

STORY PAPER

Collectors' Digest

VOL. 43
No. 505

72p



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A NEW LOOK FOR THE NEW YEAR

BETWEEN OURSELVES



I hope that all C.D. readers spent a very happy Christmas and that 1989 will be peaceful and prosperous for every one of us. As you will see we are starting the New Year with a new look; modern technology has given us this laser set type, which I hope you will agree is clear and easy to read. As I mentioned in our last issue we have had slightly to reduce our page size but altogether I think that the actual content of each C.D. will be as great as ever in terms of text and pictures.

FAVOURITE SERIES

During the run up to Christmas I carefully looked out certain MAGNET and SCHOOLGIRL series which I re-read with relish to enhance the festive atmosphere of the season. Many readers have, like me, firm favourites as far as Christmas stories are concerned. I wonder if there are any 'back to school' series which any of you make a point of reading as the New Year begins?

I always enjoy the railway station episodes on those days when the various groups of chums return to their seats of learning, but I can't say that I have any particular favourite New Year story. I'd be interested to hear your views on this

MEMORIES OF AUTHORS

I have received many letters of appreciation from C.D. readers, and others, about FRANK RICHARDS: THE CHAP BEHIND THE CHUMS, and I am intrigued to learn that lots of people who never met him still treasure fond memories of him through his letters to them. Of course over the years some of these memories will have been recorded in the pages of the C.D., but if any of you have had 'meetings' either in the flesh or by letter with Charles Hamilton or the other authors of our story-papers please don't be shy about writing about these. Many of us who never met Hamilton, E.S. Brooks or any of the Sexton Blake writers would be grateful if you would share your memories with us. (You will see that this issue includes an interesting article by Laurence Elliott about his correspondence with Brooks.)

May 1989 bring blessings to you all.

MARY CADOGAN

THE FIRST DAY OF TERM—AND HARRY WHARTON'S IN HOT WATER ALREADY!

The **SHADOW of the SACK!**





A SINGULAR SOLICITOR

by John Bridgwater

If any man leading a double life can be accurately described as 'singular' then Mr. Havlock Preed, the sole surviving partner of Manson and Preed, Solicitors of Lincoln's Inn Fields, is that man. A brief reference to a dictionary will soon confirm this. He is 'eccentric' in dress, 'unconventional' in his methods of tackling the business of some of his clients who find him quite 'strangely behaved' and, 'to their surprise', producing results 'much beyond the average'. He is certainly 'unique' among solicitors in his choice of weapon. He is an easily recognisable figure in top hat, morning coat, striped trousers and gloves, carrying a tightly rolled umbrella which accompanies him everywhere. This '...eminently respectable' gentleman with '...a rather wooden face' has '... a voice like the crinkling of old parchment' and in the opinion of one of his clients '... one of those whereas and wheretofore follows'.

From time to time Mr. Preed has had to deal with the affairs of young male clients in desperate circumstances. At first his conduct, helped by his dress, alternately exasperates and depresses the young client, who immediately comes to believe that he is obviously quite incapable of dealing with a situation which requires the services of a rough, tough and competent private-eye. The reader can sympathise with the client's feelings in that someone wearing a top hat, a morning coat and carrying an umbrella, '...who shoved slabs of dull archaeological information' at one can hardly be expected to be much help when it comes to rescuing the heroine from desperate thugs who have also left a less lucky victim lying dead in a pool of blood.

However, his sharp analytical brain, coupled with his ability to enter the old country house, where the gang have taken up temporary refuge, by climbing a drain-pipe up three floors, breaking in through an attic window, disarming the gunman, who is just about to shoot, with a neat stab of a sword (the rolled umbrella conceals this, of course) convinces one that here is an ally invaluable in such situations. On one notable occasion Mr. Preed did actually appear in a suit of armour. Things do not always go smoothly for him; he takes his tumble through the concealed trap-door as well as the best of his young clients.

