

# THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOLUME 13, NUMBER 152

PRICE 1s.6d.

AUGUST 1959

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AUGUST, 1959.

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

or

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

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## From the Editor's Chair

THE ANNUAL. I am pleased to say that orders are coming in nicely. At the moment of writing we are in front of last year, and all others years. Keep it up won't you? With a goodly number of Questionnaire Forms already filled in, I have been able to get a start on the Who's Who, which is a great help. When there's a rush at the last minute entries are apt to get missed out.

\* \* \* \* \*

SCOOP. That sleuth of ours, Bill Lofts, has brought off one of his biggest scoops; after months of trailing he has found George Richmond Samways, who for years was on the staff of the Analgamated Press, and who knows more about the inner workings of the Magnet and Gem than any one still alive. He was almost entirely responsible for the Greyfriars Herald and Tom Merry's Weekly. However, turn to Bill Lofts first instalment and see for yourselves. There's a lot more to follow.

\* \* \* \* \*

CHESTERFIELD PROGRESS. Harry Broster tells you all about the latest meeting between the Northern and Midland Clubs. All I'll say is that Harry is quite right when he says it did my heart good to sit and survey the scene. So long as this kind of thing goes on I shall never feel old, no matter how many my years.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY

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# Blackiana . . . . .

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

A number of readers who did not subscribe to the C.D. in its early days, but who have since heard about the article I wrote entitled "The Story of Nirvana", have asked me to reprint it. Well, it isn't very lengthy, so I am putting it in this month. Those of you who have already read it will no doubt have forgotten it by now; as for those who have asked for it - I hope you like it!

Walter Webb is now getting well into his stride, and next month's instalment will provide some very interesting facts and figures relating to G. H. Teed.

JOSIE PACKMAN

\* \* \* \* \*

CENTURY-MAKERS

(And a few other interesting statistics)

BY WALTER WEBB

INSTALMENT FOUR

THE COMING OF E. S. BROOKS

The year 1912 was a milestone in the history of the U.J. for it introduced into its pages two authors destined to enjoy enormous popularity as Sexton Blake writers. No. 431, the second story published that year, was not a great one by any means, but it was of sufficient merit as to make one wonder how anyone so young could have been responsible for its composition. Its title, "The Motor Bus Mystery," heralded the arrival of (28) EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, an 18 year old youth, as natural a writer as ever stepped into the ranks of the subscribers of books for boys - one who was to become a very warm favourite, not only with those who have followed the perils of Sexton Blake, but with the readers of a certain pocket-sized weekly that specialised in school and detective fiction, and which, in a matter of just over three and a half years, was to make its appearance in a Britain reeling blindly 'neath the terrible onslaught of the Boche.

Born in 1893, E. S. Brooks at the age of twenty-five, at which his immense enthusiasm was even then apparent, started as a regular contributor, producing at the rate of one a week a story of school and detective adventure for the aforementioned paper, the NELSON LEE LIBRARY. His Nipper at St. Frank's yarns have been somewhat severely criticised from time to time on account of their incredibility,

products of a fertile imagination to which the author was given a remarkably free rein. But the entertainment value of those unique yarns was considerable, and since one reads for that particular purpose then the author fulfilled both completely and satisfactorily.. the task to which he was allotted.

A cheery and lively writer, Brook's output was prodigious; his commitments seemed so heavy that one was left wondering how he managed to carry them out. Many Blake stories for the U.J.; novel-length efforts for the S.B.L. from time to time; various serials under the non-de-plume of Robert W. Comrade; occasional stories of St. Frank's for the BOY'S REALM - all these in addition to his weekly task of producing a long, complete story for the N.L.L. every week! All? Not a bit of it! He still found time to conduct what is recognised as an editor's task of replying through the pages of the paper he did so much to popularise, queries sent in by readers. These, in some cases, stretched to three pages, and since being written in the author's usual good-humoured style were richly entertaining.

Brooks' first story was immediately followed by one from Murray Graydon, which brought his known Blake stories up to the century mark thus providing the answer to our second query - WHO WAS THE FIRST AUTHOR TO WRITE 100 SEXTON BLAKE STORIES? The time lag? Unfortunately, at the time of writing, this cannot be gauged strictly accurately because in one or two cases issues have not been available for inspection for purposes of assessing origin of authorship. Since he wrote his first story for the Christmas Double Number of the U.J. in December, 1904, there are nine stories which he might possibly have written between that time and the estimated completion of his 100th story, "THE PUBLISHER'S SECRET" in January, 1912. For the time being, however, it must stand that William Murray Graydon completed his century of Blake stories in the space of seven years and one month, and it will be interesting to see if any other author improves on this time as we progress in this review.

Four other new and well-remembered authors were writing in 1912, but the actual date of the first appearance of two of them as Blake writers is doubtful. Welcome now to (29) ALLAN BLAIR and (30) LEWIS CARLTON, the former already an established favourite with the readers of the weekly BOYS' FRIEND, a very able writer both in school and detective fiction; the latter more successful editorially than literarily, being editor of the U.J. under the direction of Willie Back for several years before leaving the A.P. to play Blake on the stage.

The third writer, John William Robin, has already been mentioned

many times in these columns, and is better known under his pseudonym than his real name. To Blake devotees it was as (31) MARK OSBORNE that he gained recognition and a fair amount of popularity with tales of the gentlemen-cracksman, Aubrey Dexter, and as a substitute writer of the Plummer stories. His first effort, "The Case of the Anonymous Letters" was published in the U.J. 9 March, 1912, and was probably the story Jack Lewis was alluding to in No. 1 of THE OLD BOYS' BOOK COLLECTOR, as having been written in longhand when the author was working in a laundry. Sent in a brown paper parcel, it must have been one of the oddest and most surprising manuscripts ever received by an editor!

