getting no response, he boldly turned the handle and stepped inside, closing the door softly behind him.

Pedro Baptisti was waiting for him in an armchair by the fireplace. He was dead, with the handle of a knife protruding from his stained shirtfront.

(6) Coutts gave a nasty laugh and held the clubbed gun within an inch of the killer's nose. "You get another chance, you rat" he gritted. "Hold out on me once more and I mush up that sweet mug of yours! If you know what's good for you, you'll spill it by the time I count three! One—Two—Th—"

"I'll rat! I'll rat!" screamed the killer. "I'll squeal, I tell yer! I'll—"

Crash!

There was a shattering of glass, and between the bright black

eyes of the little killer there appeared a neat round hole...

Now who wrote this yarn? It might have been John Hunter, except that John Hunter rarely writes of Coutts. Who then? Gilbert Chester? No. No, to both of them.

Rex Hardinge? No. Hardinge doesn't write like that. It isn't his style at all.

I'm tempted to give quite a big clue, but I'll compromise by saying that the author no longer writes Blake stories.

(Answer next month)

WANTED: MAGNETS Nos. 709, 739, 743, 744, 745, 757, 758, 759, 810, 811, 812, 828, 829, 830, 874 to 877, 880, 881, 882, 884, 886, 887, 888, 1038, 1118, 1119, 1121, 1213, 1218, 1219, 1246.

GEMS Nos. 698 to 701, 776, 783, 897, 898, 899, 815, 816, 817, 1452
S.O.L.'s Nos. 64, 70, 84, 94, 111, 136, 141, 161, 166, 152, 257, 332, 263, 308, 358.

SCHOOL and SPORT Nos. 1 - 8

FOR EXCHANGE or PART EXCHANGE S.O.L. 328, Magnet Series 1390 - 1400
 1422 - 1433, 1434 - 1439, 1510 - 1515, 1541 - 1544, 1536 - 1540,
 1556 - 1559, 1383 - 1389, 1656 - 8 and 1192. 1420 - 1421, 1504,
 1570.

J. K. MORGAN, 58 MOORFIELD ROAD, GT. CROSBY, LIVERPOOL 23.

WANTED: Magnets 400/600, 1000/1250. Gems 1/900, 1250/1450,
 preferably bound. Advise price by airmail.
 CHARLES VAN RENEN, BOX 50, UITENHAGE, SOUTH AFRICA.

THE LONDON CLUB LIBRARY requires Magnets 1267, 1121, 1244 and 1245
 Also Hamiltonian S.O.Ls and Magnet runs.
 ROGER JENKINS, FLAT 6, 6 PEMBROKE GARDENS, KENSINGTON, LONDON. W.8

WANTED: Bound volumes of Magnet 1 - 1454 bound. Gems 1 - 1543. Loose
 Gems 1507 - 1542, 1579, 1580 and 1584. S.O.Ls. 230, 391. Populars,
 Boys' Friend Weekly. Holiday Annuals (1919) 1920, 1921, 1922, 1924,
 1926, 1927, 1929. For sale or exchange complete new Magnets, 1554 -
 1683. S. B. WHITEHEAD, 12 WELLS ROAD, FAKENHAM, NORFOLK.

WANTED: Magnets, Gems, all years but preferably pre 1935. Holiday
 Annuals, S.O.Ls, (Greyfriars Stories). Any condition considered, but
 price must be reasonable.

H. GORDON, 113 NEWINGTON GREEN ROAD, LONDON. N.1

FROM INFORMATION RECEIVED NO. 5By W. O. G. LoftsTHE BIRTH OF TIGER TIM

Tiger Tim....how was this character born? Who invented the name? In this case the character was born some time before it appeared regularly in the RAINBOW and it was born by accident! That well known illustrator the Irishman, J. Louis Smythe, was called upon to picture an incident from a story. The passage chosen was where the heroine stepped from her carriage and entered a house.....'followed by her tiger, Tim'. And J. Louis Smythe, unaware of the fact that in this instance a 'Tiger' signified a page-boy or youthful attendant, drew instead a small striped tiger promenading serenely upright upon his hind legs. The Editor gasped, laughed, but mentally noted for future use a new and attractive character. As stated in previous articles the character was first drawn in the RAINBOW in 1914 by J. S. Baker, followed by S. J. Cash. H. S. Foxwell took over within a year and drew them for many years until he left the A.P. in the '30s to take over Teddy Tail of the Daily Mail fame. Those in recent years were drawn by B. O. Wymer.