This solicitor with a sword stick and a taste for adventure had a career of some ten years from his first appearance in thriller No. 31 of 7th September 1929 to 562 of 11th November 1939. During this period he appeared in sixteen Thrillers, three Detective Weeklys (reprints of earlier Thrillers), and at least four Sexton Blake Library Second Series, details of which are given at the end of this article. Sexton Blake first meets Mr. Preed in S.B.L. No. 259. In S.B.L. Nos. 315 and 323 Mr. Preed is introduced as Blake's friend.

In Thriller No. 39 the son of Preed's late partner Manson appears as the master criminal. His criminal tendencies arose from being blown up at sea during the anti-submarine campaign of the first World War.

Most of the stories appear under the author's real name, Ladbroke Black, but for three S.B.L.'s, Nos. 315, 323 and 348 Preed is loaned to Black's pseudonym, Paul Urquhart. There are thirteen numbers of the S.B.L. which were not available for checking for Mr. Preed.

Quoting from 'The Men Behind Boys' Fiction' by W.O.G. Lofts and D.J. Adley, Preed '...especially became very popular with readers'. It is feared that his popularity has waned considerably over the years as no mention of him in Collectors' Digest and Blakiana in particular can be remembered. He is not even mentioned in the 'Sexton Blake Catalogue'. However, his stories can still be read with enjoyment by those who like a crime story with a touch of the unusual, which is given to them by this Singular Solicitor.

Author: LADBROKE BLACK

The Thriller

No. 31	7.9.29	The Society of the Snake
39	2.11.29	The Stranger from the East
45	14.12.29	The Ghost Ship
94	22.11.30	The Twister
126	4.7.31	The Death Patrol
149	12.12.31	The House on the Creek
181	23.7.32	The Murder Game
306	15.12.34	The Con Man's Confederate
325	27.4.35	The Great Trunk Crime
344	7.9.35	The Man Who was Taken for a Ride
357	7.12.35	His Excellency's Victim
515	17.12.38	The Squire came from Sing Sing
523	11.2.39	A Deal with Death
543	1.7.39	The Unjust Four
548	5.8.39	The Man with the Sword Stick
562	11.11.39	Next of Kin

Detective Weekly

No. 172	6.6.36	The Brotherhood of the Snake (Reprint Thriller 31)
184	29.8.36	The Riddle of the King's Ransom (Reprint Thriller 39)

238	11.9.37	Murder by the Creek (Reprint Thriller 149)
Sexton Blake	Library Second Series	
No. 259	2.10.30	The Informer (Author Paul Urquhart)
315	3.12.31	The Mystery of the Thirteenth Chest
323	4.2.32	The Mystery of the Rajah's Jewels
348	4.8.32	The Bungalow Crime

The numbers below were not to hand for checking for Mr. Preed:
 336 The Brooklands Mystery, 354 Presumed Dead, 366 Yellow Vengeance, 379 The Double Cross, 396 Mr. Kilnes Sees Red, 404 The Victim of Devils Alley, 442 Murder by Mistake, 457 The Crime at the Cross Roads, 468 The Crime of Count Duveen, 593 The Borough Council Ramp, 626 The Secret of a Dead Man, 650 The Man on the Dole, 674 The Mystery of the Lorry Driver, 731 The Secret of the Evacuee.

There are many more stories by both Black and Urquhart not listed above. All have been checked for Preed content without success.





EDWY SEARLES BROOKS AND THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY

by Laurence S. Elliott

I do not want to write about E.S.B.'s books, pen-names, St. Frank's or The Nelson Lee Library in general. All Lee aficionados know all this already, especially after the late Bob Blythe's excellent book.

E.S.B. was a gentleman with great tolerance and patience. When, in about 1924, I first contacted Brooks, living then in Halstead, Essex, I was full of questions about previous series I had missed. This correspondence lasted until 1938 when I joined the Reserve and returned to sea a year later.