The origin of the Plummer stories even to this day, constitutes the biggest headache for a researcher on the trail of the various authors responsible for their output. One story at least, was by an author never previously thought to have any connection with the character; but there is no doubt that a horse-racing story published in U.J. No. 476, entitled "The Great Turf Mystery" was by Arthur S. Hardy, responsible for earlier yarns of Blake on the Turf. The others seem a mixture of authorship, but the hand of Mark Darran is noticeable in nearly all of them, though I have a strong feeling that Lewis Carlton was part author. Darran's Blake is unmistakable. Those many references to Blake as having the "tips of his fingers pressed close together" with over them "the lips drooping low over his eyes," the continued "flicking of the ash from his cigar," the use of the word "precisely," which Blake let slip "carelessly" being so persistent that it became really aggravating - all are well-worn phrases beloved of the author.

Fourteen stories in 1912 narrowed the gap a little, and at the end of the year Darran was left requiring only 35 stories to become the second author to reach his century of Blakes.

The closing weeks saw the arrival of that "substantial-looking Canadian" mentioned in the preceding instalment, who, according to Jack Lewis, arrived under suspicion of having "ghosted" for the late Michael Storm due to the similarity of his style with that of the latter's, but who was cleared when on being asked to sit down at a typewriter and write a couple of chapters of a Blake yarn it was satisfactorily established that he did nothing of the sort. It was immediately apparent to editor, Lewis Carlton, and his chief, W. H. Back, that in this newcomer they had found a writer of unusual talent - one who possessed the necessary ability to give to the U.J. the boost it was so badly in need of at that particular time. Thus it came about that the new writer - his name was Teed - was given as much work as he

could possibly handle, though the feats of authorship which transpired as a result must form the basis of the next instalment.

In concluding, the following table will be of interest, as it described how matters stood at the end of 1912 - Total Blake stories published (as far as is known) 475; Authorship doubtful or unknown 57; Authors known 418.

In the majority of cases the unknown writers are those who had contributed occasional stories and then dropped out, so that apart from being mentioned in the Authors' List they would have forfeited any other recognition in any case. But from 1913 practically every author is accounted for, and the records from then on are almost complete.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE STORY OF NIRVANA

By Josephine Packman

(Reprinted from C.D. No. 37, Jan. 1950)

As this is my first venture into the field as a writer I hope any errors will be overlooked in my endeavour to relate the "story of Nirvana."

Some of our Sexton Blake fans are rather inclined to ridicule the stories in the "Union Jack" dealing with the affairs of Tinker and Nirvana; but for myself, being at a young and impressionable age when I first read these yarns, way back in 1925, I must admit they were great favourites of mine, and I can remember at the time regretting very deeply that nothing more was ever heard of Nirvana and her immediate associates Marie and Phillippe the Fox.

The whole series only ran to thirteen numbers spread over the period from October 1925 to December 1926 and were written by that very famous author of so many Sexton Blake yarns, George Hamilton Teed, and were set against the background of some quite exciting adventures, many of which led Sexton Blake and Tinker to different parts of the Continent.

In No. 1149, the series commenced with the affair of the Duchess of Rayland's Diamond Necklace which had been stolen by Nirvana. A short prologue gave an episode in Tinker's early boyhood when he first met Nirvana, then a small child trained as a pickpocket by her elder sister, Marie. Years later, when Nirvana has become a famous dancer, these two young people met again, at the Ball given by the Duchess of Rayland, but Nirvana, still under the influence of Marie, steals the necklace, and by using Tinker as an unconscious ally, involved him in all the subsequent troubles. However, Tinker's one aim was to get

Nirvana away from Marie, but unfortunately she insisted upon staying with her sister until she had solved the mystery which surrounded her parentage.

Tinker kept this affair a secret from Sexton Blake, thinking that nothing more would be heard from Nirvana, but in the next yarn, No. 1150, the activities of a gang of forgers are traced to Marie, Phillippe the Fox and Flash Brady, by Tinker, and in order to protect Nirvana he had to confess to Blake; but in the end Nirvana was allowed to go free.

The third adventure, related in No. 1156, took place in Sicily, that Island of deadly Vendettas, where once again Tinker met Nirvana, and armed with the knowledge that her associates were also on the island he was able to help Sexton Blake break the vendetta of the Bellamo family, of whom Phillippe was a member. It was during this period that Nirvana realised just what Tinker meant to her, and that he was trying to help her break away from Marie, but always the urge to discover the truth about her parents was too strong and Nirvana stayed on with Marie.

In No. 1159, a very seasonable Christmas story, was the finding by Nirvana of her long-neglected mother and the brother she had never seen, but who had also been ruined by Marie, and under the name of the Tongo Kid was well-known to the police. Marie and her two unworthy friends did their best to fasten the guilt of a jewel theft on to Nirvana's brother, but here Sexton Blake stepped in and thwarted their plans.

From here on I feel I must just list the remainder of the series, with a brief mention of the titles and characters, otherwise the article will become too long and take up much valuable space in the C.Digest.

No. 1161, "The Mystery of the Painted Slippers," involved another of my favourite characters, Dr. Huxton Rymer, who, with Marie, was on the trail of the painted slippers, in the heels of which had been hidden some valuable diamonds. No. 1168, entitled "Nirvana's Ordeal," brings the first part of the series to a close, with Nirvana being able to devote herself to her mother, and then rather a long time was allowed to elapse before the first of a series of six stories appeared in No. 1198, called "The Mystery of Room No. 7". The stories concerned the efforts of the wealthy and unscrupulous Augustus Keever to get Nirvana into his clutches, but behind everything there lurked the sinister shadow of the mysterious Monseigneur X.

Each story was complete in itself. No. 1199, "The Case of the

Sheffield Ironmaster," saw Blake and Tinker in Sheffield, and from there, in the "Affair of the Derelict Grange" (U.J. No. 1200), they travelled to Cornwall; and incidentally, the popular Yvonne then came on the scene, by offering to care for Nirvana.

In No. 1201, Tinker, who had been sent to Palestine, was shipwrecked in the Adriatic, and through being rescued and taken to Venice, was able to help Blake once again to outwit Monseigneur X, and incidentally, to rescue Nirvana, who had been prevailed upon by Keever to accompany him to Venice with the promise of revealing where her father was to be found.

In No. 1202, "The Clue of the Two Straws", Sexton Blake with the aid of both Yvonne and Nirvana, was able to clear up the scandal of the forged Polonian bonds by breaking up the gang of forgers and arresting Keever.