EDITORS OF THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY

Until about 1928 the Nelson Lee Library was run under the Editorship of Harold May. Mr. May, who went to Dulwich School, was a very quiet type of man - shy - and very reserved. He once brought off a great scoop when working as a newspaperman - radioing Fleet Street of a disaster at sea whilst crossing the channel on a channel steamer. He is still alive - and was seen not so long ago at Hammersmith, London.

The last Editor of the Library was H. T. Cauldwell, better known as Jimmy Cauldwell. I heard from him not so long ago. He first thought of the idea of the "Modern Wonder", offered it to the A.P., but they turned it down as unsuitable. Later the firm of Odhams accepted the idea, and he left the A.P. to become editor of this science-fiction paper. Being also an artist he was connected with the Mickey Mouse Weekly.

Only at the beginning of last year he started up a new boys paper with the title of "Boys Venture" which cost 2/- a month - being a sort of copy of the B.O.P. This must have been a disastrous venture, as it only ran for two issues; no doubt boys thought twice at paying

2/- for a paper! These days Jimmy is free-lancing.

JOHN HUNTER

As many readers know, I know John Hunter very well; and I have often been asked in correspondence whether this is the real name of this very popular author. Actually his real full name is Alfred John Hunter and he used this name in his very early days writing for "Chums" and "Scout". He adopted the name of John Hunter when he got going as it was better than A.J. (he used his initials only). Other names used by Mr. Hunter are "Peter Mariton", "Anthony Drummond", "L. H. Brenning" and a host of names for the women's papers.

Mr. Hunter who is 66 this year thinks that "Chums" was the finest boys paper ever to appear on the bookstalls - and still writes a lot today though not in the juvenile field. Newnes, "The Saint Magazine" and occasional S.B.L. and newspaper work take up much of his time.

JACK TREVOR STORY

One of the best known writers in the modern Blake Library is Jack Trevor Story. I was recently very pleased to meet him and we had several hours of delightful and interesting conversation. It is easy to see why Jack Story's stories are written in a humorous vein as I found he has a most wonderful sense of humour.

As a boy Jack (as I will call him) read the comics "Funny Wonder" and "Puck" every week. At about the age of ten he started to read the boys papers. "Modern Boy" was his favourite and he used to revel in the stories of flying by George E. Rochester. Believe it or not he wrote a story for the "Modern Boy" at the tender age of twelve entitled "The Phantom Squadron". Needless to say it was rejected, but Jack was not disheartened. The "Boys Magazine", "Magnet" and "Gen" he liked also, and he had a very good memory of all the well known characters.

Mostly his work has appeared in the newspapers and humorous magazines; but his best work of course is not only writing the book - but the screen-play as well of the two Frankie Vaughan films "The Trouble with Harry" and the latest just released "These Dangerous Years". Just turned 40, Jack lives in Hertfordshire - not far away by the way from a very famous Editor - Mr. Maurice Down of "Magnet" fame.

His wife is also a writer - mostly romantic westerns. Mrs. Story by the way, is very interested in the "Nelson Lee Library" and

is certainly very knowledgeable on that subject. A very great animal lover Mrs. Story keeps no less than 27 cats! and two hedgehogs. Our own beloved Frank Richards is I know a lover of animals - and I am sure that he will be interested to read this.

Mr. Story was very interested to know about our hobby - and thought it should be enlarged and publicised more; "there are countless thousands of old "boys" in the country; all of whom have nostalgic memories of the past" he said, but who don't know of our activities.

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FROM INFORMATION RECEIVED NO. 6. Look out for:

The Mystery of Duncan Storm Solved.

The Coming New Format of the Sexton Blake Library.

The Editor of the Aldines.

The Identity of Marjorie Stanton. //

HAMILTONIANA

compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

Billy Bunter has been providing headlines again. The Daily Herald, August 27th had him in Dior-land, of all places. A half page showed the latest fashions for the fair sex, of course, and alongside one immaculately clad model was the caption - the Billy Bunter Look. I confess I couldn't see where Billy Bunter fitted in this instance. If the model had been wearing what are so often inappropriately called slacks there might have been a resemblance to the Bunter form. However, the caption did, for once, make a male pause at a fashion page.