During the period when I was at sea, prior to the war, I did not have such a regular contact with him as before and, after the war, only little. However, some years ago when there was some argument in the Club over the provenance of a book written years before, I was able to verify that E.S.B. had written the story as Robert W. Comrade, for he had loaned me several of his old stories issued in *The Boys' Friend* (monthly) Library, and the queried story was one of these.

He also was thoughtful about how much one spent on his books; in 1938 he told me of his next book but said 'Wait until it comes down to 3/6d'. (The late Dennis Wheatley advised me to get cracking on his new title at 8/6d, rightly after all, as his business was to sell his books.) Brooks kept contact with his readers, and sent photographs of himself, signed 'Edwy Searles Brooks' and 'Yours to a cinder, Nipper'.

Another venture was the St. Frank's League, with certificates of membership. I still have mine.

When I first wrote to E.S.B., avid for details of his early series, he answered every request, with full details, in his letters (in black/blue ink with green and red ink for titles and underlinings). On one occasion I stated my schoolboy opinion that Arthur Jones was not the right illustrator for the St. Frank's juniors, making them too adult looking, although he was 'O.K.' for the Union Jack, etc. Cheeky, although I didn't mean to be, and I got my 'come-uppance'. With gentle sarcasm he stated that he would inform his editor 'of my wish to take over'. By a co-incidence some weeks later a new illustrator did take over, but I gave myself no credit. I did not think I had anything to do with it.

He admitted to writing occasional 'Frank Richards' and 'Martin Clifford' stories, and to being R.W. Comrade; also that he would be producing stories for the Holiday Annual (only two to be written).

He has been accused of using the works of Rider Haggard, Conan Doyle and E.R. Burroughs for his plots. Not so. He was a great admirer of these writers but wrote his tales of the St. Frank's boys in his own special style.

His 'School ship' series was not the first, the 'Bombay Castle' stories having this honour. But his 'School train' series of 1929 was original, and a fantastic series of adventures in England.

When he admitted to his noms-de-plume, he asked how I had arrived at my ideas about these, and I stated that - as I still think - he had a unique and unmistakeable style which could not be imitated.

He wrote all the St. Frank's yarns except one, and the short stories in the Boys' Realm (those not written by him) were short. The first yarns and the two serials in the 'Realm' were his, and the last.

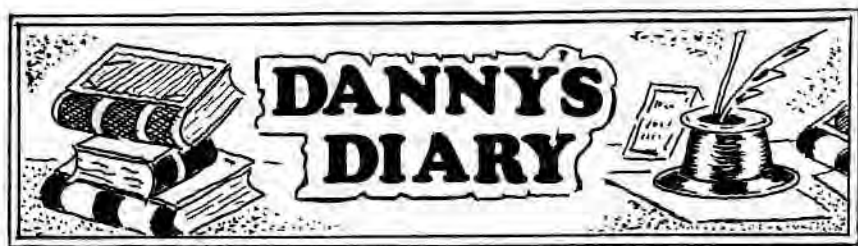
Ross Storey, late wife of Jack Trevor Storey, wrote a full length St. Frank's book which E.S.B. thought very good. It was never published. I would like to see it and so, I imagine, would other Lee-ites.

The Nelson Lee was a lovely little paper, and even the various New Series were compact and attractive. The blend of School and Detective was excellent, and without the bad management and mixed up stories of the last series the Nelson Lee would have probably lasted until the war.

Finally, what a lovely marriage E.S.B. and Frances had.



A Happy New Year



JANUARY 1939

The New Year hasn't really kicked off very well so far as the fourpenny Libraries are concerned. All the same, the Greyfriars S.O.L., entitled "The Mystery Master" is splendid. It starts off after the Christmas holidays. Some very skilful burglar is cracking cribs in the district all round Greyfriars. There is a new master for the Remove Form, a Mr. Steele. And circumstances cause the chums, and particularly Vernon-Smith, to suspect that this Mr. Steele is the mysterious cracksman. This affair will carry on next month, and it is all great stuff.