The final meeting between Blake and Monseigneur X occurs in Spain. The story of the mysterious Monseigneur ends amidst the mountains of the little state of Andorra, but Blake was enabled to discover the true identity of Nirvana's father, and in the last episode of this series, No. 1208, "The Adventure of the Two Devils," Nirvana and her parents are united, but only after Tinker's final efforts to get her out of Marie's clutches.

As I remarked at the beginning of this article, nothing more was ever heard of these interesting folk; and I, for one, was extremely disappointed that Marie did not get the punishment she deserved.

\*\*\*\*\*  
FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE - ½d. Magnets 14, 15, 17, 19, 22, 43 (double No.) 46, 47, 58, 60, 61, 62, 63, 65, 66, 68, 69, 72, 73, 74, 83, 84 (double No.) 88, 89, 90, 93, 96, 98, 101. Rookwood "Schoolboy's Owns" 347, 356, 368, 380, 389. Sexton Blake 19 (third). 24 Bunter Books. Some Magnets have no covers, some have edges cut, all in good condition, stories complete. Wanted, Later Red Magnets, Schoolboys' Owns 169, 171, 47 to 133 (Greyfriars). Old copy Film Fun.  
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10/- EACH OFFERED FOR THESE MAGNETS IN GOOD CONDITION. 510, 530, 995, 1004, 1011, 1013, 1015, 1024, 1027, 1028, 1034, 1114, 1121, 1129, 1154, 1177, 1215.

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2. Contents to be short stories, articles, news items, jokes, poems, limericks, etc., ostensibly written by members - of the four famous schools of fiction, i.e. St. Frank's, Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood, together with any associate schools, i.e. Highcliffe, the River House School, etc.
3. The title to be "THE SCHOOLBOYS' HERALD."
4. All entries to be typewritten as far as possible.
5. No illustrations whatsoever, but, if desired, title may be printed in ornamental lettering.
6. All contributions, of course, to be anonymous as far as individual members of the various Clubs are concerned, (see rule 2 above)
7. Closing date - 30th November, 1959.
8. Any entry not observing these rules, especially size and contents will be immediately disqualified.
9. All entries will be marked with a distinguishing symbol, which will be issued to the various Clubs at a later date, together with the address to which the completed entries should be sent.
10. The name of the judge will be announced as soon as his consent to judge is received, but, in order to make the judging a little speedier, entries will not leave this country for judging.

\*\*\*\*\*  
WANTED: Magnet No. 799, S.O.L's 60, 68, Jd. Gems 16, 37, Gems 279, 359, 364, 433, B.F. Libraries 1st series 237 King Cricket, 334 Jungle Patrol, 383 After Light's Out, 497 Adventure Creek.  
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WANTED URGENTLY to complete set "Captains" Vols. 38 and 41. "Chums" years 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1914, 1915. Could anyone assist?  
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CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Please note Frank Vernon Lay has moved to - 52 OAKLEIGH GARDENS, WHETSTONE, LONDON, N.20. 'Phone number later.

# HAMILTONIANA

Compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

Well, there's quite a lot to get into Hamiltoniana this month. We start off with a cheery note from Frank Richards.

6th July, 1959.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Thanks for the C.D. It came just in time for me to read Eric Fayne's article "What's in a Name?" over my breakfast roll; reviving many pleasant memories. I was very pleased, too, with the review of the "old fat man" on page 204, and readers who agree that my new series has started well, may be pleased to know that it will run to nine plays, instead of the usual half-dozen, which to me at least, seems quite a good idea.

Kindest regards,

FRANK RICHARDS

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## LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

(In this series, Eric Fayne touches on certain matters of interest to students of the Hamilton papers. He gives his own view superficially. If you will write to him, expressing your opinions on the topics he discusses, he will summarise readers' views in a future issue.)

### NO. 29. FRANK RICHARDS'S WRITING LIFE.

Neil Bell, author of many dozens of novels, has written his Autobiography, and he has also written a separate work entitled "My Writing Life." Not being very interested in the private life of Mr. Bell, I did not find his Autobiography particularly entrancing, but having read and enjoyed some of his novels, and read and disliked others from his pen, I found "My Writing Life" fascinating.

It is now some years since "The Autobiography of Frank Richards" came on the market to entertain his admirers. In its striking dust jacket, it occupies a position of honour on our bookshelves.

An Autobiography and a "Writing Life" are really two different things, and I am not sure that the "Autobiography of Frank Richards" did not slip between the two stools. He gave us details of certain adventures he enjoyed as a young man. The average man's life is very uneventful, and even a famous author is unlikely to have had a real book-full of interesting experiences. In Mr. Richards' case, we should

have been enthralled by some account of his childhood and his school-life. We should have liked to know whether he inherited his gift for writing.

All the same, these matters are entirely Mr. Richards' own business. He is, as we well know, a retiring type of man, and we have no right in the world to attempt to pry into matters which he prefers to keep private.

His "Writing Life" however, to some extent, belongs to us all. True, in his Autobiography he gave us many graphic glimpses into this, and they alone made the book well worth the money the publisher charged for it. But those glimpses were restricted - they served to give us a yearning for more.

I hope that one day, ere long, Mr. Richards may see fit to pen his "Writing Life." I cannot think that there would be any difficulty in finding a publisher for it - the demand for non-fiction works is colossal. The writing life of the man who must be the most prolific writer of the century, would surely evoke great interest.

I feel sure that Mr. Richards could give us a thousand and one items to fascinate us, beyond the outlines which he gave us in his Autobiography. We should not ask for insight into any reasons for isolated friction which might have occurred at any time - and no man could pursue any vocation without some form of friction occurring now and then. That sort of thing would be no concern of ours. But there must be endless information in connection with his stories and their handling that Mr. Richards could give us without any recrimination and without spoiling any of our illusions.

Mr. Richards is a busy man, and though his wonderful accumulation of years rests lightly upon him - and may it do so for many years to come - it is understandable that he has to limit his commitments these days. I hope that he will consider the possibility of giving us his "Writing Life" in book form. If he feels unable to undertake an addition to his Autobiography, what a treat it would be for us all if he would contribute a brief sketch of his Writing Life to the C.D. Annual.