Then to John Derby of the "News Chronicle" September 4th, goes the credit of being the first columnist of a national newspaper to mention the coming "Lagnet" Jubilee.

Under a banner heading "Latin without Tears" by Billy Bunter in heavy type across four columns he gave the following account of an interview with Frank Richards, accompanied by a photograph.

"Frank Richards, the man who sprang Billy Bunter on the school-boy public 50 years ago, has a great idea to celebrate the Owl of the

Remove's jubilee.

It is a new series about the japes at Greyfriars entitled Bunterus in Scholis.

And in case you duffers at the botton of the form can't understand that, it's Latin for Bunter in School.

Before the adult followers of the fat boy yell "Yaroooh" at the thought of more Latin, let me make it clear; this is strictly for school.

Says Bunter's creator: 'I had the idea that boys would prefer translating "I say, you chaps" rather than "All Gaul is divided into three parts."

Bunter will line-up with his old form mates "Whartonus" and "Nugentius" for his first scrape in Latin, called "Placenta Amissa" (The Missing Cake).

Says author Richards, with a touch of sadness: "Cake is as near as you can get to jam tart in Latin."

Also missing: Bunters cry of "Yaroooh".

"You just cannot translate it," says Richards. "But then I've never heard anyone really say that in all my life."

No publisher has been found yet - "The Latin takes longer to write so I would have to charge more."

But Richards adds cheerfully, "After all it was eight years before I could interest anyone in Bunter."

I had called to see the monkish little man in the black skull cap who had invented Bunter - and hundreds of other characters - at his home outside Broadstairs.

He is still as lively as a fourth-former and still churns out 250,000 words a year on Bunter and Co.

Frank Richards is a pen-name of Charles Hamilton.

While Richards writes the Bunter stories, Hamilton relaxes by translating Dante and playing Mozart. He is also writing a book about Horace - "The others all seem to be written by blithering idiots." - which he wants to see published on his 100th birthday.

As Bunter would no doubt point out, his creator is something of a bally swot."

And here's a third instance. "Pharos" in the "Spectator" 30th August reminded his readers that he had some time previously accused the Foreign Office of being furtive for delay in publishing a document. Some other paper had disagreed so "Pharos" now said:

"This is surely a very odd argument to put forward.

It is like Billy Bunter saying that as nobody noticed him snitching the cake how can any rotten cad say he was furtive about it."

"Pharos" went on to say "it took four months to produce a document of one and a half pages which makes it look as if the Foreign Office is as lazy as Billy Bunter himself."

Another old "Magnet" fan by the look of it. If only we could get them all to read the C.D. what a circulation we should have.

* * * * *

THAT MAGNET JUBILEE It's only four months away so we shall have to get moving. I propose to have a bumper number of the C.D. somewhere about the size of No. 100, price to be, owing to increased costs, about 3/-. The extra pages would, of course, be devoted entirely to the big event. Perhaps some of you could write crisp accounts of how you first became acquainted with the "Magnet". I should welcome any suggestions to help make it a big success.

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Now here are the details, supplied by Frank Vernon Lay, of the great Cup Competition. All will cordially endorse what Frank says about the generosity of the donor.

* * * * *

GREYFRIARS JUBILEE CHALLENGE CUP

To celebrate the Jubilee of Greyfriars, Les Rowley, the popular member of the London Old Boys' Book Club has donated a magnificent Silver Cup to be competed for amongst the various Old Boys' Book Clubs and has further arranged to have the winning club's name engraved on it. This is a very fine gesture and we ask all clubs to give of their best and show Les in this manner their appreciation of his generosity.

The rules are simple. Each competing club is asked to produce their own version of an issue of the Greyfriars Herald. To ensure uniformity the following brief conditions should be adhered to.

1. The magazine should be of 4 foolscap pages, folded to form an issues of 8 pages, the size of the C.D.
2. As far as possible all reading matter should be typewritten.
3. It should be borne in mind, as Les says, that the cup is definitely a Greyfriars trophy, celebrating a Greyfriars event with a

Greyfriars subject as the contest.

4. All contributions must be anonymous as far as individual members of the various clubs are concerned. They can, of course, purport to be written by the appropriate characters from Greyfriars or elsewhere.