But the St. Jim's S.O.L., "The Shanghaied Schoolboys" is really a most odd book. For one thing, it is not written by the real Martin, and the title only applies to the final third of the book. The first two-thirds is giving over to plotting by Racke, and Racke is expelled from St. Jim's. Then comes the "Shanghai" business.

The St. Frank's S.O.L., "The Brotherhood of the Free" is rather hard to swallow, with St. Frank's being taken over and run by the rebels who call themselves the "Brotherhood".

In the Boys' Friend Library there was nothing at all to tempt me to spend fourpence. I had one Sexton Blake Library, "The Third Victim" by Donald Stuart, in which a wealthy man is poisoned and Blake is called in to solve the affair.

Modern Boy isn't all that hot, at the moment, but with the month's second issue it has been given new life with the return of Ken King. The first tale is called "King of the Islands" in which Danny, the black "cooky-boy" thinks he sees a "debble", and the rest of Ken's crew mutiny, thinking the "Dawn" is haunted. But, in the next week's story, "The Chest of Terror", they eventually find the villain, Dandy Peter, complete with revolver, hidden in a chest. His plot was to cause the crew to mutiny and then take over the ship. The final of the month is "Island of the Wolf" in which Ken sails to the pearl islands of Mua'a, where they find that O'Lobo, the Wolf, has taken the island, and is ready to shoot on sight any visitor.

There is a new Biggles serial in M.B., and it is "Wings Over Spain", which is bang up-to-date, being about the Spanish Civil War. A series of humorous stories is entitled "Tales Told in the Tuckshop", which doesn't

appeal to me a lot, though one of them this month was "The Five Thousand Pound Pussy", about a cat, and it made me laugh a lot.

In real life there has been a nasty train crash at Hatfield, with some loss of life and people injured.

This month's Magnet stories have been very good and very original. The first tale "Spotting the Secret" is the final tale of the Christmas series which brought back a very old Magnet character, Soames. The secret of the whereabouts of the loot from a raid on a post-office is written in Greek characters inside a cigarette case. And it is Mark Linley who finally spots the secret.

Next came "The Sportsman of the Fourth" in which Angel of the Fourth is caught out of bounds by a rascal named Squidge. And Angel tells Squidge that his, Angel's, name is Harry Wharton. And so Wharton is astounded to find a man named Squidge trying to blackmail him. The sequel to this story came next week in "Saving Bunter's Bacon."

Finally came the first tale of a new series in which a black-guardly Old Boy of Greyfriars, Crocker, comes back and opens a cobbler's shop near the school. And Loder is brutally struck down in the quad after dark, and Vernon-Smith is accused of it and is expelled. And Redwing sends a telegram to Smithy's father.

With the general news so gloomy with the clouds of a possible war with Hitler and his lot, it's nice to escape to my gorgeous weekly papers, and, of course, to escape to the local cinemas twice every week. There have been some pretty good pictures on during January.

The year opened with a British film in Technicolor, Anna Neagle in "Sixty Glorious Years". This is quite spectacular, about happenings during the reign of Queen Victoria, but I found it a bit like a history lesson in class. But I was in my element with Laurel and Hardy in "Swiss Miss". It has a lot of good fun and excitement, even though I have seen better among their films. There is a good bit of operatic singing in it, which seems slightly out of place.

Next came "Pygmalion" with Leslie Howard and Wendy Hiller, which has had wonderful write-ups though it wasn't quite my kettle of fish. "Man's Castle" with Spencer Tracey and Loretta Young was fairish. The famous Charteris character "The Saint" (a big favourite with my brother Doug) has come to the screen with "The Saint in New York: with Louis Hayward as the Saint. Fairly lively was "The Buccaneer" with Fredric March, and I enjoyed Robert Taylor in "The Crowd Roars" about a young boxer who gets mixed up with gangsters.

