

# COLLECTORS DIGEST

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# CHIPS



# COLLECTORS' DIGEST

FOUNDED in 1946; by HERBERT LECKENEY

Vol. 19

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## A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER.

He who has learned to disagree without being disagreeable  
has discovered the most valuable secret of a diplomat.

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### AFTERMATH:

I have been deeply moved by the wealth of letters - literally masses of them - which have flowed into this office during the first two weeks of January. Almost without exception, the letters came from kindly folk writing in praise of the latest edition of Collectors' Digest Annual. Almost without exception they said "The Very Best Ever," or words to that effect. All the articles, the stories, the pictures, and the novelties have been acclaimed lavishly, all our sterling contributors receiving their mead of praise. Plus, it goes without saying, bouquets for the inimitable firm which produced the volume so perfectly.

So great has been the volume of letters that it has not been possible to answer every one personally. I take the opportunity here to express my sincere thanks to all who have written in such glowing terms. It makes the job so very worth while.

### PUBLICITY:

Our London Club has decided to take no part in any future television or radio programmes without giving considerable thought to the matter and assuring themselves that any such programmes are sincere attempts to present the hobby in its proper light. This was obviously a sensible decision. A further motion that the club should never have

anything to do with further broadcasts was defeated, and once again we consider that the club showed common sense.

If a broadcast is planned, it is likely that it will take place, with or without the blessing of our clubs. If we co-operate, we should be able to make it reasonably certain that the people who appear know what they are talking about, and we should be able to influence the tone of the programme. Too often in the past, both in broadcasts and printed articles, we have seen distortion and errors which would never have occurred had the people concerned been more closely in touch with their subject.

Publicity is a two-edged sword. Generally speaking, Collectors' Digest is not in favour of much of it. Publicity which brings more readers for the magazine is naturally welcomed. The more readers we get, the better the service we can give. But, usually, publicity brings us loads of extra work at this office, and not much else.

The recent article in the Weekend Telegraph (a first-class article in which the writer, Mr. E. S. Turner, had gone to endless trouble to get his facts right) brought us at least a hundred letters, probably more. Every one was answered, though, except in a very few cases, the correspondent did not enclose a stamp for reply. The majority - probably 90% - were from people who had volumes of Chums, the Captain, and especially the B.O.P. for disposal, and it was clear that they hoped that these volumes were worth a great deal of money. Even now, two months after the publication of the article, the letters are still coming in.

#### CAUSE AND EFFECT:

Years ago it was rare to find a schoolmaster who looked with favour on the periodicals which we loved. Many schools, so far as they were able, banned them. Plenty of parents granted the old papers only a doubtful and limited tolerance. They were regarded as harmful in effect. The small print ruined the eyesight; the subject matter ruined the mind.

The cinema was often regarded as the root of all evil. Our weekly visit to the picture palace was setting our feet firmly on the downward path. The music halls, with their smut, were avoided by really "nice" families.

What would the purists of yester year have thought of many of the books and papers on sale in the shops now for any juvenile to buy? And most of the juveniles, with plenty of money in their pockets, can buy anything they want. What would the old purists have thought of our television programmes which offer crime and sickening violence

night after night after night?

A week of television crime recently was wound up with an episode of "Gideon's Way" in which a horrible tale was told of youngsters who committed crime and violence 'for kicks.' One wondered whether a few youngsters might not be given ideas by an offering of this type.

Licence, in an adult world, does not allow for the young. If you don't like a TV programme, you can turn it off. You usually don't - for many of those programmes have a morbid fascination. Children should be in bed at the time those shows are screened. In fact, the average child does not go to bed early.

The absurdly narrow censorship of years ago has become the gruesome licence of 1965. The happy medium has never been struck. Probably that is why the child of to-day grows up so quickly. What kind of an adult he will make, only the future will show. We didn't do so badly on the Magnet, the Union Jack, "Over the Hill," and "San Francisco." Maybe the modern child will emerge just as happily from "The Perfumed Garden" and "Gideon's Way."

The Editor

REMEMBER KENT CARR'S FINE SCHOOL STORIES?  
THEN THIS WILL INTEREST YOU...

By Brian Doyle

I have just made a surprising discovery about popular school story writer KENT CARR, whose books and serials were widely-read in the early years of this century.

The discovery? That 'KENT CARR' was, in fact, a woman!

Her real name was Miss Gertrude Kent Carr and she was born in Norton, Yorkshire, on October 28th, 1871, being educated at Sheffield High School, and Somerville College, Oxford, where she was one of that famous women's college's earliest educational pioneers. In 1896, she married Edwin Oliver, a noted writer and critic of the time, and editor of the magazine "Outlook." She was dramatic critic of the latter for some years before and after the Great War, also contributing to other newspapers and magazines.

Soon after her marriage, Mrs. Oliver began writing stories for boys and girls, particularly concentrating on public school yarns. Her most famous school serial, "A Rank Outsider," appeared in "Boys of Our Empire" (Melrose) in 1901, and was illustrated by Hutton Mitchell (the artist who originally drew Billy Bunter and the rest of the Greyfriars characters in "The Magnet" in 1908). Three more serials ran in "Boys' Own Paper": "The Shaping of Jephson's," "Caught Out!" and "Dixie of the Cock House." ("Caught Out!" was later serialised in the "American Boy" in the U.S. - the first English public school story ever to achieve this). All these serials were reprinted in book-form "A Rank Outsider" running into several editions) and other school stories in hard-covers included: "The Big Row at Ranger's," "Rivals and Chums," "Werewolves at Whispers," "Not Out!," "Playing the Game" and "Hemphill Minor." When "The Big Row at Ranger's" was first published, Harrods' famous London department store chose it as the best boys' book of the year and devoted a whole window display to it at Christmas.

Mrs. Oliver was, I gather, a very soft, feminine and gentle lady and the last person one would have suspected of having written dramatic and sporting boys' school stories. When she was stuck for authentic descriptions of football or cricket matches, she used to enlist the help of her several schoolboy nephews!

Mrs. Oliver also wrote historical books for children, including "Miss Elizabeth's Family," "The Boy Bondsman," "The White Hawk," "Lord of the Korean Hills," "The Reign of Lady Betty," "Timfy Sykes, Gentleman" and a biographical work called "Girls Who Were Famous Queens." Later in life, as 'G. KENT OLIVER,' she spent much painstaking time on two adult historical novels - "Gideon's Lady" (about early settlers in America) and "No Man's Son" (King Louis XIth). Another book, about women during the 1914-18 war, was "Women Who Dared." She also left a part-finished novel, set in Virginia, U.S.A.

Mrs. Gertrude Oliver - or 'KENT CARR' as we probably know her better - lived to a ripe old age and died in London on March 17th, 1955.

Her books are today treasured and read by her children and grandchildren - as well as by many other readers too, no doubt. I have eight of them myself and a fine show they make under the 'C' section of my school story shelves. Good, meaty, excellently-produced tales they are too, with plenty of good incident, drama, character-drawing and sporting interludes.

So, not for the first time, a writer of fine boys' stories, is unmasked as a woman. And let's by no means enjoy her excellent yarns any the less for that fact...!

(I am much indebted to the late Mrs. Oliver's daughter, Mrs. Gwen Hirst, who today lives in Kensington, London, for kindly supplying me with most of the above details.)

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**WANTED:** NELSON LEES 1st New Series 9, 164, 189. 2nd New Series 2, 31, 33, 35, 37, 46, 58, 60, 98, 130, 131, 141, 142, 156. 3rd New Series 2, 3. Collectors Digests 2, 3.  
 Fullest details to:- NORMAN PRAGNELL, 33 BRAE ST., LIVERPOOL, 7.

**WANTED:** "Young Folks Tales" (1910-1918) also "Girls' Friend Library" (circa 1912) entitled "The Twins of Twyneham," and very early Silent Film stories, (i.e.) "The Broken Coin," "Diamond from the Sky," "Fantomas."

40 FOWEY AVENUE, ILFORD, ESSEX.

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**WANTED:** Good loose copies or bound volumes containing any of the following:  
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# B L A K I A N A

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN  
27, Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22

IN AND AROUND BAKER STREET (3)

By Walter Webb

The SEXTON BLAKE author and the GAIETY girl

They were evenings of enchantment, those spent at the old Gaiety Theatre, in the days when London's streets were paved with the golden glow of its gas-lamps, when the shrill treble of the newsboys mingled with the deep bass of the hawkers, as they plied their wares to an orchestra of whirring wheels, sharp, staccato beat of horses' hoofs, and the tinkling of bicycle bells; when Sherlock Holmes, by courtesy of Mr. Arthur Conan Doyle, was in residence at 221b Baker Street, well "done for" in his leisure moments by Mrs. Hudson, and ably assisted by the indefatigable Dr. Watson in his more active ones; when a young detective named Blake, - Sexton Blake - with rooms in the Strand, was observing with keen interest the many successes of the world-renowned Baker Street sleuth, in whose footsteps he was determined to follow.