5. The completed entry should be enclosed without any other matter in a sealed unmarked envelope and sent to Frank Vernon Lay, 167, Watford Road, Harrow, Middx., with a covering note in the outside envelope only stating the Club of origin.

6. All entries will be marked with a distinguishing symbol and forwarded on by Frank to a neutral judge who will have no means of knowing from which clubs the various entries emanate.

7. The name of the judge will be announced as soon as his consent to be judge is received.

8. In order that the result can be announced by the date of the actual Jubilee the closing date for all entries has been fixed as December 31st. So "go to it".

* * * * *

BILLY BUNTER ON TELEVISION

By Roger M. Jenkins

Most of the charm of the Magnet stories lay in the style of writing, particularly the descriptive passages which were rich in humour and classical analogy. It is not surprising, therefore, that most collectors regard the Bunter television series with very mixed feelings: the pleasure that comes from knowing a vast audience is now enjoying tales of Greyfriars is tinged with regret that, by the very nature of the medium used, this audience cannot really enjoy the best part of the stories - the writing itself.

It is at once apparent that this imposes a restriction on the type of story suitable for television plays; there must be plenty of action (mainly farcical) and no long periods of contemplation. In other words we can have Bunter at his most outrageous and we can have some of the minor "whodunit" plots in which Bunter plays a large part, but we cannot have any of what are sometimes called the great character series of Magnet days. It is not only the time factor and the limitations of the boy actors which prevent the screening of the dramatic type of story: it is the inability to find a substitute for the long descriptive passages which were an essential feature of the great Magnet series.

There is no doubt that, even with these restrictions, it would be possible to produce some plays which were not unworthy of the best

Magnet traditions, and indeed some plays, like the one about the bank-note which was hidden in the lining of Bunter's jacket, do maintain a good standard. Unfortunately others suffer from the seemingly unavoidable defect that the Famous Five have no part to play except to stand about and discuss Bunter, as they did in the recent ventriloquist episode. The Magnet usually managed to achieve a secondary plot which was ingeniously linked with the main plot, but the plays seem to require more unity of action which can be rather cramping on an author's style.

It is also unfortunate that many actors appear to have a mis-founded conception of the part they are playing. The boy who played Lord Mauleverer with a monocle cannot of course, be blamed, nor can the Famous Five be blamed for not being more distinctive when in fact the script does not allow for it. But a distinguished actor of the calibre of Kynaston Reeves is surely off the track when he plays Mr. Welch as an absent-minded professor. What has become of the gimlet eye, the rasping voice, and the basilisk countenance? On the credit side it is pleasing to record a really lifelike Coker (though perhaps a little small in stature) a really credible Skinner, and of course a perfect Bunter.

It is clear that Gerald Campion is the only actor in the cast with a deep and enduring knowledge of the Magnet. Not only does he portray Bunter exactly as the Magnet described him - the giggle, the furtive but short-sighted glance, the sagging jaw, the gobbled food - but he even adds further touches of verisimilitude which were perhaps best epitomised in the episode in which he went to sleep in class and woke up smacking his lips. Whether or not one likes Bunter as a character there can be no doubt that Gerald Campion stands head and shoulders above the other members of the cast in the television series.

Perhaps the most disquietening feature is the impression that the plays give of being under-rehearsed and produced on the cheap. No one could reasonably cavil at the settings which give the right impression of oak-panelled solidity. But surely there ought to be a few more boys about? Some quite authentic classroom scenes are spoiled by the sight of a Remove form consisting solely of the Famous Five and Bunter, whilst the passages and quadrangles are deserted apart from the few characters who have speaking parts. Since the plays are presumably filmed in groups, it ought to be easy enough to provide some walking-on characters, and it would be interesting to spot, say, Skinner in the background when he has no part to play in the particular play. Then there is the question of reality. Perhaps it would be a little

hard on Gerald Campion if he were really bumped or caned as often as the script demanded (though Monsieur Charpentier made some very realistic lunges with the pointer in the ventriloquism play), but is there not room for improvement in many other matters? The sight of the Famous Five running around in the quadrangle looking for Bunter when he is in sight and perfectly obvious to everyone, may raise a few laughs but not in the place where the author intended. Again, when various actors fluff their lines could not the particular sequence be filmed again? It is realised of course that the B.B.C. cannot indulge in lavish expenditure, but it seems unlikely that their finances are so straitened that they are unable to add a little more polish to the series.