If the best and second best are outside reason, perhaps some day he will let one of us who write regularly for the C.D. interview him for the purpose of gathering some facts and write up "Frank Richards' Writing Life" for the enjoyment of readers. It would be a very poor third best - but it would be better than nothing.

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

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOESNo. 27. SOMEBODY SAID. (Third Spasm)

BILL LOFTS writes: "I have read with much interest your comments on my School Friend article. I think it probable that Charles Hamilton, who was obviously the best writer of boys' stories on the market, was not so much in his element when it came to writing stories for girls.

I concede that Bessie Bunter did not appear in the Magnet long before she featured in School Friend, and I was really intending to emphasise the point that the girls of Cliff House - Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn - were created by Mr. Hamilton long before the School Friend was thought of.

When I stated that L. E. Ransome was the best of the School Friend writers, I was giving the opinion of most of the editors with whom I have come in touch. You certainly make a good point when you ask why, if this was the case, the format of School Friend changed so soon after he started writing the stories. I could write a whole article on this - it has a lot of connection with the introduction of lending libraries, which almost stopped altogether the market of juvenile fiction."

My quotation in S.P.C. "Frank Richards had created Cliff House many years before the first issue of the 'School Friend' appeared. Marjorie Hazeldene, Clara Trevlyn, and Bessie Bunter had been featured in many of the Greyfriars stories....."

Now the first issue of School Friend was dated May 17th, 1919. Bessie was mentioned in Magnet No. 572, dated 25th January, 1919, in the Wally Bunter series. Magnet No. 582, dated April 5th, 1919, actually featured Bessie on the cover - and the first chapter deals mostly about her in a most amusing conversation with Dr. Locke. So you see I am correct in stating that Bessie did appear before the first issue of the School Friend. Bessie must have been thought of by Mr. Hamilton before the School Friend was considered."

ROGER JENKINS writes: "I would not agree with you altogether about the ease in which sub stories could be spotted. Even experienced collectors sometimes disagree on the authorship of an odd story here and there, and, though such doubtful cases are few in number, I think it must be conceded that young readers of the time might have been taken in by even more easily detectable sub stories.

Again, for the casual reader the magic of Greyfriars or St. Jim's might even have been enough in itself to survive the rough handling of

the sub writer. Further, there are even some collectors today who admit they class some sub stories among their firm favourites.

I think the answer must be that a regular reader with a firm eye for style and consistency must have noticed the sub stories, but in other cases it would have been a matter of chance. But Eric, don't try to tell us that you were a bad scholar."

FRANK LAY writes: "As a youth I mainly read the Magnet, and whilst I sometimes found the stories to be inferior, it never occurred to me to doubt their authorship."

SYD SMYTH writes: "Whilst it is hard to figure out exactly what did happen with regard to the School Friend in 1919, I do agree that the earliest stories were much the better. Some of the later ones were unreadable, in my opinion.

Regarding your comments on detecting the sub stories when young, I remember quite definitely being very puzzled over the heavy treatment of some yarns, and the smooth likeable pace of others. It amazed me that a writer could turn out such completely different styles. I was too dumb to go a step further and say it was a different writer. But I discarded these melodramatic yarns and kept the others, and in later years, when I clearly realised what had happened, I was able to check my books against a list of subs, and there were only about 3 subs kept, and these had (and still have) a special charm to me of their own."

GEORGE SELLARS writes: "I agree with you about detecting the difference between Charles Hamilton's stories, and the sub stories. I had been reading the Gem nearly two years when I read the Parker series in January, 1917. I would have been very thick in the head if I had ever entertained a thought that Martin Clifford had written these almost unreadable tales. I believe they were the very worst stories by any sub writer to appear in the Gem or Magnet, and I should say there were quite a lot of readers who noticed the difference as well as myself.

These stories were a blot on the fair name of the Gem."

BILL GANDER writes: "Regarding your comments on Bill Lofts' Cliff House authors, you are right about Bessie Bunter. The first mention of her is in Magnet No. 572, and again there were brief references to her in 574 and 582. These issues were early in 1919, so it may be that there was thought that early of a girls' paper featuring Bessie.

I fear that I was not a good Hamiltonian. I have, now, not the least recollection of ever noticing that some Magnet and Gem stories were not in the same class as the rest. For all that, I may have noticed at

the time, but failed to remember it, for I was out of contact with both papers from 1919 to the 1930s. Then, of course, I could easily distinguish a sub story from a genuine one...until I came to that Dirk Power series in the Gem. I wouldn't have believed that it was Frank Richards' work if he hadn't said it was."

RON CROLLIE writes: "Today, I have no difficulty, of course, in distinguishing Mr. Hamilton's work in the Gem and Magnet from that of other writers who tried to relate the adventures of the scholars of Greyfriars and St. Jim's. But I maintain that any reader of the papers when they were actually appearing, must have been a reader of very long standing - a far longer period than was average for even a St. Jim's and Greyfriars enthusiast - if he could pick out the difference between a genuine tale and a sub story. Although most of us were quite capable of distinguishing that two stories were written by different authors, we had not the inside knowledge that one of them had originated the characters and places that were depicted therein.

May I end on this note. If all the sub stories had been written in the style of 'Tom Merry for Borstal' then I must confess that I would have had far more difficulty in distinguishing them from the genuine article."

ERIC FAYNE adds: Some months ago, Roger Jenkins and I were discussing a white-cover Magnet series, in which a film company visited Greyfriars, and Wingate fell in love with a film star, Elsie Mainwaring. Roger's impression was that it was a genuine series, written when Frank Richards was off-form. I myself, though it was many years since I had read it, gave my opinion that it was a sub series. Somehow, the very name, Elsie Mainwaring, did not smack of the genuine Frank, and I am still holding the view that it was a sub series.

My thanks to Mrs. Vera Nicholls, who sent to me a letter which she had received from one of her favourite writers, Ida Melbourne. It would appear that "Ida Melbourne" is the L. E. Ransome to whom Mr. Lofts refers.