The Gaiety was a happy rendezvous for some of the Harmsworth editors, authors, and artists, the centre of attraction at that time being a diminutive artiste named Ellen Farren, undisputed Queen of the Theatre, whose popularity amounted almost to that fanatical pitch of adoration which is accorded the Beatles today. She was a member of a team of burlesquers, known as the Great Quartet, the others being Edward Terry, E. W. Royce, and Catherine Candelin, who performed under the name of Kate Vaughan. Their act was bang up to the minute, and it was said that if you went to the Gaiety the purchasing of an evening paper was quite unnecessary, for the quartet gave all the news from the stage in a far wittier way than any newspaper could have printed it. Nor did they need script writers - they wrote all their own gags, and, as a team, they were supreme. The dancing of Royce and Kate Vaughan was overwhelmingly popular, and they were encouraged again and again. She exploited femininity and the mystery of the petticoat but never gave her audiences too much - she knew the value of leaving their appetites unsatisfied.

Whilst they remained as a team the Gaiety played to capacity houses, but time eventually caused the inevitable break-up. Ellen Farren, a cricket lover and possessor of a French poodle, named Ally

Sloper, became crippled by rheumatism by, it was said, dabbing water on her thighs to make them tighter still; Royce's health failed, and Terry and Kate Vaughan went their different ways. She became a well-known figure in pantomime, and he bought a theatre. On its stage they attempted to revive the triumphs of their old Gaiety burlesques; but it was too late, their time was past as was their magic, and the result of that excursion into a dead theme ended in dismal failure. But with the Pinero play, "Sweet Lavender" it was a different story, and played to full houses. The cast was comprised of West End actors and actresses, but when Terry went on his long provincial tours Kate Vaughan accompanied him, as did a new recruit, whose name every old boys' book enthusiast will remember - Arthur Steffens Hardy.

Of Polish origin, Hardy was born in 1874, and appeared at the Brighton Theatre Royal - or it may have been the Grand - with Kate Vaughan, who, her dancing days behind her, had developed into an excellent straight actress. Like Hardy, she was of mixed blood, and her origin was uncertain, but from photographs published during her Gaiety days, one got the impression that she was of Polish extraction too. Certainly, her love for music and dancing could have been inherited from that nation, which, to a man and to a woman, is obsessed with the desire to sing, dance, and make music.

In the Pinero play Hardy played the role of Clement Hale, a name he was to use as a pseudonym in his boys' stories some few years hence. In those days he was a very smart, good-looking young man, and was to be observed many times swimming in the sea off Brighton Pier. Having the urge to write as well as act, he was prompted to answer the Harmsworth call for authors to help them maintain the flow of their increasing flood of publications, which were proving so popular that an embarrassing shortage of really good contributors was making itself felt. His first story, a "short" for the Boys' Friend, was published in 1897, under the title of "Flash Jim."

An unhappy year this for Kate Vaughan. Her marriage was dissolved - her husband was a descendent of the Duke of Wellington and he wrote one or two books - and, although she made a brief return to her former triumphs on the occasion of a mammoth variety show which was put on at the Gaiety for Ellen Farren's Benefit, her star was dimmed, and was soon to be extinguished altogether. For several more months her name and that of Hardy appeared on the bills advertising the comedies they played in together, and then Kate Vaughan sailed to South Africa, from where she was destined never to return, for, following a performance at the local Gaiety Theatre in Johannesburg, she died prematurely

At the same time Hardy left the theatre to take up a full-time career with the Harmsworths, and a colleague recalls him in those days as being a tall, good-looking, and debonaire young man, keenly interested in boxing, racing, football, cricket - and, in fact, nearly every form of sport. He would dress in smartly cut tweed suits, of a rather pronounced check design, wore his bowler hat at a rakish angle, and smoked large cigars. Incidentally, he had Sexton Blake smoking cigars too, so this is one example, at least, of an author endowing the detective with his own particular smoking habits, as suggested in an earlier article.

Hardy was a genial companion, whose delight was on a Friday night when, after picking up a fat cheque from the office, he would go off with one of his cronies to the West End for a slap-up dinner followed by a bottle of that which cheers, and then repair, large cigar in mouth, to the National Sporting Club, or to some other sporting venue, where there was a fight to be witnessed. No editor considered him a great writer, and if some found him a bit of a mystery, all acclaimed his dependability to have his instalments ready for the printers on time. Well-read, hard-working, and devoted to music, Hardy was at all times impeccably mannered.

His story, "The Touring Company Crime," which appeared in the S.B.L. in September, 1935, and was his last for the Library, may have been suggested to him on recalling his earlier days, when he used to tour with a theatrical company, accompanied by that darling of the footlights, Kate Vaughan. By this time, Hardy had struck a bad patch, and, like other surviving members of the old Harmsworth brigade, was finding great difficulty in selling his work. His name appeared in the Blake papers for the last time in 1936, as the author of a short serial in DETECTIVE WEEKLY, entitled "Marked Down!"

1898-1936. This total of 38 years to which Arthur Steffens Hardy can proudly lay claim as contributor, is a record unsurpassed in the whole history of the Blake papers.

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### An Amazing Coincidence! (?)

There have been articles in past C.D.'s citing certain coincidences; but the B.B.C. plays by Anthony Skene, Anthony Julian Skene, and Anthony Juan Skene - to give him the three names by which reference has been made - beats everything else into the proverbial cocked hat!

Mr. Skene, the Sexton Blake writer, who, in actual fact, is Mr. George Norman Philips, has denied that he was the author of the plays

referred to, claiming that the B.B.C. writer must have filched his pen-name, and then, finding out that he - the original Anthony Skene - was still alive and kicking, decided to insert a middle name, hence the additional "Juan" and "Julian."

However, having previously admitted to making a mistake over the two Skenes, I am now not nearly so sure that I did, and suspect that the original Anthony has been gently pulling the leg of one, if not two, of the Sexton Blake Circle members.

Three questions remain to be answered: (1). Why after discovering that Mr. Skene was "still alive and kicking," did the B.B.C. writer continue to use the name of "Anthony Skene" minus the appending "Juan" or "Julian."? (2). Why use the pen-name in the first place? With all due respect to Mr. Philips, he was almost unknown outside his Blake and THRILLER stories, so there was no suggestion of another writer basking in his reflected glory, so to speak. (3). The most vital question of all: At 3 o'clock on Wednesday, 7th February, 1962, a play was heard on the B.B.C. Home Service. It was entitled "The Reference," and dealt with the efforts of a girl to obtain a post as matron at a boys' school. And the name of the author? None other than G. NORMAN PHILIPS!

One might feel prompted to ask yet another question: Why hasn't the name of Anthony Skene, with or without the appended "Juan," or "Julian," appeared as script-writer for the B.B.C. since those controversial C.D. articles some three years ago?

To conclude - an interesting observation: One or two of the B.B.C. plays have been written by a man named Dudley Hoys. This name will mean nothing at all to most collectors; but he happens to have been the author of two stories which appeared in THE THRILLER in 1930, entitled, "Certain Death," and "False Faces," the issue numbers, for anybody who might be interested, being Nos. 70 and 79.

Dare I say it? - that this is the same Dudley Hoys of the early THRILLER days - or will I be chided for jumping to rash conclusions again? Two writers, each using the pen-name of "Anthony Skene;" two writers, each named G. Norman Philips. Coincidence surely cannot be carried to the extent that there are two different writers named Dudley Hoys as well !!!

(continued)

THE LATE ANDREW MURRAY

(For the following information I am indebted to Mrs. Joan Farrell, nee Murray. J.P.)

ANDREW NICHOLAS MURRAY was born on 13 January 1879 at Islay.

Argyll. His father was the local G.P. His parents died when he was sixteen. He then came to London, doing various jobs until he joined the Scots Guards and fought in the South African War. He wrote for the "Army Graphic" and was Poet Laureate for the Brigade of Guards Gazette. He bought himself out and joined the Amalgamated Press, for whom he wrote prolifically until his death in 1929. Mrs. Andrew Murray is still alive - aged 86!

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The following extracts from Mrs. Farrell's letters are reproduced with her permission.

.....My parents were separated, so I did not really 'know' my father; but as my mother gets older she dwells more in the past and tells me things about my father.....

.....During the three years of my father's illness in Bethlehem Hospital she visited him constantly - and then buried him. His friends vanished - but that's the way of the world, surrounded when you are on top and deserted when you fall.....

.....My father's gift has not been passed on to my children (perhaps my grandchildren). This has been a great disappointment to their Granny, but nature does things like this.....

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By the time the above appears in print I hope to have met both Mrs. Murray and Mrs. Farrell, in which event I will tell you about it in the next issue.

JOSIE PACKMAN

\* \* \* \* \*

SEXTON BLAKE - WITHOUT THE SEX

(Reprinted from DAILY MIRROR 19.12.1964.)

Here is an announcement to thrill and delight boys from seven to seventy:

Sexton Blake, veteran private eye, who went into semi-retirement two years ago, will ride again.

The return of Sexton Blake, in half-a-crown paperback version, is destined for February 5, next year.