It is not quite fair to regard television plays as a travesty of the Greyfriars stories that are so dear to the heart of Magnet collectors, but it is true that the necessary limitations in the scope of the plays are at present rather prominent. Perhaps the fairest verdict would be that the plays are promising enough to make us wish they were so much better.

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES NO. 5

IS GUSSY TEDIOUS?

Mrs. Vera Nicholls writes:- "I think he is very much so. He is also
 (1) Old-fashioned and outdated like 'Burlington Bertie'.
 (2) Foppish and feminine. I like a smart youth, but who could call anyone smart who was as overdressed as Gussy? Some readers may have come across real boys like him, but I never have.

I like the characters of a story to come alive to me, but Gussy never has done so. Now Paula Creel, who was mentioned, was a girl and very feminine. I know she could not pronounce her R's, but otherwise she was quite plausible.

I have no objection to Gussy being the son of a Lord, but I do think he showed the aristocracy up in a way some people would object to. He had neither the physique nor the brain power of the other more mundane characters."

Donald Webster writes:- "Being an ardent admirer, or is it devotee, of Gussy I have never found him tedious. He was the first character to arouse my interest in the Gem as a boy, and I liked to read of his noble instincts always prevailing. Of later years, he was not so gullible as in early Gems, but even to the last he could be placated

by flattery. Billy Bunter, to my mind, was an 'also ran' in the field of popularity until Charles Hamilton began concentrating solely on the Magnet."

Roger Jenkins writes:- "I think Gussy should be looked at from two aspects: first, as a character, and second, as a means of developing the plot. On the surface he appears to be unimpressive - a peer's son with an inability to pronounce his R's, meticulous, and fussy about trifles. Yet it does not take the reader long to discover that there is more in Gussy than meets the eye. Gussy may be simple, and Tom Merry may not worry if he is unable to play in the junior eleven, but Arthur Augustus has sterling qualities which more than make up for his apparent failings: courage, an unfailing sense of honour, and a complete lack of snobbery. We are told that simple faith is worth more than Norman blood, but Gussy, to his everlasting credit, has both.

Gussy's high sense of honour was the main-spring of many a fine Gem story. Who does not revel in the magnificent exchanges between Gussy and Levison in "Bought Honours?" Who can forget how Gussy had to leave St. Jim's in disgrace because he would not bring himself to sneak? Even in quite trivial incidents, when Gussy's leg is being pulled unmercifully, he may look ridiculous, but we cannot quite rid ourselves of the feeling that Gussy has not really come off second-best: there is something very appealing in the nature of a trusting, unsuspecting character, even if things do go badly for him at times.

I agree that Gussy could never have monopolised the St. Jim's stories as Bunter has succeeded in doing at Greyfriars. But then, Gussy's remarks are not so stereotyped as Bunter's, and his humorous parts seem all the fresher for it. Because the Gem reader's interest was not focused upon a single study, Gussy never became tedious, as you say. Bunter is now the lord of creation at Greyfriars, but Gussy at St. Jim's is more like one of the ancient monarchs - first among equals."

Eric Fayne adds:- "My criticism of Paula Creel was not as to whether or not she was a credible character, but that she was a copy of the "one and only". A wealthy girl, who dressed to kill, could not pronounce her R's, said "Yaas wathah" and "Bai jove" and, to the best of my recollection, sported a monocle, seems to me to have been more than distantly based on the Swell of St. Jim's."

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

(In this series, Eric Fayne discusses certain topics of interest to students of the Hamilton papers. He gives his own opinion superficially, and invites you to write to him with your own views on the subject. He will summarise readers' letters on the topic in a future C.D.)

No. 7 Can any criticism be levelled at the reformation of Vernon-Smith and Levison?

In the case of the Bounder, I would say No, but it must be remembered that he never really did reform. In very early days he was a heavily overdrawn character, with vice and villainy far beyond credence. He was not the counterpart of Levison of St. Jim's, but of the early Lumley-Lumley. As Roger Jenkins commented in an article some years back, the first Lumley-Lumley stories were not pleasant, and struck a disturbing note. Exactly the same thing can be said of the early tales of Vernon-Smith at Greyfriars.