Ginger Rogers was a bit dull in "Having a Wonderful Time". So, a passable month at the local cinemas, though nothing to write about, except in my Diary.

They now advertise the Gem as "the oldest school story paper in the world - and the best!" And I don't think, with the present programme of St. Jim's, Cedar Creek and the Benbow "they" can be far out.

The year opened, at St. Jim's with "Tom Merry's Boast". A goaded Tom Merry boasted that his School House team would beat the New House on the soccer field, even if the School House were playing Trimble and Grundy. At the end, that good sport Figgins played a couple of duds in his team, too, Clampe and Chowle - and the result was a draw. Ten all. Which took some swallowing.

Next week brought a light, humorous tale, "The St. Jim's Prize-Packet". Apparently Mr. Railton, over the phone, asks Tom Merry to meet a new boy named Walker who is going into the School House. And Walker turns out to be a stunning freak. He is Kerr in disguise. Next "The Snob's Lesson", in which Clampe is expecting a visit from his Naval Officer cousin. But when the cousin arrives he is a boozy-looking seaman. The cousin has heard Clampe's snobbish boast, so he teaches Clampe a lesson. Finally, "The Boy from New Zealand". He is named Roylance, and he falls foul of Manners over a little affair with Manners Minor. This seems to be the start of a new series, and this Manners-Roylance business will continue next week.

Now Cedar Creek. In "Poker Pete's Losing Game", the Cedar Creek chums intervene when Poker Pete is illtreating a horse. The black stallion runs away, and Mr. Lawless pays for the horse.

In "The Horse Hunters" the chums set out to look for the horse which is called "Demon". And Beauclerc rides the horse, and it becomes his property, a gift from Mr. Lawless.

In "Yellow Vengeance", Gunten is terrified when he incurs the wrath of the Chinese, Yen Chin. Finally another story of Yen Chin, "The Terror of Cedar Creek". Splendid reading.

And the Benbow. In "Bucks on the Warpath", Daubeny & Co. plot to stop Drake swotting for his exam. Next, "The Voice of the Tempter". Estcourt is Drake's only rival in the exam, and Estcourt is tempted to crock Drake, so that Drake can't sit for the exam. Then Drake wins the scholarship in "Jack Drake Makes Good."

And lastly, "The St. Winifred's Election". Drake, now secure in his place in the school, challenges Daubeny for the junior captaincy, and the election result is a tie. So we have to wait till next month to find out what happens when a fresh election takes place.

ERIC FAYNE Comments on this month's DANNY'S DIARY

With S.O.L. No. 358 "The Mystery Master", Danny was commencing one of the greatest and most famous Magnet series - the Courtfield Cracksman set of stories. "The Mystery Master" comprised the first three tales from this 9-story series.

S.O.L. No. 359 "The Shanghaied Schoolboys" came from exactly the same period in the Gem as the Greyfriars tale mentioned above; the very start of the year 1930. This was a 3-story series, and, as Danny instinctively knew, it was by a sub writer. Actually, "The Shanghaied Schoolboys", though episodic, is quite well

plotted and told, though the knowledgeable reader can detect quite soon that it lacks the "master" touch.

So Danny saw "The Saint in New York" in January 1938. Over the next few years there were about 8 more Saint films, so presumably they were reasonably popular, though I doubt whether they ever caused queues at the box office. Louis Hayward played the Saint in just two of them - the first and the last.

The Gem story "Tom Merry's Boast" had originally been "Tom Merry's Brag" at the start of 1918. "The St. Jim's Prize-Packet" had had the intriguing title of "Walker" in the autumn of 1917. I fancy that "WALK-ER" had been a kind of catch phrase of the period, equivalent to the more modern term of "now pull the other one." "The Snob's Lesson" had been "Clampe's Cousin" in late 1917.