Then, from offices in High Holborn, London, Mayflower Books will present "Murderer At Large" with Sexton, aided by his stumpy, faithful assistant, Tinker, stalking the murderer.

What a smile of bliss and joy crossed my old uncle's face when I

gave him the news.

He remembers Blake of the 1890's. A poor man's Sherlock Holmes. An eagle-nosed, gentlemanly figure in silk dressing gown beside crackling fire in a Baker-street flat eating buttered crumpets and solving crimes most dastardly.

He remembers Blake of the Twenties showing lively interest in damsels in diaphanous nighties.

He recalls Blake of the Thirties and Forties. More serious now. His responsible old self again. Courting danger for King and country rather than the ladies.

He's a bit sad about Blake of the Fifties and early Sixties. For then Blake was revamped. He was moved from Baker Street to a chromium-plated office in Berkeley Square and acquired a leggy, blonde secretary, Paula Dane.

Uncle went off Blake a bit then. Sexton Blake was too sexy by half.

The then publishers of Blake's daring deeds got wind of my uncle's disenchantment. Readership started slacking off. Sexton Blake, it was decided must be retired.

This was done in 1963 by leaving Blake and the provocative Paula lying on golden sands in Honolulu and idly wondering whether they should marry.

Mayflower Books are having none of it. Sexton's their boy now, NOT married to Paula, for all her winning ways, NOT retiring from deeds most daring.

The man mainly responsible for urging Blake out of his retirement is a quietly-spoken Irishman of 38, Bill Howard Baker, one of hundreds of writers who have documented Blake's adventures.

He said: "The new Blake will be a compromise between the solid, sturdy character of Baker-street and the streamlined character of Berkeley Square.

"Tinker will be a smoother version of his old guttersnipe self. And Paula, the fateful Paula, won't figure half as much in Blake's life."

"Nail him down in a crate and throw him off the bridge at Westminster and while you are still dusting your hands and saying, 'That's that,' you'll feel his automatic in your back."

Blake, out of retirement, is just that.

URGENTLY WANTED: Good copy of Gem 493. 25/- offered.

ERIC FAYNE, c/o Collectors' Digest Office.

" H O O L I G A N "

By L. M. Minty

(EDITORIAL NOTE: The following is actually part of a letter sent to us by Mr. Minty. We are unable to help him concerning his main question. "Nuggets" was a periodical published by James Henderson, and ran from 1892 till 1906. We find of intriguing interest the reference to the expression "Schneider, how you vas!" It appeared often in the early blue Gem. Most of us read those Gems long after they were originally published, so the expression was not familiar to us. It is astonishing to catch up with it after all these years.)

The word "hooligan" came into common use about 1890 but was not accepted by dictionaries until about 1902. It appears in the index of the Solicitors' Journal for the first time in 1902. Articles were then appearing in various legal journals about the prevalence of "Hooliganism." The explanation then given for the increasing amount of "hooliganism" was that during the recent Boer War so many men had been serving in the forces that many children had been bereft of paternal discipline. For want of any better explanation the same was given after World Wars 1 and 2. Since then the word has been accepted in modified forms into nearly every known language. In Soviet Russia it is spelt "Ghoulighan." But nobody is now able to give a clear account of the origin of the word. In the article on "hooligan" the British Encyclopaedia, 11th Edition, 1910, says "It seems to have been first applied to the young street ruffians of the South East of London about 1890 and though popular in the district, did not attract general attention till later when authentic information of its origin was lost, but it appears that the most probable source was a comic song which was popular in the lower class music halls in the late 80's or early 90's which described the doings of a rowdy family named Hooligan (i.e. Irish Houlilon). A comic character with the same name also appears to have been the central figure in a series of adventures running through an obscure English comic paper of about the same date and also in a similar New York paper where his confrere in the adventures is a German named Schneider. The comic character appeared in a serial strip cartoon in a boys' paper "Nuggets" published from Red Lion Street. I remember as a boy, about 1902, buying copies of Nuggets but I have no recollection of this comic character Hooligan. I vaguely remember Schneider who was an American German tailor. It gave rise to a silly catchword "Hullo

Schneider" to which the person greeted was supposed to answer "Schneider, how you vas." Another explanation I have heard is that there was a rowdy family of the name of Hooligan who lived in Peckham. They were continually in the local police courts charged with various assaults and wilful damage to property and thus similar conduct was first known as "hulliganism." The editor of Nuggets cashed in on their notoriety by producing this comic strip in Nuggets but to avoid the possibility of being sued for libel called his hero "Hooligan." A team of knockabout acrobats toured the Music Halls with a sketch called "the Hooligans" in which they threw each other about and fell off ladders etc. A similar sketch "Casey Court" in time took their place. I remember "Casey Court" very well. It represented a backyard in a slum dwelling and a troupe of acrobats tumbled off the roof and out of windows. But I have no distinct recollection of the Hooligan troupe.

R E V I E WTHE SAINT MAGAZINE FOR 1965Price 3/- Monthly

Readers who enjoy the research articles by W. O. G. Lofts, may be interested to know that commencing with the FEBRUARY issue of THE SAINT MAGAZINE, Mr. Lofts has a full length article entitled THE SAINT AT FLEETWAY giving the whole history of THE SAINT from the THRILLER days up to the present, as well as a potted biography of his creator Leslie Charteris. Later on in the year, there will be another full length article with illustrations, plus it is hoped a story, on our own SEXTON BLAKE. Towards the end of the year, Bill (giving his own researches) will also have published the histories of DICK TURPIN, ROBIN HOOD, and SWEENEY TODD - which have direct connections with our Hobby. The U.S.A. edition of this magazine sold in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, will have these articles probably two months earlier.

FOR SALE: Sexton Blake Libraries (final series) 133, 157, 177, 178, 179, 180, 182, 189, 191, 192, 193, 197, 198, 201, 202, 210, 213, 215, 216, 219, 227, 237, 238, 244, 246, 247, 249, 251, 253, 254, 256, 258, 261, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 269, 270, 271, 273, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 281, 282, 284, 285, 290, 297, 305, 308, 311, 321, 329, 330.  
 £3 the lot (plus post and packing) or would be sold separately.

ERIC FAYNE, "EXCELSIOR HOUSE," GROVE RD., SURBITON, SURREY

# DANNY'S DIARY

February 1914:

The Germans have announced a blockade of Britain, and the neutral countries have been told that if their ships bring supplies to Britain, they will be sunk at sight. What cheek! In retaliation the British Navy has seized a ship called the "Wilhelmina," carrying supplies from the U.S.A. to Germany, and the ship has been taken into Falmouth. The Americans are cross about this. What larks!

The Firefly has now become a comic paper, and it is very much like the Butterfly. I like it very much. There are grand stories about Abel Daunt, the detective, and the comic pictures comprise Grabben and Pinch (the comical coppers); Erb and Alf, a couple of tramps; Gilbert, the Filbert; and Timothy Touchwood. The Firefly is only a half-penny, so I hope to be able to afford it sometimes.

Near the end of the month Doug had the Union Jack, which contained a Sexton Blake story entitled "The Conniston Diamonds." I read the tale which was about Baron Beauremon and the Council of Eleven and was fairly exciting though a bit mixed up. The diamonds were stolen in Devonshire at a ten-day house party.

Early in the tale, Blake boarded a train at Waterloo, having reserved a carriage for himself. That seemed very extravagant - but perhaps the author meant a reserved "compartment," though even that was extravagant. The train went through Taunton to Exeter, where Blake changed, and boarded a train for Bideford where the house party was to be.

Doug said it was silly, as a man travelling from Waterloo would not go through Taunton. He said a man going to Bideford would go on the Great Western from Paddington, and not on the South Western from Waterloo. Doug may be right. He is nearly as clever as he thinks he is.

If you send 6d to the editor of the Union Jack he will send you a handsome lucky horseshoe to send to the boys at the front. The editor says he has already distributed over two hundred thousand horseshoes.

There has been a big fire in Paris, and the Moulin Rouge has been entirely destroyed. Sarah Bernhardt, the famous actress, has had her right leg amputated. That seems terrible, and I wonder whether she will be able to act with only one leg.

There is a marvellous new series of school stories about Rookwood in the Boys' Friend. The editor says that Owen Conquest, the author, is very famous, but I had not heard of him before.

In the first story "The Rivals of Rookwood" Jimmy Silver, a new boy, travelled in a train with Tommy Dodd, Tommy Doyle, and Tommy Cook, who are Moderns, but as Jimmy was a Classical they all had a bit of a fight. There were three brakes waiting at the station to take the boys to Rookwood, but only a few could travel by each brake. So Jimmy bagged a brake reserved for Modern prefects, and drove it himself, passing the other brakes in the lane before they got to Rookwood.

The second story was "Jimmy Silver's Ruse." There was an election for junior captain, and the Moderns were voting for Dodd and the Classics for Smythe. Jimmy's vote would make all the difference but he kept them all on tenderhooks and did not let them know till the finish that he was voting for Smythe. Mr. Bootles, the form-master, spoke about "Master Dodd" and "Master Smythe" which I thought funny. At my school we are taught that it is bad form to give any boy the title of "master" nowadays.