\* \* \* \* \*

**WANTED:** Sexton Blake "New Look" series Nos. 359, 365, 366, 367, 370, 385, 390. Must be in good condition.

**JOHN STEELE,** "GLOBE" CINEMA, HOMS GARRISON, B.F.P.O. 57.

**WANTED:** The first Bunter Look - "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School" 10/- offered.

**COLIN WYATT,** 85 CARNFORTH GARDENS, ELM PARK, HORNCHURCH, ESSEX.

A		1							
B	2		3						
C	4	5							
D		6	7						
E	8			9					
F		10	11						
G	12					13			
H		14	15						
I			16			17			
J						18	19		
K	20		21	22					
L			23	24					
M	25					26			
N	27	28							
O	29					30			

QUIZZLE NO. 9

The letters in the numbered squares, if placed in the lower grid, will spell out a welcome event at the end of the Summer Term.

CLUE DOWN: A. A Sine Qua Non of the Vacation. (3,5,4,3,)

CLUES ACROSS:

- A. Not difficult for Ali Ben Yusef.  
 B. Carry on, Marie Rivers.  
 C. Did he ever make a duck on Little Side?  
 D. Typical of Cardew - and descriptive of Lord Reckness, perhaps.  
 E. Nugent is, is more ways than one.  
 F. Signs of Spring in the quad. What a game! (4,4)  
 G. This Shell fish tries to be funny.  
 H. Jimmy Silver is it - and has it.  
 I. Protected by Tom Merry, and wrecked by Fatty Wynn.  
 J. Mr. Chunkley has one at Court-field.  
 K. Each Gem had one, and was one.  
 L. The Famous Five experienced it in the China Seas.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30

- M. Thus, even Billy Bunter is smaller than life.  
 N. Blake is often called one, and obviously should be one - but he isn't! (3,3)  
 O. Skinner likened Wharton to this, and Julius Caesar said "Hence! Wilt thou lift up....."

Write on a postcard the words in the lower grid and the answer to the Clue Down. 5/- to the sender of the first correct solution received by the Editor.

RESULT OF QUIZZLE NO. 8 - Solution to Clue Down - "Sailing the Thames"  
 Hidden words - "The Grand Gentleman of Broadstairs." First correct solution received from W. L. Williamson, 410 Oakwood Lane, Leeds, 8, to whom 5/- has been sent. Northern 40 pts, London 30 pts, Merseyside 10 pts.

I MEET GEORGE RICHMOND SAMWAYS - MAGNET AND GEM EXPERT

By W. O. G. Lofts

Foreword:

In No. 63 of the "Story Paper Collector" dated July, 1957. I wrote a short article entitled "George Richmond Samways - and especially Magnet 400". I would suggest to readers who have this particular issue - that to refresh their memories on the merits of G. R. Samways - that they re-read through it again before reading my following article. This will give them some idea of the great enthusiasm and expert knowledge that G. R. Samways showed in his early days on the famous school-boy characters in the "Magnet" and "Gem". This information was supplied to me, by a former schoolfriend of his - who was of the firm opinion that 'Sam' as he called him, was easily the most knowledgeable person who ever worked on the "Magnet" and "Gem". His intimate knowledge on all the characters was astounding - as not only did he write at least 100 Greyfriars and St. Jim's stories - but practically wrote all the contents in the "Greyfriars Herald", "Tom Merry's Weekly's", "Holiday Annuals", etc., excepting of course, the long stories in these papers written by Charles Hamilton. Rhymes and ditties were his speciality - and these must have totalled in all several thousands - if one could compute them all. But firstly, for the benefit of readers who were unable to read my article on this author - here is a very brief synopsis of what I wrote:-

G. R. Samways as a boy went to a very strict bluecoat type of school. The Companion papers which included the "Magnet" and "Gem" were very unjustifiably classed with the 'blood and thunder' type of boys literature - and the Headmaster who was regarded by one and all as a narrow-minded old tyrant, with an extremely pious disposition, put a very rigorous ban on them. Woe betide, any youth who was caught reading them! Not only was the so-called offending literature confiscated - but the culprit received a severe licking in the bargain!

This ban did not daunt Samways however, as he was so enthusiastic and keen to read more about the schools of Greyfriars and St. Jim's - that he organised an 'underground movement' where the "Magnet" and "Gem" were circulated freely. He even held weekly readings in the school playground where to an enthralled audience he narrated the current adventures of Harry Wharton and Tom Merry and Co.

Later when he left school and was able to write letters without having them censored by the Masters, he started to bombard the Editor of the "Magnet" and "Gem" with poems-ditties-short stories etc., and to his great delight many of them were published - the first in Magnet

No. 249, 1912, which also included his name in rhyme. After several jobs he at last realised his youthful ambition - and obtained a post as junior sub-editor in the Magnet and Gem office. In 1915, he was known to have written Magnet No. 400 - a special story with a religious theme, to sort of erase the stigma of the so-called 'Blood and Thunder' from his favourite paper, and especially so to appease his old Headmaster. He was last heard of in the late 30s in the Southend area - but despite an exhaustive search by myself I never succeeded in tracing him until a short while ago.....now read on.

#### Chapter 1

Starting with getting the solution as to the actual identity of the well known writer of serials in boys stories 'Edmund Burton' - and later by a series of deductions, with the co-operation of my great friend Derek Adley, I was at last able to trace the whereabouts of George Richmond Samways. In very interesting letters to me, he was astonished to know of the vast amount of interest there was still today in the old Magnet and Gem. I too was astonished at the amazing knowledge he showed in the old stories and by his mention of several Hamiltonian items - which have been most controversial for years - and which certainly shows a new light on the subjects. As we had so much to discuss on the matter, he suggested that I stayed with him for a weekend - where we could talk about the old papers to our hearts content; and this I gladly agreed on.

After a weekend of lovely weather, and in my opinion the most informative ever spent in the quest for information on the Magnet and Gem, I can now record the following facts in Mr. Samways' own words.