As in the case of Lumley-Lumley, the Bounder's character was subtly changed, but he was never depicted as being a model youth. From the incredible scoundrel of early days, he became the reckless, rather quixotic fellow who was one of Greyfriars' most fascinating studies from 1913 till the present time. Who can forget that brilliant sequence when the Bounder, thinking to help Wharton, purchased the latter's bicycle at a figure far exceeding its value, only to have his kindness thrown back in his face?

Certainly, the contrast with Redwing helped to make the Bounder so outstanding. In the last year or two of the Magnet, it seemed to me that Smithy was too harshly drawn, a factor which robbed the Bertie Vernon series of some of its charm.

It is more difficult to assess the reform of Levison, for he was two completely different characters under the same name. Recalling the many fine stories of the good Levison in later years, one would not, perhaps, have willed things to have been different from what they were. But I always regard the period, 1911 to 1913 as the Golden Age of the Gen, and feel regret that we lost a strong shady character of great potentiality. For Levison's villainy was of the sly, cunning type of the mean-minded schoolboy, while the early Bounder's was that of a vicious adult. In that the distinction lay. I have never regarded the reform of Levison as believable - it was far too wholesale, while Racke who replaced him for dark deeds, was a mere shadow in comparison.

It's just my point of view. What's yours?

S.B.L. REVIEWSOCTOBER - 1957Passport to Danger (No. 391)James Stagg

A novel on the old familiar lines. Political intrigue... underground movements...the everlasting battle for power and gain...all the old ingredients that go to make up the topical thriller. Familiar, too, are some of the characters and the settings. We meet once again Marshall Ivan Vranner, Dictator of that turbulent European state, Esto-slavia.

What goes on in Esto-slavia - the ruthless regime, the dreaded secret police, prison camps and rebel organisations, and so forth. is consistent with what is happening in a certain part of Europe today. The fate of the spy is swift, sure, punishable only by death. When Tinker, whose only thought in going to the frontier was to help in the relief of the refugees, is arrested by the Est-slavia Secret Police his doom is sealed. Blake had only one thought. To go to Esto-slavia in the vain hope of saving his assistant from the unjust fate awaiting him. Beset on all sides by those he cannot completely trust, Vranner sees in Blake the very man who can help avert that catastrophe which he has always been dreading - a civil war. So Vranner makes a bargain. If in three weeks Blake can discover the person or persons who have re-organised the present underground movement which is threatening his - Vranner's - security as head of the state, Tinker will be set free. Of its type, quite a sound if not outstanding thriller.

Rating..... Good

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The Copy-cat Killings (No. 392)Martin Thomas

A new author with a leaning towards the old style of writing. Martin Thomas makes an auspicious debut to the depleted ranks of the Sexton Blake contributors in this novel, set entirely in London and chiefly in Scho.

The Cingalese Twins - Darro and Luiz da Silva - who did quite a thriving trade with illicit cargoes amongst numerous other crooked businesses, attracted Sexton Blake's attention when they became involved in the killing of a model and the disappearance of a famous stage actress. Who was Sato Yamasaya, the mysterious figure behind the criminal activities of the twins? How two different coloured crayons

put Blake on the trail of the murderer - whose identity is quite a surprise! - raises this who-dun-it above the average. One finds things a little confusing at first, but the real thrills come in the ending, with Blake, believed by the murderer to be bound and helpless, at one end of a microphone and the murderer at the other. There's a shock in store for the assassin when, having committed himself to the crime, he comes to close Blake's lips for ever! Coufts of the Yard and Splash Kirby the columnist play small assisting roles, whilst Paula Dane flits in and out of the story in negative fashion. A praiseworthy first effort by the author.

Rating Very good

WALTER WEBB

WANTED: Single copies or bound volumes of the following:-
 Champion No. 130 to 340; Triumph 1 - 190; Pluck (last series) 78 to 97; Rocket 78 - 87; Triumph Annual 1938. Pleasewrite stating prices wanted to: R. J. McCARTHY, WETLANDS, AUGATHELLA, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

LATE NEWS: Bill Gendor has consented to act as judge in the great Greyfriars Jubilee Cup Contest.