I like Rookwood very much, and hope to have it every week. Doug says that if I behave like a human being instead of a savage he may buy it for me regularly. It's very awkward indeed.

We have been to the pictures quite a few times this month. We saw Marguerite Clark in "Wildflower;" Elizabeth Ridsen in "Idol of Paris;" and Anita Stewart in a

Vitagraph picture called "Two Women." They were quite good, but I did not care much for "Sixty Years a Queen" which was a long picture about the life of Queen Victoria. It seemed like history, so I was not amused. Of course, I like the Keystone's best. The Victoria picture was in Kinemacolor. The serial "Trey O' Hearts" is still going strong at one of our cinemas.

During my half-term holiday, Dad took us to a matinee at the London Coliseum, which is a variety theatre - a huge place. We saw a comedian named Charles Austin in a sketch "Parker on the Panel," and we also saw Vesta Tilley who dresses as a man, and who sang "Jolly good luck to the girl who loves a soldier."

All horseracing, except at Newmarket and in Ireland, has been stopped for the duration of the war. Mother says it's a good thing, as it is wicked to back horses.

Doug has the News of the World every Sunday, because it always prints the words and music of a song. I am not allowed to read it, but I look at it when nobody is about. There is an interesting case about a man named Smith who seems to have been drowning all his wives in baths. He has been arrested for doing this, and will be tried later on.

The Gem has been good this month. "Herr Schneider's Secret" was about a new Housemaster, Mr. Carrington, who was coming from Melbourne in Australia to replace Mr. Ralton who has joined the army. However, he was kidnapped on the way by a German spy named Franz Goetz, who took his place as a Housemaster. Herr Schneider recognized him as a spy, and denounced him. It was a fine story, but it finished too quickly. It ought to have been made into a series of three or four.

"The Rival Patriots" told how the School House and the New House each tried to raise money to help one of the war funds.

In "The Secret of the Towers," Cousin Ethel's brother, Captain Cleveland, was wounded in the war, and took an old house called "The Towers" in which to get better. He invited Tom Merry & Co there for a house party, but when they arrived they found that Captain Cleveland had disappeared. He had been kidnapped by a German spy. Harry Hammond played a big part in this story.

The last tale of the month, "The Pride of St. Jim's," told of a visit to Wayland of Chumung's Circus. Figgins started in this one.

On the 21st there was an air raid on Essex, and bombs were dropped on Colchester, Braintree, and Coggeshall, but nobody was hurt. It makes the war seem near when that sort of thing happens.

The Magnet has been quite good, though I don't like the serial starting at the beginning of the paper. "The Schoolboy Auctioneer" was about Fisher T. Fish who bought up a lot of things and sold them by auction. In "Bunter the Blade" Mr. Bunter made a lucky deal on the Stock Exchange, and sent Bunter £20. He spent it all trying to be a gay dog.

"The Last Plunge" was good. A German named Falke, who was the private secretary of Johnny Bull's uncle, wanted Johnny disgraced so that he would not be his uncle's heir. Falke blackmailed Smithy to try to disgrace Johnny, but Smithy did the right thing in the end.

In "Captured at Last," Johnny Bull was persuaded to go to Australia with his uncle, but before he left Greyfriars he suggested that Squiff should become the fifth member of the Famous Five. I expect that Johnny Bull will come back one day, though he may not.

The editor of the Magnet says that a reader has suggested that the editor of such an important group of papers should have his photograph at the top of his Chat Page, and he asks his readers whether they would like him to put it there. I myself would rather have a picture of Frank Richards.

The Greyfriars stories are going on in the Dreadnought. I had one this month. It was about a Foreign Academy which opened near Greyfriars, and among the pupils were Hurree Singh, Hoffman who was a German, and Meunier who is a French boy. It seems funny to find Hurree Singh at any other school but Greyfriars.

## No. 84. THE CHARM OF ROCKWOOD

Fifty years ago this month, the first Rockwood story appeared on the bookstall. It was a direct result of the war. If there had been no war it is likely that there would have been no Rockwood.

As staffs were depleted at the Amalgamated Press, there was much telescoping in editorial direction. The medium for the presentation of Rockwood was the Boys' Friend, which had come under the editorship of Herbert Hinton. Hinton introduced Rockwood to the Friend, though the Rockwood tales had been running for several weeks before the change of editor was announced.

The Boys' Friend was already an old paper when Rockwood brought it a new lease of life. It had started in January 1895 as a halfpenny paper, being promoted to the penny paper class in 1901. It had seen over 700 issues when "The Rivals of Rockwood" appeared.

A series of the Rockwood type was something entirely new for the Friend which had always been the medium for adventure serials. Fairly obviously, it was Hinton's hope to swing to the Boys' Friend some of the mighty readership of the Gem and the Magnet. It seems probable that he was moderately successful in this, but the pocket-money of juveniles was painfully limited in 1915. To buy regularly an additional penny paper was quite an under-taking - in many cases, an impossibility. It is, of course, possible that the slipping of the

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# PLATE Inside

Gem's circulation, which seems to have started about this time, was due to a transfer of allegiance from St. Jim's to Rockwood.

Rockwood has an undeniable charm, but there is something of a paradox about it. To-day, Rockwood would almost surely come third to Greyfriars and St. Jim's in a popularity poll of the great Hamilton schools. Yet, though some profess to dislike Greyfriars and many are luke-warm about St. Jim's, almost all seem to have a very soft spot for Rockwood.

Just where does the charm of Rockwood lie? Inevitably, I think, it lies in the originality of so much of its material. A large number of Hamiltonian plots first saw light of day at Rockwood, and some of them remain peculiar to Rockwood to this day.

It would, probably, be idle to suggest that Rockwood's popularity ever equalled that of Greyfriars or St. Jim's. In 1923, Jimmy Silver and Co went to the Wild West in a series which lasted 30 weeks. It was touch and go whether Rockwood would not be entirely abandoned. That does not suggest an overwhelming call for stories of Rockwood School. It is hard to believe that the readers of the Magnet or the Gem would have tolerated such a sweeping change for Greyfriars or St. Jim's.

The nearest approach was the Hollywood series in the Magnet, but that only lasted for 16 weeks, the plot was continuous, and the eventual return to Greyfriars apparent. But Jimmy Silver in the Wild West comprised a large number of stories which were only linked by setting and characters.

And, of course, the last Rockwood story appeared in the Boys' Friend in the Spring of 1926.

Rockwood, possibly, was never particularly

strong on characterisation. It relied more upon its plots and the way its story was told. Characterisation is markedly absent in the Rookwood of 1915, and, in fact, it mattered but little. Jimmy Silver was a hackneyed type of new boy, and I think readers must have loved him for his sheer normality.

In reading those early Rookwood tales now, one is struck by the real verve, the ebullience, of the writing. By 1915, Greyfriars seems to show signs of a kind of tiredness. St. Jim's was offering too much heavy material. But at Rookwood the writer seemed to have found again the real joy of writing which had carried the Gem and the Magnet on the crest of the wave a year or two earlier.

Rookwood, with its Classical and Modern sides, seemed to owe more to St. Jim's than to Greyfriars. And the fact that Macdonald illustrated the early Rookwood tales strengthened the kinship.

We learned things about the school which seem to have been lost later. The Modern Side was much larger than the Classical. The Moderns wore red caps and the Classics blue. Points which were soon forgotten.

The first three or four tales told of the "settling-in" of Jimmy Silver, his feud with Lovell, his rescue of Lovell from a waterlogged pit, and finally of how the Fistical Three became the Fistical Four.

Then came a barring-out series. It would be easy to assume that the Hamilton-Hinton idea was "When in doubt, stage a barring-out!" It would be a false assumption, for, once again, Rookwood was first in the field. This was the first Hamilton barring-out series.

True, Bob Cherry had put on his famous barring-out in the Magnet several years before, but that had been a minor affair, over in a few chapters.

The Rookwood barring-out was painfully contrived and far too precipitate. The Head had gone to a nursing-home with a chill. The Classical masters were all down with flu. Mr. Bootles is familiar to us, but the others sound strange - Mr. Wickett, the master of the Fifth; Mr. Tutt; Mr. Raynor. Mr. Greely, that charming chunk of characterisation, was still far distant.

The Classics came under the supervision of Mr. Manders and the Modern prefects - and the resultant barring-out was held in Sergeant Kettle's tuck-shop.

Rookwood was a slack school so far as the juniors went - a new theme then, though it became familiar later. It is slightly reminiscent of Highcliffe in "The Boy Without a Name," published the previous month. The junior captain was Smythe, and in the early tales he picked up a licking from Greyfriars at soccer and then at

cricket. With the passing of time, the energetic Jimmy became skipper, and his team then walked over St. Jim's at cricket. Did nobody really come to the conclusion that all three schools had a common creator?