"One day whilst working in the office, I was sent for by the editor of the companion papers - H. A. Hinton - and was requested to write a Greyfriars story for the Magnet. I was somewhat overawed by this commission, for though very familiar with Charles Hamilton's style (I had been an avid reader of the Magnet and Gem since the first issues) I had never yet attempted a long story in my life! However, I took lodgings in London and tackled the task, and on the Monday morning, the story was presented to H. A. Hinton, and Maurice Down, the chief sub-editor for their approval. They accepted it, and I went home the richer by £15 15 0! This story was certainly not one of my best efforts and was No. 353 entitled "The Reign of Terror" in 1914. Later I conceived the idea to bring the rival schools together in a grand sports tournament - prior to that - sport had only been dealt with in a cursory way in the stories. This story was entitled "Sportsmen All" No. 390, 1915 - and this story according to H.A. Hinton,

brought an amazing response from readers questing for more tales of that nature.

As a result of this I was specially commissioned to write for the Boys' Friend Library, an 80,000 word yarn on the same lines. This was entitled "SCHOOL AND SPORT" and was a great success; several thousands more than the usual quota were printed in a reissue.

I am very surprised that this story should have been attributed to John Nix Pentelow by some readers - for our styles of writing were so widely dis-similar. Pentelow was an excellent writer in his own field, but as a writer of Magnet and Gem stories he had two serious defects:-

- (a) extreme verbosity (b) no sense of humour

There once appeared in a Pentelow story:-

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry monosyllabically, and this phrase was repeated jestingly in the office for a long time after. As an original writer, Pentelow was much my superior. My work was not liked by him, and he very rightly criticised two of my chief faults, i.e. inability to create characters, and thinness of plots. But these two faults, although fatally disabling to an original writer, were less serious in the case of a substitute writer; for the characters were already created, and schoolboy readers did not mind thinness of plot so long as the story was gripping and exciting. Moreover, these faults were redeemed in my case by a keen sense of humour, which Pentelow entirely lacked. The disparity between a Pentelow story and a Samways story is evident. A Pentelow story has plot and form, but is extremely prosy. A Samways story has neither plot nor form, but the dialogue is crisp and snappy, and modelled as closely as possible upon Charles Hamilton's.

If the Magnet story, "Sportsmen ALL" is compared with "School and Sport" it will quickly be apparent that both stories are by the same writer. "School & Sport" an expanded version of "Sportsmen All!"

Despite our slight difference of opinion on the stories - both John Nix Pentelow and myself were the very best of friends; he was a very elderly man when I knew him in 1915 - and sad to say, almost stone deaf. A most kindly and friendly man, he was a very painstakingly editor and would not do anything without a good reason.

I am very surprised to hear that Mr. Pentelow has been severely criticised at times by some of your members, especially in the case of when he killed off the Greyfriars sixth former in Magnet No. 520, entitled "A Very Gallant Gentleman" and when Arthur Courtney, of course, ceased to appear on his death. The following explanation as to the true facts of the matter may remove some of the stigma attached to his name. And I am surprised that none of your knowledgeable Hamiltonians



# NELSON LEE COLUMN

by JACK WOOD, Nostaw, Stockton Lane, York.

Phone: 25795

\* \* \* \* \*

This month we complete the excellent Random Recollections by Jim Sutcliffe, and I'm sure Lee fans everywhere will have shared my enjoyment of Jim's survey of a typically Brooksian series.

## "THE FATAL FIFTH"

Guy Fawkes celebrations coincided with the test of the seventh infidel and this time it was Walter Church and while he was undergoing his test in the monastery ruins Handforth intervened at the very moment that Church was acquitting himself to the priest's satisfaction, and as a result of this Handforth is bound to a gigantic catherine wheel, eight feet in diameter, a fate that had been prepared for Church, had he failed in his test. Church, although now acquitted, lay bound hand and foot while the priests made their escape and helpless he watched Handy turning with ever increasing speed, safe for a minute or two while the firework burned on its perimeter. Then Church, in a frenzy wrenched his hands free and struggled to Handy, pulled him to a standstill and cut him free. The wheel now freed of its burden, gathered momentum and continued its pyrotechnic display while the two juniors crawled into the night and safety.

## "THE HORROR OF THE RUINED ABBEY"

The summons to number eight came on a bitter misty November evening and the recipient was Jack Grey who was in Bennington on a shopping expedition. He made his way purposefully to the ruined Abbey between St. Frank's and Eagemoor, but on the way is seen by Gore-Pearce who follows him, thinking Grey is on his way back to the school. As they approach the Abbey ruins Gore-Pearce catches a glimpse of one of the Tibetan Priests in his robes and thinks he has seen the ghost of the Abbot! Inside the Abbey Jack Grey finds that his task is to drive a dagger into the heart of one of the priests who is accused of treachery - they want to make a murderer of him! He refused, not from cowardice but because of the feeling of nausea that overcame him, only to find that the priest was in fact loyal to Taaz and what had looked like his bare chest was in fact a metal plate through which no dagger could have penetrated. At this moment, however, Reggie Pitt was brought in having been found looking for his chum and now a more

diabolical ordeal was prepared for Jack Grey - he was to be Pitts' executioner! However, once again the oriental fanatics were thwarted by the arrival of Nipper, Handforth and other juniors in the "know" who, having heard Gore-Pearce's story of the "ghost" had put two and two together and accompanied by almost half the junior school raided the Abbey ruins. This time the priests were seen and received unwelcome publicity and it would not be long before the mysterious disappearance of the men of the East after the shipwreck and the reappearance of robed figures near St. Frank's were connected, so they must move swiftly if the two remaining juniors were to be put to the test.

**"THE DEVIL'S MIRE"** In the middle of a night of impenetrable fog came McClure's turn and this time the priests came into the school and took him, despite precautions which had been taken. Once again Bannington Moor was the scene, where he was ordered to walk forward into the treacherous bog known as the Devil's Mire. He refused to do this and managed to elude his captors after throwing pepper in their faces and hoped to escape in the mist but he reckoned without the cunning of the priests, for after only a few yards he was pulled up by a lasso! No doubt, had McClure walked into the bog commanded by the Priests, this lasso would have been used by the fanatical priests to pull him back to safety after he had satisfied them as to the quality of his courage, but now, he had no second chance. The priests threw him bodily into the middle of the mire where he would most certainly have been sucked down to his death, had not a rescue party led by Nipper's Alsatian dog with phosphorous smeared over him, which to the terrified priests, must have had the appearance of the hound of the Baskervilles, arrived on the scene.