A TIP: Should anyone get an offer of books from an address in Heap Lane, Bradford, Yorkshire, it will be advisable to get the books before sending any cash.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

by JACK WOOD
 Westaw, 328 Stockton Lane, York.
 Phone: 25795

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Some time ago, Jim Cook, one of the staunchest Leeites, suggested to me that it might be interesting to write the story of the Nelson Lee Library and St. Frank's on an alphabetical basis - A for Ancient House and so on. Truly a stupendous task, yet oddly enough since

which Arthur Southway, our South African chum has already done a lot of spadework by writing an alphabetical Who's Who of the characters.

That monumental work has now been succeeded by an alphabetical list he has compiled of all the 948 Nelson Lee Library titles. That list has been passed on to me for comment by our worthy editor, so I propose to hold over my story of the River Thames in Nelson Lee lore, and to deal with the titles.

The titles have been arranged so as to ignore the definite or indefinite article and to concentrate on the first principal word. The first thing which hits the reader is the fact that Nelson Lee only appears twice - Nelson Lee, Cracksman; and Nelson Lee's Lady Assistant. Both these titles come in the early days before St. Frank's.

Nipper too, is as infrequent as Wharton in the Magnet titles. He starts the titles only on eight occasions, including two of the last New Series reprints.

Nelson Lee and Nipper appeared in one title together in addition and Lee (twice) and Nipper (once) in titles where they were not the first word.

St. Frank's appeared first in 41 titles and elsewhere in another 59 titles. The part which the Remove and for the Fourth played in the saga is shown by the appearance of the Remove in 26 titles and the Fourth in only three. "Schoolboy" appears 50 times, "Schoolgirl" once, and "School" 23 times.

Delving into the personalities we find that Edward Oswald Handforth and Archie Glenthorne made 47 and 12 title appearances respectively, and Fullwood was runner-up with 4. Others mentioned are Fenton, Fatty Little, Willy Handforth, Ezra Quirke, Singleton, Waldo, K.K. Parkington, John Busterfield Boots and Yung Ching among others. There are, of course, less direct references to other characters such as the Boy from California and the Boy from Bermondsey.

We must not forget, however, that the Nelson Lee Library was also concerned with detective adventure, and that we can therefore expect some little emphasis on this side of the schoolmaster-detective's career. The word "Mystery" we find in 61 titles, the word "Riddle" in 4 and the word "Clue" in 7, "Case" in 8 and "Secret" in 18.

Other curiosities are that we have three Armistice Day at St. Frank's, two Expelled from St. Frank's, two Fall of the Tyrant, two Freed from Bondage, two The Mystery Master, two the Rebel Remove, three The Schoolboy Slaves, two S.O.S., and Two Victory for the Rebels. Over so many years of life so small a number of duplicate titles does not appear unduly large, does it?

We have "Ghosts" of Somerton Abbey, St. Frank's, Travis Done, Dorrinore Castle and Glenthorne Manor. We have a "Golden" Boomerang, Cavern, Image, Locket and Rover. We also have a Haunted House (twice) and Haunted School and a Haunted Schoolboy and a "House" of a Thousand Eyes, of Dread, of Fear, of Hazard, of Horror, of Mystery, of Pattering Feet and of Secrets.

"Island" appears several times in titles, as do also "Lost", "Peril", "Phanton", "Prisoner" and "Rebels".

Well, there it is. The compiler has done a memorable job with his usual persistence and patience. It will provide an important addition to the records and ease an often difficult task of finding a reference.

Before I close, I would like to hint at some of the things in store for Lectures in the forthcoming Annual. I hear that Frank Lay is compiling a biography of our favourite author, Edwy Searles Brooks. Charles Churchill who also has not written for us for some time, is tackling the lengthy story of Douglas James Sutcliffe, Jim the Penman. If space permits I hope to add to the St. Frank's section with a survey of the prefects of the school.

OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

LONDON SECTION

Down to the Greyfriars country by car and train went the 'old boys' on Sunday, September 15th for the first away meeting of the year. I saw five of them off from Charing Cross in the morning and then went back home ready for the car ride down to Frank Keeling's abode at Polkastone. When we arrived at the harbour it looked as if there was an impromptu meeting there as there was quite a good gathering assembled there. However, the cars took all up to Frank's house and 19 collector members and two bairns had a right good time. Our Herbert was present also Harry Dowler. The Lawrence family from Sunbury on Thames had motored down, Norton Price had bussed it over from Margate and John Wernham had come from Maidstone. Les Rowley from Tokyo and Bill Hubbard from Kenya also made the journey and one Monty Lowther humorist, suggested that Eric Lawrence was from Arabia.