A worth-while series - not unlike the Kildare-Monteith stories of the blue Gem - told of the rivalry between Bulkeley and Knowles.

Pankley and the "Bagshot Bounders" featured in quite a number of amusing tales of school rivalry, this time reminding us of the blue Gem rivalry with the Grammar School, though there was a pleasant freshness about the Bagshot boys.

Herr Kinkel, the Rookwood German master, was the centre of a few rather uninspired little stories.

By late summer, when Rookwood was firmly established, there arrived the first newcomer who was to remain permanently in the cast. He was Dick Oswald, who was recognized by Smythe as having been expelled from a school in the north. It turned out that Oswald had been shielding the son of the northern school's headmaster. A fore-taste of the Carboy series in the Magnet, maybe, though lacking the delightful humour of that superb series.

There was, of course, something different about Rookwood in those good old days. For one thing, there was no fat boy. Tubby Muffin had not yet come on the scene - or, if he was there, he had not been featured. And characterisation was waiting in the wings until such time as Mornington should appear.

Maybe Rookwood was something of a form of relaxation for Charles Hamilton. He seems to have clung to Rookwood at times when he was neglecting Greyfriars and St. Jim's. There were, by comparison, very few substitute stories of Rookwood, and that makes it easier to review the Rookwood stories as one saga.

What was the reaction of Boys' Friend readers, accustomed to stories of adventure, to the tales of Rookwood school? And how many readers of the Gem and the Magnet took the new school to their hearts and parted with the additional penny per week?

We don't know! Is there, among Collectors' Digest readers, anyone who can go back as far as that, and put us wise?

And who was your favourite character at Rookwood? I think that I myself would plump for Clarence Cuffy who was featured far too seldom.

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 82. THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL FOR CHRISTMAS

ROGER JENKINS: I agree with you that the earlier Holiday Annuals were better than the later ones, but I should not agree that the later annuals had fewer new stories

specially written by Charles Hamilton. According to my records, "Gussy's Latest Stunt" (1930), "Billy Bunter's Booby Trap" (1935), "The Dunce of Greyfriars" (1936), "Mr. Ratcliff has a Busy Day" (1937), "Jack Drake's Capture" (1938), "They Called Him a Funk" (1939), and "The Case of the Beak's Black Eye" (1940) are all genuine Hamilton stories which had never before been printed. Very often it was actually stated that the stories were specially written for the Holiday Annual, and this was always true, if so stated.

The last Holiday Annual was dated 1941, undoubtedly printed in the Spring of 1940, or earlier, for publication in September, 1940. It is curious to think that the Holiday Annual survived the Gem, the Magnet, and the Schoolboys' Own Library.

You are right in saying that the Holiday Annual stories often deserved reprinting. I can modestly claim to have been instrumental in getting one reprinted. Charles Hamilton was looking for a short story of his to be published in an anthology of school stories, and could not find one short enough. I suggested "Billy Bunter's Booby Trap," and (when the A.P. agreed) the story duly saw the light of day a second time, but I think this was the only one which was accorded this honour.

JOHN TROVELL: In the days of carefree youth, the Holiday Annual was undoubtedly a most welcome item to the Christmas stocking, the only fear being that parental funds would be insufficient for its inclusion, and it was with delight and relief that the gleaming yellow cover appeared from its wrapping, and one could again revel in the magical school and adventure stories contained inside.

The inclusion of the Rookwood stories was one of the highlights of the Holiday Annual, and like myself many readers were introduced to Jimmy Silver and Co. through its pages.

In youthful enthusiasm and ignorance substitute or reprinted stories mattered not at all, and like the Digest Annual today it was essential to our enjoyment to have the Holiday Annual for Christmas.

GEORGE SELLARS: I like the dear old Holiday Annual very much, and always have done since I bought the first one in September 1919. I can remember saving up my coppers for it weeks before it was published, and I was a proud and happy lad when I browsed through it and almost reverently turned the pages with great delight. I still believe it was the best of them all. Of course the first 9 H.As. were the best (better quality paper and more reading) than the rest of them, although there were some good ones among the thick volumes.

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GEMS OF HAMILTONIA No. 16 (New Series)

He had saved Reggie. He had saved his father. He leaned heavily against an elm, staring straight before him, seeing nothing. From a mist, as it seemed, his father's voice came to him. He saw his father. He saw Reggie. He could not speak. His father was speaking. He did not follow the meaning of his words. A strange, wild inclination to laugh seized upon him. He knew that he was close upon hysteria, and he fought to keep it down. Reggie's bitter voice came as through a veil.

"So it was you - you all the time! I might have known that! So that's why you were so cut up! I wondered why --"

"Silence, Reginald! Henry, you have done infamous wrong, but you have had the courage to speak the truth at last. I shall not forget that. You will leave the school with me. You are still my son --"

There was a rush of feet. Tom Merry came racing up, his face white, his eyes blazing. He caught Manners by the arm.

"What's this they're saying, Manners? What's this rot - these lies?"

"Manners tried to pull himself together.

"It's true, Tom. I did it. I had to own up!"

"You're mad!" shouted Tom Merry. "It's not true! It's a lie, and you've told it, if you've owned up --"

"Don't, Tom! I can't stand much more," whispered Manners. "I - I - feel - ill --"

The faces, the trees, the old quad seemed to be floating round him. He stretched out his hands blindly. It was his chum's strong arm that caught him as he fell.

THE BILLY BUNTER GAME

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By W. O. G. Lofts

I never fail to be astonished at the memories of collectors. Many can remember stories, articles, and illustrations of well over 40 years ago! Such, I suppose, is the vivid impressions that one had in the days of one's youth. Only last year a member of the Northern Club was relating to me about the Greyfriars Cigarette Pictures he could remember quite clearly. Only recently, however, in talking with a non-collector friend on boyhood memories - he suddenly said "Do you remember the Bunter Hunter's game."

Now I must confess that although by now every topic relating to the dear old MAGNET has been discussed and written about, I have never heard any mention of a Bunter game.

"Yes" said my friend, "we cut out the game, and pasted it on a board. We had hours of pleasure in trying to get Billy Bunter out of a bumping."

My friend's memory was correct. In MAGNET No. 1051 (1928) and in the last but one of Charles Hamilton's Crum the Schoolboy Hypnotist Series, was the game in the centre pages entitled - THE BUNTER HUNTER'S - and I should think that this copy of the MAGNET is the least existing today - for many readers may have taken the game out!

Briefly the game was played as follows. Going to the tuckshop, the Famous Five discover that Bunter has bagged a cake, promising to cash a postal order, and come back later and pay for it. Knowing Bunter's methods Wharton & Co go in chase. Bunter has ample opportunity to dodge about, and elude his pursuers, and if he can outwit them, and get back without at least two of them catching him at the same moment - he has won. If not, Bunter loses and gets a bumping!

The inventor of this clever and amusing game was none other than my old friend, editor of the UNION JACK, Mr. H. W. Twyman - who did many other constructive themes for the Companion papers and MODERN WONDER. Strangely enough, and despite writing two substitute Greyfriars stories, Twy, unlike Samways, an old school friend, never read the MAGNET, or had any inclination to, when a boy. But at least his creative Billy Bunter Game, must have given pleasure to a great many readers.



# NELSON LEE COLUMN

CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

My amendments last month to the Nelson Lee catalogue have brought me a lengthy letter from the compiler Bob Blythe who suggests that I have made some errors which he naturally asks me to correct.

I had, of course, no intention of belittling anything the industrious predecessor of mine as editor of this column had done in his work on the history of E.S.B., for I have a great admiration for the service he did in getting the catalogue published after many years hard work. No offence was intended in drawing attention to what I felt were almost entirely errors of omission rather than fact, errors due to lack of full information at the time of compilation.

The best way, I think, will be to quote Bob's remarks and then defend myself. So here goes

"Page 1. Why give Andrew Gray as the author of 1, 4 and 20? I know Andrew Gray is the pen-name of A. C. Murray, but as the stories gave no indication of the author's name why alter the author's real name for his pseudonym? A. C. Murray should stay as the author!" (I agree; this was a clarification on my part as several Murrays were authors and this one was best known to readers as Andrew Gray. I feel on re-consideration that perhaps here was a case for printing both names rather than just the little known real name which means nothing).

"Why give A. S. Hardy as the author of No. 37. Agreed the author as given, W. M. Graydon, is incorrect, but according to Bill Lofts payment was made to W. J. Bayfield (Allan Blair). The author should be given as Bayfield." (Again I agree with Bob, but some years ago the late Herbert Leckenby gave the authorship as Hardy, I believe, and I had accepted his authority. I think, too, this is not the first time there has been confusion about the stories of Hardy, Bayfield and one or two contemporaries.)

"Page 19. You say 2nd N.S. 130 was reprinted for S.B.L. 1st Series 21 The Pipe of Peace by Andrew Murray. Whether or not this story was R/P for S.B. 21 I don't know, but I do know that S.B. 21 was in fact The Golden Belts by A. Murray. This again is from the official lists." (Unfortunately, I cannot for the moment lay hands on my source for this one, but I have a feeling that there was a subtitle The Pipe of Peace to The Golden Belts, which would make us both right. Anyway, I'm certain this was the right S.B.L.)