**"THE SCARAB OF DREAD"** Nipper was the final victim and again the priests made a nocturnal visit to the school, but this time the procedure was different. Travers, who had been the first to answer the call from Taaz, received a letter in the morning, telling him that Nipper's call had come but that his test would not take place until midnight, at a spot known as Death Gulley in the depths of Bellton Wood, and that the nine juniors who had already answered the summons would be required to be present on the occasion of the final test. Meanwhile, Nipper was a prisoner in one of the dungeons of Zinestro Castle, the building which had been transported by a Spanish nobleman and re-erected block by block on its present site in Bellton Wood. Midnight eventually came and Nipper was taken to the area in Death

Gulley. Here, Travers had brought the eight other witnesses and an awe-inspiring scene they saw. The robed priests formed a semi-circle ranged on either side of Raa-ok, the chief priest, veiled and sitting in the great carved chair with the image of Taaz, the Vulture God, perched on its back.

In the centre of this arena lay Nipper stripped to the waist and spread-eagled with his hands and feet bound to stakes. The nine juniors watched in silence as one of the priests laid a trail of sticky liquid along the ground, finishing in a pool on Nipper's chest. Then another priest released a gigantic beetle from a casket - the sacred scarab of Taaz!

After a warning from the high priest himself, that only silence could save Nipper's life, the juniors watched with baited breath. The scarab moved along the trail getting nearer and nearer, consuming the liquid as it went, and Nipper's blood turned to water as the repulsive creature crawled onto his bare skin, but he closed his eyes and waited.

Then, the unforeseen happened, a piece of twig fell from a tree above and landed on Nipper's eye. He gasped and jumped in pain and at that instant the giant scarab rose up to strike. Crack! There was the report of a revolver and the scarab was sent flying off Nipper's chest and at the same time men with lights blazing appeared as if from nowhere, led by Nelson Lee himself accompanied by our old friend Detective Inspector Lennard of Scotland Yard. The priests were arrested and Nipper was released. Of course, everyone was mystified to know how Nelson Lee had known of Nipper's ordeal, everyone, that is, except Vivian Travers who admitted to phoning the detective in London and giving him all the details.

The priests of Taaz claimed that the scarab was harmless and would not have attacked Nipper in any case and was used only to test his courage. Anyway, the outcome was that the priests were placed on an Eastern bound ship and deported as undesirables.

Well, that is a brief synopsis of each plot and as I said earlier, the series are well worth looking up and in his "Let's Talk it Over" section in the second story, Edwy Searles Brooks replying to a letter I had written to him, referred to the present series of "Taaz Stories" as "being more in my line!"

\* \* \* \* \*

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE - "MAGNETS" 104, 107, 109, 112, 113, 116, 118, 119, 127, 131, 135, 145, 148 (double no.) 149, 151, 152, 163, 166, 168, 175, 177, 178, 181, 184, 189, 212. WANTED - Ezra Quirke Series. Some Magnets have no covers, others edges trimmed. All in decent order. Offers to: G. THOMPSON, 53 WALLASEY PARK, OLD PARK ROAD, BELFAST.

# OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

LONDON SECTION: Good sales and exchanges, popular competitions, a good reading from 'Magnet' No. 810 by Roger Jenkins, and the distribution of the 1960 "Billy Bunter's Own" all went together to make one more very enjoyable meeting at East Dulwich with Len, Josie and Eleanor Packman doing the hospitality honours. Furthermore, Len took over the chair in the unavoidable absence of Frank Vernon-Lay. New 'old-boy' was David Samuel who had come along with his son. The Hamiltonian librarian, Roger Jenkins, gave an excellent report of continued progress and stated that a printed catalogue would be available directly for all members. Excellent progress was also announced with the complete lists of "Magnet" etc., titles, this coming from the committee of three that have been engaged in this sphere of work. Truly a very good gathering and its "gratters" to all concerned. BREEZY BEN.

NORTHERN SECTION MEETING, 239 Hyde Park Road, Leeds, July 10th, 1959. Despite the summer weather, and the height of the holiday season, there was a record attendance for an ordinary meeting of 21. It speaks well for the drawing power of the O.B.B.C. doesn't it? Bill Williamson, in the chair, gave a hearty welcome to Haydn Salmon of Ipswich, and our new York member, Neville Vear.

Business disposed of, we got down to more Desert Island Books, the three speakers on this occasion being Harry Barlow, Elsie Palmer, and Harold Busby. Harry chose "The Popper Island Rebels", "Whiffles Circus" and Stacey-Wharton series. Elsie, the first lady to take part, and quite well she did it too, chose the Smedley-Vernon Smith series, the Greyfriars Hikers from a Holiday Annual and the 1925 Harry Wharton Rebel series. Harold coming last, found it had been forestalled in two of his choices, so had to hurriedly substitute two single stories, Bunter's Bid for Fortune and Billy Bunter's Bargain. His other was the Coker Rebellion series.

All Greyfriars you will observe, but it won't be so next month for I shall be taking part, and there were other good stories you know.

After refreshments, Gerry read an article by Margaret Cooke, of how, midst all sorts of domestic worries and interruptions she endeavoured to write an article for Blakiana and a Blake story for Bette Pate, aided by Gerry's gifted delivery this was a real classic. Among many other things she described with delicious touches of honour her more or less friendly encounters with a member of a certain religious sect who believe in spreading the gospel from door to door. With it

all she delivered the goods on time. I made a vow that when I start to grouse because the milk has gone sour, or I have some chores to do or there's not many letters in my mail - I'll think of Margaret Cooke with all her troubles, and say to myself, "Chuck it!"

Next meeting - August 8th. HERBERT LECKENBY, Northern Section Correspondent.

MIDLAND SECTION MEETING HELD 29th JUNE, 1959. Holidays always "play the bear" with meetings at this time of the year and in most cases this was the cause of only ten members attending the night after the Chesterfield re-union. Madge officiated as Chairman for the first time and also was responsible for the last item of the evening which was an article on "Tom Merry" by Eric Fayne from the 1951 C.D. Annual. She also won the Library raffle. Beryl started off the first meeting of the "new year" 1959/60, with a novel sale of Magnets, Gens etc., etc. In card playing parlance "take the top card from the pack which is placed face downward." No one was killed in the "rush" but I am afraid there would have been cases of heart failure if some of the dealers had been there to hear the price asked for these papers. There will be more of these sales each month, so roll up with your "coppers."