"The Boy from New Zealand" had been "Manners' Vendetta" in early 1918, the first story in a series of three. Astonishingly, in 1918, this opening tale of the series was separated, by two sub stories, from the other two tales of the series. Naturally, in 1938, they kept the series intact. Why on earth, in 1918, was a Hamilton series split by the insertion of 2 sub tales, nothing to do with the series. Your guess is a good as mine.

Of the Cedar Creek stories in the January 1938 Gem, these 4 stories had run consecutively in the Boy's Friend from mid-February 1918. "Poker Pete's Losing Game" had been "Striking a Bargain"; "The Horse Hunters" had the same title on both occasions; "Yellow Vengeance" had been "Yen Chin on the Warpath" and "The Terror of Cedar Creek" had formerly been "A Regular Terror."

The 4 Benbow tales had originally run consecutively in the Greyfriars Herald from early April 1920. "Bucks on the Warpath" had been "The Scheme that Failed"; "The Voice of the Tempter" had been "A Terrible Temptation"; "Drake makes Good" had been "All Serene" in 1920; and "The St. Winifred's Election" appeared under the same title on both occasions.



(Picture by Bob Whiter)

Cliff House Corner

by Margery Woods



A PAGE FROM CLIFF HOUSE

One of the joys of the Cliff House saga is the way in which the successive Hilda Richards wove a fascinating and convincing tapestry of the entire world of the school. Not only were the pupils, the building itself, its grounds and the panorama of its surrounding countryside meticulously drawn, a complete cast of mistresses, parents, governors, neighbours, servants, even pets, also were assembled and characterised with a remarkably steady consistency. One member of this supporting cast was Cliff House's little page-boy, Charles Percival Henry Boker.

Boker, variously described as a lad with freckles, rather large ears, very hard working, a jolly good sport, and having a special admiration for Babs, was not merely a name referred to in passing when the action required a message to be taken or a bag to be carried. On at least three occasions he stepped out of that background tapestry to star in some very appealing tales of the chums of the Fourth.

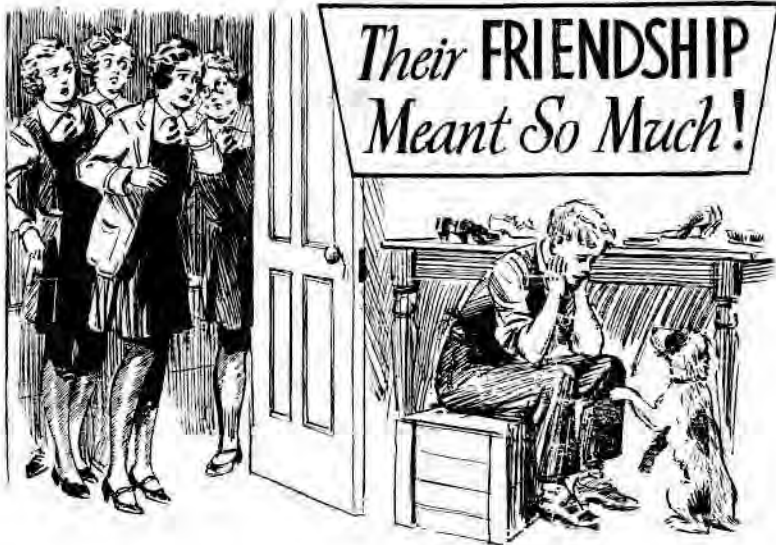
In PAGE-BOY BOKER TO THE RESCUE (SCHOOLGIRL 437 Dec. 11th, 1937) we find the chums deep in the thralls of their latest show, a Christmas Fantasy written and produced by Mabs, scenery designed by Babs, and costumes designed by Marjorie. (No end to the talents of our clever schoolgirls.) Disaster has just struck and their scenery has been badly damaged in a railway crash. With only three days to go the show is threatened, until Boker volunteers to repair and build the sets. The chums scarcely have time to heave sighs of relief before Rhoda Rhodes of the Fifth, one of the principal players, decides to break bounds and is challenged by Boker, temporarily acting porter during Piper's absence with influenza. Rhoda has all the worst characteristics of Diana Royston-Clarke but without the Firebrand's impulsive flashes of kindness and her charisma, and sets about wreaking her revenge on the hapless Boker. One of her vindictive retaliations is to lock Boker in the garage where he is working all his spare time on the scenery. Unfortunately for Rhoda she has made the mistake of calling Bessie a fibber, on one of the occasions when the fat duffer is actually telling the truth. The Bunter blood rises! When Miss Primrose demands to know who is the culprit who incarcerated poor Boker, Rhoda confesses. No one is more astonished than Rhoda herself. Had she seen Bessie's lips pursing prior to a spot of the famous Bunter ventriloquism Rhoda might