"Page 24. This is correct, except that only Gems 1059, 60 and 62 were included in the S.O.L." (This is the Handforth at St. Jim's series which covered four Gems. I thought the S.O.L. was badly disjointed.)

"Pages 27, 30. This is correct. Bill Lofts is giving a complete list of Brooks and substitute authors and the stories they wrote." (These are the Boys Realm stories, and I await Bill's exposure of the real truth with interest - some of the yarns were terrible!)

"Page 39. Correct."

"Pages 41/42. I cannot comment on these as I have read very few of the S.P.L. I assume that you have checked each of these stories to your own satisfaction." (With the aid of a Jack Cook article in the C.D. Annual some years ago, yes.)

"Page 43. I'm inclined to agree with you regarding Six Feet of Dynamite. The plot of this story could well be summed up in the title One Man Blitzkreig." (This was the missing Thriller 590.)

"However I cannot agree with you when you say that Mr. Ball of Fire is R/P from Black Hand at St. Frank's. The Berkeley Gray story is concerned with Conquest on his honeymoon and as far as I can make out has nothing to do with Mafia type organisations. Have you checked the two stories personally?" (Bob is right in saying that Mr. Ball of Fire was concerned with Norman and Pixie on their honeymoon when they became involved in odd happenings behind the walls of an old castle. So did Handy & Co. in Black Hand of St. Frank's, the last serial to run in the Gem. They both have the same adventures with a mysterious package held by a man dropped by parachute, are knocked into an electrified moat by a mystery man, and other similar events. There can be no doubt the same, but 'Black Hand' is not to be confused with an earlier NLL story involving Handy and his father.)

"Page 44. Correct, except for Nice Day for a Murder. Have you checked both stories personally?" (Yes.)

"Page 45. Correct, except once again, Dead Man's Warning." (Here again, too, I have checked with the original NLL. Of course, R/P does not mean a word for word slavish copy; Brooks amended and expanded in his novels.)

"Page 47. Correct, except that I object most strongly to the deletion of Mr. Clifford as sports master. I cannot fathom out why you did this. It's like Pentelow killing off Courtney without telling Hamilton! I know that late in the 1st N.S. a professional footballer Victor Mason became football coach but as far as I remember Mr. Clifford never left the school. And if he did, and I've forgotten it, his name

should not be deleted." (Well, Bob has forgotten. Mr. Clifford did leave and, judging from the Questionnaire, must have been replaced as gym and sportsmaster by Arthur Blake, with Wally Freeman later taking over as football coach only. There never was any reference to a cricket coach after Hussi Khan's elder brother way back in the Old Series. The lists of staff and boys in the Catalogue are those I gave in an Annual some years ago as at the 'purple period' when Nelson Lee was headmaster. I did not then include Mr. Clifford who had left. Looking down the list I see Mr. Clifford arrived in O.S. 395 and Victor Mason in 544 O.S.)

Bob also asks why I say studies K. L. M. and N. in the Ancient House and X. Y. and Z. in the West House are empty, and if they are what happened to Studies S. T. U. V. and W? (Well, here again this information came from the Questionnaire and the latest lists published in the NLL and the Gem. What has, in fact, happened as compared with the Catalogue is that four new Remove studies, K. L. M. and N. were added to the Ancient House, and the West House Remove studies were re-lettered from O to Z. Hence, as I listed in the Annual, all that needs doing is to re-letter from O to W and everyone is accounted for.)

Finally, Bob queries my inclusion of The Crescent of Dread from Nugget Weeklies 1-6, in which Sexton Blake tangled with Jim the Penman. The stories read like Brooks; if they are not, then they are a complete 'pinch' from his Green Triangle and Circle of Terror yarns in the NLL. I'm sure, from style and content, they are genuine Brooks, but otherwise have no proof in black and white. The stories certainly linked with his Lee, Green Triangle and Penman stories some Nuggets later.

Well, there it is. If I've upset anyone, and most of all my old friend Bob, I'm sorry, but if I've cleared up any problems I'm satisfied. Much still remains obscure in the early Nelson Lee saga and in the Boys Realm stories of St. Frank's, and I hope light will be shed before long. The other deletions and amendments I made to the section on Brooks as Martin Clifford were based on Bill Lofts' greater knowledge of the A. P. authors.

Mr. L. S. ELLIOTT writes: Here are two items not mentioned by Jack Wood or Bob Blythe. The 49-page story by "Reginald Browne" in No. 1 Schoolboys' 1/- Library, "The Pirates' Cover Affair." Also the short Ironsides/Johnny Lister story by Victor Gunn in the "Splendid Book for Boys" - "The Clue of the Glass Stopper."

BELLTON WOOD

By R. J. Godsave

I have often wondered if the detailed topographical lay-out of the St. Frank's district was appreciated and absorbed by the reader of the Nelson Lee Library as a fact. Were the discrepancies - of which there were surprisingly few - even noticed by the reader?

To get all that may be got out of books the reader should hear, see, and feel all that the author describes, so vividly that he would remember it as he would remember an actual experience.

Of the local landmarks Bellton Wood was perhaps, the most important. It figures in many stories; dominated the Clement Heath series, and to a lesser degree that of Yung Ching the Chinese junior.

It is generally accepted that Bellton Wood runs along the side of Bellton Lane opposite St. Frank's, with the open meadows on the school side running down to the River Stowe. Confirmation of this can be found in "The Hounds of the Tagossa" o.s. 311 in which it is stated that on one side of the lane lay Bellton Wood and the other open meadow.

In "Bowled Out" o.s. 210, Nipper tells the reader "When I emerged from the wood, almost opposite the school gates, the evening sunlight was shining down more gloriously than ever!" This statement could allow for open meadows being immediately opposite the school with Bellton Wood starting a short distance down the lane and stretching on to Bannington Moor.

This illusion is shattered in "The Master of Mystery" o.s. 257, with Handforth & Co. trailing Mr. Heath - the new Remove master - one night. They saw him creep across the Triangle, climb over the school wall and drop into the lane. Following Mr. Heath after a brief interval, Handforth tells his chums "We'll dodge across the lane and get into the meadows, then we can slip along parallel with the road and overtake the bounder."

Once in the meadow the lane was cut off by a thick hedge. Arriving opposite the stile a handy gap provided a spy-hole, and Church peering through saw Mr. Heath step over the stile and plunge into the wood. The three juniors broke through the hedge, crossed the lane, and slipped over the stile.

From this extract it would appear that Bellton Wood is on the same side of the lane as the school.

No doubt, there are many people who read only matter that is relative to the story and skip the descriptive parts. Therefore, it would be only those who enjoy descriptive reading that would notice the discrepancies.

# NEWS FROM THE CLUBS

## MIDLAND

### December 15th Meeting

Despite the fog nine members assembled to make this a successful Christmas Party. Tom Porter was in charge of the programme and saw to it that there was no lack of variety. Besides the anniversary number which Norman Gregory had, by a strange coincidence brought along also, there was the usual Collectors item. All Nelson Leest Collectors piece was No. 78 Old Series "A Christmas of Peril" dated 2nd December, 1916, the FIRST Double Christmas number of the Nelson Lee Library. Anniversary number was No. 137 (1st New Series) - The Return of Ezra Quirke - dated 15th December, 1923 - 36 years old. Tom had brought along the two following issues Nos. 138 and 139 for further interest and so had Norman too so there were two sets passing round the table at the same time. The chairman was also happy to announce that he had recently acquired No. 2 Nelson Lee Library (Old Series) and now only needs 17 for a complete set. The reading was by Madge Corbett and was a much-enjoyed substitute story of Billy and Wally Bunter at Greyfriars - the title "Bunter's Double Trouble." The substitute writer - Harry Broster. To balance the scales against the Leetes Jack Corbett obliged with a tape recording called the World of Greyfriars - A Christmas Fantasy. This lasted nearly an hour - and an hour well spent. An imaginary tour of Greyfriars started from Courtfield Junction a local train ride to Friardale, visits to well-known landmarks in the district and encounters with some of the favourite characters of the Magnet. This tape recording will be available to the other clubs. During the refreshment interval the library raffle was won by Madge Corbett. One of the best of our Christmas parties for all the small attendance. Owing to the Secretary not being able to attend last meeting (November) due to his wife's illness it is regretted that the report in this magazine giving the details of that meeting were unable to be sent, as were the customary Christmas greetings of the Midland Club to all other clubs and members of the hobby. We can make some small amends by wishing all of them a Prosperous and Happy New Year.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary - with many thanks to Tom Porter for supplying details of the meeting.

## AUSTRALIA

As anticipated both the attendance and the rendezvous combined to make the ideal combination for the club's Christmas party on Thursday, December 17th. When members gathered at "The Guardsman" Restaurant at 6.30 p.m. they found that mine host, Mr. Chapman had kindly decorated the tables, giving a most festive atmosphere to the gathering.