There was the usual good talks, quizzes and reminiscences plus a good study feed and photographs taken out in the garden. Time, as

usual, went all too quickly and ere long it was time to get ready to break up with the knowledge of a happy time and to look forward to the second away meeting at Bill Jardine's residence at 20, Spencer Road, Caterham, Surrey on Sunday, October 20th. This meeting place is in the Harry Wharton country and Bill can be relied on for a good agenda and programme.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

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NORTHERN SECTION MEETING - 14th SEPTEMBER, 1957

Although our usual room was engaged this evening, we were soon comfortably settled upstairs. Our Vice-Chairman was missing for only the second time in the history of the Club, but what we lost the London Club gained.

Business was soon dealt with and the chair was handed over to Gerry for his talk on "Frank Richards' Schooldays". I suppose we all expected a talk on the Cedar Creek series but we were all enjoyably surprised when Gerry started. He gave us an excellent talk on the various comparisons between some of Frank Richards' thoughts about matters in the Cedar Creek stories and his actual experiences in the Autobiography. Some were almost word for word, as in "The Schoolboy Author", when Frank Richards was writing a series of stories for the local paper and because of a cold the editor wrote one story himself and published it under the name of Frank Richards. In the Autobiography this cropped up again in the chapter on substitute authors.

Many other instances were quoted by Gerry in his interesting and informative talk.

Following the refreshments it was the turn of Stanley to do his duty, as he was the winner of the previous competition. This time Stanley gave us the T.V. game of Criss Cross Quiz. The board was the same as on T.V. except on a smaller scale and the questions dealt with the hobby. Jack Wood finished the night as champion, as he beat all six members who challenged him.

Altogether an excellent meeting which I imagine was enjoyed by all present. Next month, Stanley Smith is to give us a talk.

RON HODGSON, Hon. Sec.

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MERSEYSIDE SECTION - SATURDAY, 7th SEPTEMBER

Only a small number of the Club Members were able to turn up for the September Meeting, this being mainly due to it being held on a

Saturday which is not convenient for many members. Attempts will be made to revert to the Sunday gatherings, and the October one will definitely be held on Sunday 13th October at 6.30 p.m., when it is hoped Mr. Leckenby will be with us once again. Apologies were received from Mr. Switzer who had to go into hospital and Mr. Horton who has suffered a severe personal bereavement. The Clubs best wishes and thoughts go out to these two members. A further sale of Magnets, Nelson Lees and Sexton Blake was then made and the writer was very pleased to obtain three specimen Magnets, covering three different periods, for the sum of three shillings. This branch will stick to its principles of no high prices for its books. Frank Unwin's letter in the September Digest was then discussed, and the Merseyside Branch fully indentifies itself with the views expressed.

After tea we were given a new quiz devised by Frank Unwin called A - Z. Twenty six cards were placed on the table with the letters from A - Z written on them. Each of us took one in turn and had to answer the three questions written on the other side. This was a most interesting competition and thanks must go to Frank for the time and work he must have put into it. The meetings concluded with a preliminary discussion on the Xmas Party. Next meeting Sunday, 13th October at 6.30 p.m.

NORMAN FRAGNELL,

Secretary Merseyside Branch O.B.B.C.

MIDLAND SECTION - 2nd SEPTEMBER by Harry Broster

Though holidays still interfered with the attendance a good number assembled to hear what turned out to be a tip top item from Tom Porter. He had selected as his subject what is undoubtedly the most interesting character in all Charles Hamilton's school yarns - Ernest Levison, that mixture of good and bad traits. It was one of the highlights of this years' programmes. There was no time for the usual quiz and the night ended with a reading from the ever popular "Water Lily" series. This was in the hands of Ted Davey and being his favourite, was put over in the very best style. A fitting climax to a very enjoyable meeting. Before the main programme began, there was a fairly lengthy discussion on various topics. The future of the library and disposal of books which had been fully circulated, appreciation of the batch of Sexton Blake Librarys sent on to us by Herbert Leckenby as our share of a gift by Miss Cooke of Manchester and most important a suggestion by Tom Porter that we endeavour to arrange another "conference" at Chesterfield for this coming December and I was asked to approach Leeds and Liverpool. Would London be interested?