Norman obliged with a quiz for the first item of the evening. "Very easy" - just general knowledge of old boys books. How easy it can be judged by the fact that Tom Porter was the winner with THREE right out of twelve. The next item was a talk on "SUBSTITUTE WRITERS" by myself. Nothing new for me to defend the unfortunate, misjudged individuals who had to "fill the gap" when Charles Hamilton was unavailable. Amongst other things we had a talk on the Greyfriars Cup Competition and the Secretary again was assigned the job of producing our contribution. Conditions having been agreed with the Merseyside Section, we are going all out to re-capture the trophy. By and large a very satisfactory meeting for all the low attendance, which will, we trust, be improved at the next meeting, July 27th, same place, same time.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

MERSEYSIDE SECTION MEETING-5th JULY. The highlight of this meeting, which was blessed with yet another excellent attendance, was the tape-recording for Botte Pate and those good friends of the "Golden Hours Club." Each member recorded his greeting, and as Herbert Leckenby had already made his at a previous meeting, the Aussie are in for a very pleasant few minutes listening - if one may be so bold as to hint that our Merseyside voices are pleasant - and in spite of Bill Windsor's dire threats about the fate of the Ashes in 1960. Our thanks again to

Jim Walsh for all the trouble he has taken over his recording.

Don Webster's game, "Treasure Hunt" involved much activity and wearing out of carpets. The debate "that the old school-tie spirit still produces Britain's finest leaders," proved another winner, and the motion was passed by a very small majority. These debates are always one of the main attractions of our meetings.

The programme once again proved too full, and "Twenty Questions" has to be postponed until the August meeting. Yes, there will definitely be an August meeting, by popular request, and this will take place on Sunday, August 16th, at 6.30 p.m. Please make careful note of the unusual date, members, in order to fit in with holiday arrangements - the third Sunday in August, which is the 16th.

THE GOLDEN HOURS CLUB. Having found the ideal rendezvous for our winter meetings at Cahill's Restaurant it was with keen anticipation that the members foregathered there on Friday, July 10th at 6 p.m. And they were not disappointed for, amid very luxurious surroundings, the members enjoyed a delicious meal and spent a leisurely two hours in discussing (or should I say riding) their favourite hobby. Letters from our good friends, Herbert, Ron Hodgson, Ben Whiter and Donald Webster were passed around and a most interesting Newsletter from Harry Broster was enjoyed. And some very interesting Hamilton items from Don Webster proved a most exciting aperitif for the meal - Syd Smyth and Ernie Carter were the lucky recipients of these items for their collections for which they send their thanks to Don for his gift. Main course for the evening was the article dealing with the hobby which appeared in the June issue of "People" whilst all members agreed that it was the biggest coverage yet afforded our hobby with really first class reproductions of the various covers, it was felt that the article itself was so full of incorrect statements which misrepresented both the hobby and the collectors themselves that a letter of protest had been sent by Syd Smyth on behalf of the Club to clear up the various points.

With dessert the Secretary served up the final greetings from overseas - this time from a collector well-known to all by his interesting articles - Bill Hubbard in Kenya - so nice to hear from you Bill - our best regards to you and all your friends in England. When the evening concluded at 8 p.m. those present voted it quite the best evening (and dinner) yet enjoyed by the Australian fraternity. B. PATE - Secretary.

CHESTERFIELD RE-UNION, JUNE 28th. The fourth annual get together of the Northern and Midland Clubs and as far as attendance is concerned, there were twenty of us, an improvement each year. This was Northern's

year, our turn next time to provide the Chairman and at least an equal share of the agenda. Anyway, with Gerry in the Chair Northern gave us a fine afternoon's programme, aided and abetted by Stanley Smith, his interesting games proved very popular. There was one item which will be of interest to all four Clubs. It was felt that there could be more general co-operation amongst members of these four Clubs. (alright Bette Pate, we will make it five) in supplying each other's WANTS. All members unfortunately, were not subscribers to the C.D. and it was suggested that through the medium of the four SECRETARIES who naturally correspond monthly (or do we) particulars of WANTS could be circularised at each other's meetings. Extra work for the (willing) secretaries, but no expense to the "collectors" and in no way interfering with the usual adverts in the C.D. Settling a point like this one, brought acutely to mind that it would have been just perfect, had the other two clubs been represented. Herbert, tired but happy, after his London holiday, must have been very well content as he sat on Gerry's left hand and saw the bright smiling fans in front of him. As I said before "The Brotherhood of the Happy Hours" - Herbert's own special creation. Thanks to the organisers, the good service and kindness of the staff of the "Portland Hotel", the ideal weather - this was a great day for those who forged still closer the bonds of friendship. Those who were lucky enough to attend were - Herbert Lockenby, Gerry, Myra and Mollie Allison, Jack Wood, Ron and Doreen Hodgson, Laurie and Heather Morley, Bill Harrison, Stanley Smith, Geoff Wilde, Elsie Palmer, Tom Porter, myself, Norman Gregory, Beryl Russell, Jack Bellfield, Jack Corbett and John Tomlinson. A fair representation of the clubs and in some cases "fair" was a true word. May I conclude with personal thanks to Ron Hodgson for his co-operation and doing the arranging with the Portland Hotel.

HARRY BROSTER.

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BILL BUNTER ON TELEVISION - The new Bunter Television series, the first play of which we reviewed in the July issue of this journal, has gone on with great success, and this is probably the best series of all because the Famous Five are played by teen-age boys who can act. John Woodnutt, who portrays Mr. Quelch, has improved immensely since the opening play. The second play, "Bunter's Burglar" was not so good as the first, but with the third "Phoney Bunter" we found Frank Richards in top form again. This was, perhaps the best of the four which have been televised so far. The fourth and most recent, "Bunter's Birching" will have been reasonably pleasing to most fans of the "old fat man" though a little more elaborate production would have improved it.

York Duplicating Services, 12A The Shambles, York, England.