Whilst members sipped their tomato juice aperitifs, greetings from absent friends were read out by the secretary. Greetings had been sent by Arthur Holland, Jim Cook, Tom Dobson, Bill Hubbard, Harry Broster and Bob Whiter and a most enjoyable beginning to the evening's festivities was provided by these letters and cards which brought the world wide hobby to our Christmas party.

Having consumed a delicious chicken dinner with all the trimmings members relaxed and chattered over coffee whilst the usual little Christmas cake was cut and served by the secretary.

A presentation of a book was then made to the proprietor Mr. Chapman as a gesture of appreciation for services rendered to the club during the year.

Syd Smyth produced the current edition No. 24 of "The Saturday Book" which contained an article "The World of Charles Hamilton" by Robert Kelly. This is one of the best articles ever written on this subject and the illustrations are excellent.

Entertainment was provided by a tape sent from New Zealand by Albert Watkins. This featured a talk by Alwyn Owen for a leading N.Z. radio station and was entitled "Remembering Colwyn Dane." His reminiscences evoked the atmosphere of the past skillfully blended with humour, and each and every member recognised 'The Widow,' proprietress of the second-hand bookshop wherein they in their own youth had discovered the magic of the Magnet and Gem, Union Jack, Chums, etc. There was a personal interview with Albert Watkins and this was followed by a taped greeting from Jack Murtagh who had an individual message for each club member. To complete the evening's enjoyment the tapes from the Merseyside and London clubs were also run through thus bringing to the Australian Christmas Party a host of old friends to provide an enjoyable finale to a grand occasion.

Our best wishes for the New Year to our overseas friends - may 1965 be your best year hobby wise!

B. PATE (Secretary)

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NORTHERN

Meeting held 9th January, 1965

Jack Wood was in the chair for this, our first meeting of 1965, Geoffrey Wilde being unfortunately indisposed. We wish him a speedy recovery and hope to see him back in his usual place next month. The attendance was rather below par, and probably the wild, wet night had something to do with this.

Formal business, correspondence, etc., was soon despatched, and then we got down to the programme proper, which this month was a film show - a pleasant change, and very restful, except for the hard-working operators!

First came Harry Barlow, with a colour film of his summer holidays in Devon, followed by a cartoon and a comedy; then Molly Allison's film of her recent visit to the United States. A break for refreshments followed and then Gerry Allison showed us some slides, including some taken on his recent visit to the London meeting, and Rose Lawn. Finally, Ron Hodgson showed us some slides taken on his own holidays, and the programme closed to loud applause from those of us in the three-and-sixpennies.

A novel and interesting meeting - back to the old routine next month.

Next meeting, Saturday, 13th February.

F. HANCOCK (Hon. Sec.)

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MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held Sunday, January 10th

A very wet and cold day heralded the opening of the 1965 season and the attendance as a result, was a little below standard, but we nevertheless had an interesting and enjoyable evening.

Norman Pragnell opened the meeting with the usual business items, and included in the correspondence we were very pleased to note greetings cards from Bob and Mrs. White from California, David Hobbs from the U.S.A., Frank Hancock from the Northern Club, and a particularly attractive one from our friends in Australia with a photograph of Bette Pate, Stan Nicholls, Ernie Carter and Victor Colby.

Norman referred to the advertisement controversy which was mentioned in the December Report, and said that he had written to Eric Fayne enclosing the original letter which was sent to the advertiser, and the reply which was received written on the back of that letter. We now await further information.

A discussion followed on the present method of advertising items for sale. We deplored the fact that prices were very seldom quoted but offers invited instead. This

was turning the whole business into a glorified auction sale, and the commercialisation of the hobby is something we could do without. The inflated prices being demanded and paid by some (and presumably wealthy) collectors and dealers was putting a lot of the O.B.B.C. members from all over the country, and who form, after all, the backbone of the movement, out of the market. It is the unanimous opinion of the Merseyside O.B.B.C. that club members generally should resist the tendency to push prices up, and that, where possible, available books should be kept within the clubs and away from dealers whose sole purpose in obtaining them is to make a profit. This is not intended to be a criticism of the club member who is a genuine collector because of his enthusiasm for the old books. We do feel, however, that even he should take care that his enthusiasm doesn't encourage the profiteer.

After the discussion Pat Laffey invited us to write down our New Year Resolutions. The papers, folded over, were passed around and the reasons for the resolutions written underneath. Some amusing, and not altogether inappropriate, results were obtained.

After tea Norman introduced us to a competition which appeared in the C.D. some time ago in which readers were invited to place in the order of popularity 8 Magnet series which were listed. Norman read the list out and we were asked to give our opinions. This was won by Walter Prichard whose order was nearest to the one which won the C.D. competition. Pat Laffey's quiz followed. He asked us to write down as many school characters as possible with a 'TON' in the name. This was won by Frank Unwin and I was runner up. Norman concluded the evening with a quiz in which we had to name the papers in which certain characters appeared. I was lucky enough to win this.

Please note that the next meeting is a SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7th.

BILL WINDSOR

**EDITORIAL COMMENT:** In our Liverpool club's report, published last month, it was implied, quite unwarrantably, that the editor of this magazine gave to selected readers advance information of advertisements which were due to appear in the magazine. As that implication has not been withdrawn, we refer to the matter again.

Mr. Norman Pragnell has written us that he was surprised to see the reference in the last club report, as he had decided to drop the matter.

The advertisement in question was one inserted by Mr. John Gunn of Matlock. Mr. Bob Blythe telephoned immediately to Mr. Gunn, and Mr. John Beck wrote to him in a letter which reached Mr. Gunn before that of Mr. Pragnell. Mr. Gunn dispatched his items at once to Messrs. Blythe and Beck. It is a simple and obvious explanation, and one which might have been considered before the good faith of this magazine was questioned.

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LONDON

The January meeting was held at the Cricklewood home of Bill and Marjorie Norris on Sunday, 17th. There was a fully representative gathering of 21 members, amongst these being L. Peters and P. Kurowski who were attending their first meeting.

Bob Blythe took the chair in the absence of Len Packman due to health reasons. Also unable to attend for the same reason was Josie Packman. Both were missed by all present.

Good progress was reported by the Charles Hamilton Librarian, Roger Jenkins.

Bob Blythe, Nelson Lee librarian, gave his report. He stated that he had made big purchases of books and the full list will appear in the February newsletter.

Bill Lofts gave a satisfactory report on the progress of the Sexton Blake catalogue.

Laurie Sutton won the quiz set by Ben Whiter and in the second place there were three names, Charlie Wright, Bill Lofts and Don Webster.

\*Why Do I Collect the Books and Papers\* was the title of a discussion that Bob Blythe started up whilst the cine projector was being made ready. Messrs. Bush, Sutton,

Hopkins, Norris, Bennett, Kurowski, Lawrence, Morley, Jenkins, the two DoYLES, Webster, Whiter, and the three ladies, Lyle, Morss and Norris all gave their views. A fascinating, nostalgic discussion, enjoyed by all.

With Marjorie Norris as projectionist, two films of the Margate outing were shown, one taken by Ray Hopkins and one by Marjorie herself. Other films shown were Micky Mouse, Pluto, Donald Duck cartoons and Charlie Chaplin in "The Floorwalker." As an added item, a short film of Bill Norris coping with a deck chair in the garden before reading a "Magnet" was enjoyed.

The seventeenth Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday, February 20th, at a venue to be decided on.

With votes of thanks to the hosts, Bill and Marjorie Norris and also to Marjorie's mother it was homeward bound once again.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

## THE POSTMAN CALLED

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

Laurie Sutton (Orpington): I was interested in the C.D. Annual item on Frank Richards as a songwriter, in which mention is made that two of Charles Hamilton's own songs were referred to in the blue Gem. One of them is also featured in the charming early Magnet story (No. 22) in which Wharton & Co. spend a jolly day at Winklegate-on-Sea, and are entertained by a minstrel group singing "Come and Kiss me Honey." The juniors themselves later dress as minstrels and go busking to pay for their fares home, and "Come and Kiss me Honey" is again in the programme! Incidentally, in those early days Greyfriars was a 1½-hour train journey from the coast, and places in the vicinity of the school were Mountford and Benfield.

W. O. G. LOFTS (London): What a splendid Annual! Surely the best yet!

Jim Hurrell (Romford): To say that the Annual is better than ever is no misnomer. Indeed, each successive copy seems better than the last, if that is possible. One shudders to think what Xmas would be like if no C.D.A. dropped "on our mat" among the cards of goodwill.

A. G. STANDEN (Stockport): C.D. Annual is as much a part of the season now as "A Christmas Carol" - to me, at any rate. What a fine artist Mr. Webb is! I see what you meant about the cover, bearing in mind the special one done for the Christmas Number of C.D.

John McMahon (Tannochside): Once more I must thank you for the Annual. I don't know how you do it. Such a wonderful book and really good value. I assure you that my pleasure in receiving this grand book is sincere and deep.

Basil Adam (Newcastle): "Magic Series" by Roger Jenkins was my favourite article. However, I still prefer the 1924-5 Rebel series. Much more powerful than the second series in my opinion. Second series too episodic for my liking. Thank you for reproducing the final cover of the first series. "A Very Special Magic" by Robert Kelly was my second favourite article, although I don't agree with all his opinions. "Danny for Merric Christmas" and "The Making of Harry Wharton" were close favourites, too. So many fine articles and illustrations.

J. A. JEVES (Northampton): Glad to see mentioned in December C.D. the name of Hamilton Edwards (the man who started it all), and the so-called "hack" writer A. S. Hardy. Hack perhaps, but what an interesting one. One of my most treasured possessions is No. 25 of B.F.L. by A. S. Hardy, entitled "Sporting Life." Great stuff!

Mrs. E. SOAR (Ilford): For years I have sought Young Folks' Tales (1910-18) and especially a copy of the Girls' Friend 3d Library entitled "The Twins of Twyneham". If only someone could give me information on the history of these items!

JULIUS LENNARD (Winsford): Number One place in this year's Annual easily goes to "Christmas With Meredith." I have found Annuals of other years better than this year's, but if you could please everyone it would be a miracle. Ten pages of "And Every Story Not a Gem" is ten good pages gone astray. Over ten pages of Tarzan and Edgar Rice Burroughs is also not my idea of O.B.B.

W. H. CLOUGH (Sale): All the Annuals have been excellent and this year it is better than ever. Some of the articles must have entailed a terrific amount of research and study, and I would like to thank all contributors and yourself for this wonderful volume.

STAN KNIGHT (Cheltenham): A wonderful Annual with a splendid cover. I was pleased to see the article featuring the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs. For years I have been very partial to his stories. I first read "Tarzan of the Apes" as a boy in hospital, and was instantly captivated by his style and stories. A real innovation was the re-printing of the opening chapters of Magnet No. 1. There must be hundreds like myself who have never seen this copy, to whom this came as a very pleasant surprise.

W. J. RAYNER (Clare): Congratulations on the Annual. I think the editors of many professional annuals would hang their heads in shame if they saw this C. D. Annual.

C. LESLIE FARROW (Boston): The Annual improves every year. It took me four hours to read it - four hours of Fairyland, the years slipped away, and I went back 45 years to the days of my youth. Thanks to all the contributors, and God bless the man who started it all - Herbert Leckenby. Being a St. Frank's fan, I greatly enjoyed Jim Cook and Robert Blythe.

GEORGE BELLARS (Sheffield): Better than ever, the Annual filled my heart with a great gladness. God bless all who helped to make this the greatest Annual of them all.

J. C. DOYLE (Acton): I was delighted with "Christmas With Meredith" which I consider the best Mr. Buddle story as yet. This, together with "Darny for Merrie Christmas," made the Annual worth waiting for. I would like to extend my grateful appreciation to your many contributors for such interesting and varied items.

HARRY BROSTER (Kinver): A smashing issue of C.D.A. Tarzan was very useful. We can always rely on Bill Hubbard to bring in something a little different from the three main topics.

JOHN TOMLINGTON (Burton-on-Trent): There must be some subtle charm in "Jimmy Silver's Christmas Party," as in five years I have read it four times. Is it owing to different writers tackling Charles Hamilton's characters that Mr. Manders cannot make up his mind if his name is Roger or Herbert - or Stott whether his name is William or Frederick?

PAT CREIGHAN (Eire): Congratulations on the "new look" of C.D. I thought you had reached the ultimate in the appearance of C.D. But you always seem to have an ace up your sleeve! One little jarring note - the number of the January issue has been transposed to read 271 instead of 217. We aren't that near the third century yet! Thank you for such a wonderful Annual.

(Our apologies to readers for our slip over the number. -ED.)

E. THOMSON (Edinburgh): I can't think of an Annual I have enjoyed more. The Buddle story was worthy of insertion between the covers of a Gem during its best years. All the contributors deserve a round of applause. They were "tops," a grand bunch of fellows.

F. N. LAIBERT (Chessington): Another grand Annual. Each year one thinks it has reached its zenith, yet each year it surpasses itself.

JOHN STOKES (Dublin): It is so fine that I am wondering whether even you can produce a better Annual next Christmas, the present one is so perfect in every way. Congratulations again and again.

SYD SMYTH (Australia): It's a splendid Annual. Apart from the contents, the quality of the workmanship and the care and thoughtfulness which speaks from its pages keeps intact the completely uncommercial labour of love air about it. I liked everything, and especially "And Every Story Not a Gem" and "A Very Special Magic," the latter particularly for its appreciation of my favourite artist, I. Shields.

A. V. HOLLAND (Australia): I consider "Christmas With Meredith" the best Slade story to date. I appreciated the complimentary mentioning of the N.L.L. at the conclusion of the story. I think the artistic work of H. Webb and Geoff Harrison added to the attractiveness of this very fine volume.

FRANK CASE (Bramcote): A really splendid January issue of C.D., full of good things as always. It certainly has the professional touch now, with the new finish. We shall be having Technicolor next.

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**WANTED! WANTED! WANTED!** The following Nelson Lees Old Series No. 114, 121, 123, 128, 136, 137, 139, 143/4/5/6, and Nos. 542 to 551. Please note that I have nothing to offer in the way of swaps or exchanges. Please write stating price you want including postage. Will readers who have already offered me copies that I wanted and have not replied to my answers - please write again.

JOHN GUNN, The Queens Head Hotel, Matlock, Derbyshire. -----

**WANTED:** C. D. Annual 1948, S.O.L. 185, Magnets 1277 to 1284, Boys Friends, Tom Merry Annuals, etc.

H. MACHIN, 38, St. Thomas Road, Preston, Lancs. -----

**FOR SALE:** 15 Bound Vols. Boys Own Paper. Excellent condition, original binding. Offers to:-

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LET BY C. 25 30. Desmond Reid  
(Mayflower Paperback 2/6)

"LET BY C. 25 30."

Desmond Reid

(Mayflower Paperback 2/6)

In some ways this was an odd choice with which to herald the re-birth of the Sexton Blake saga. The title, with that abstract quality reminiscent of many titles of the former "new look" period, is unlikely to attract many and may repulse some. To the initiated, the information "by Desmond Reid" will suggest, rightly or wrongly, a story written by one man and re-written by another. Tinker, who was to be the old Tinker, does not appear at all. There is just one meagre reference to "his junior partner, Edward Carter (more generally known as Tinker)."

Towards the end of the story we are told: "Blake smiled wryly. This was one case that he had 'flopped' on. Definitely. But then, had it really been a case?" Some readers will smile equally wryly, and think the same as Blake.

Putting those thoughts on one side, this is an immensely readable story. The Irish atmosphere is fascinating, even down to the pace, which at times seems leisurely. In fact, the plot develops without waste of time, and there are plenty of exciting sequences. Much of the descriptive writing is charming as well as entertaining. Blake, planning a fishing holiday with Pedro, is visited by a Professor who claims to have seen a leprechaun, and who believes in the existence of a race of weird little people beneath the earth's surface. As a result, Blake decides to take his holiday in Ireland, where he meets up with the Duke and Duchess of Derwentwater, two former antagonists among his criminal acquaintances. That is not so important. Pedro plays a large part in the tale - and that is very important indeed.

The reader - like Blake himself - emerges at the end slightly bewildered and wondering whether a few loose ends have been gathered together.

The story is well worth reading. For one thing, it is an extremely unusual Sexton Blake story, and most readers will regard it as a winner.

### "MURDERER AT LARGE"

W. A. Ballinger

Sexton Blake comes storming back into the glittering lights of his beloved London, into the even brighter illumination of the television studios, to solve the riddle of the PRIMROSE BALLET MURDER CASE. A task fitting for no ordinary detective, this, one to be overcome only by a man of Blake's extraordinary capabilities. This novel, the first of the fifth and most sensational of all the series, if this is any criterion, is quite the most adult Sexton Blake story written to date, and pulls no punches at all. Blake, of course, cut loose from the juvenile field many moons ago, yet, even when it did, complete frankness towards life was not exactly encouraged. This takes the lid off a little more.

ATN's new murder series, MURDERER AT LARGE, is the jumping off ground for Blake's new leap into the turmoil of crime and conspiracy, and it is the death of one of the researchers for the television programme that supplies the momentum for his propulsion into the depths. Blake, a very busy man with heavy commitments and no time to waste, sets to work in his usual methodical, calm and unhurried fashion to hound the killer down.

There is nothing like a really good who-dun-it as a means of quiet relaxation, and this is one of the best of its kind I have read for a long time. Old characters make brief but welcome re-appearances - Splash Kirby, Venner of the Yard, Belford, Mrs. Bardell, Pedro, Paula Dane and Marion Lang.

A fine start to the new series in a pleasing format, an equally pleasing coloured cover, and a gripping story. The Sexton Blake lover can wish for no more.

Walter Webb