not have been so surprised. So Rhoda gets detention and Mabs has to take over the leading part in the show herself.

All seems to be going well; Boker has restored two of the sets and is hard at work on the last one, but Rhoda is smarting for revenge. After taking Boker's keys she removes the silver Cliff House trophies from Hall and hides them under the stage, then opens several windows and a side door, knowing that it will look as though a burglary has taken place and Boker will be blamed for carelessness. This plan succeeds beyond her dreams. Boker is found, a small, exhausted lad, fast asleep on the floor of the garage after working through the night to complete the scenery repairs. Miss Primrose dismisses him for this gross neglect.

The chums rally to the cause and Bessie decides to set the great Bunter brain to work. She longs to emulate her hero, detective Sexton Blake, and with the aid of Pedro, Christine Wilmer's bloodhound, she sets out to track down the real culprit. In a hilarious mix-up with a tabby cat and Pedro, detective Bessie is dragged under the stage at the close of the performance. Amid the racket of cat and dog and the clangor of the hidden silver trophies, Bessie suddenly pops up through the stage in an unscheduled appearance that would not have disgraced the demon king.

Inside one of the trophies is a wristlet watch with a broken link, reported missing by Rhoda and lost unknowingly by her during her stealthy handiwork the previous night. So Boker is reinstated, the hero of the hour and presented with a lovely silver wristwatch by the grateful chums.



In **THEIR FRIENDSHIP MEANT SO MUCH** (486 Nov. 19th, 1938) we find Boker in charge of the Cliff House Pets' Kennels, just before an important show. He has acquired a clever little terrier named Buck—he has also acquired a new enemy in Connie Jackson, the terror of the prefects. Connie has become involved with a strange woman who for reasons of her own wants Boker thrown out of Cliff House. Why, we have to wait until the end of story, after much trouble and injustice befall the lad, to discover. The country's most notorious dog thieves are after Deena, Miss Primrose's valuable pedigree Borzoi, and need to remove the vigilant Boker before they can succeed. The chums, of course, will never allow such a dastardly plot to succeed and all ends as it should, in rejoicing for Boker and his clever little dog, Buck. One is always tempted to wonder why the Connie Jacksons of school life always manage to escape with a feeble wiggling while heroines who are blameless are promptly expelled. (On the occasions when I watch the Australian soap, Cell Block H, I am always irresistibly reminded of Connie Jackson. She and the ghastly Vera could interchange roles any day.)

In **MABS ALONE BELIEVED IN HIM** (530 Sept. 23rd, 1939) we have another tale of the Chums' theatricals, this time a musical talent competition. Once again the faithful Boker is lending his invaluable carpentry skill to scenery making, and this time the enemy is a newcomer, one Cecil Hargrove, a protegee of Miss Charmant. Cecil seems a charming boy, good-looking and able to play the ukulele and sing, and the chums are amazed when the usually amiable Boker arrives red-faced and angry, and shouts at Cecil. They have never seen him so annoyed. Mabs has already invited Cecil to join the Fourth's Hawaiian Band, not yet suspecting that Cecil is a worthless little worm in the true storypaper tradition of baddies. The luckless Boker is forced into the equally traditional cleft stick because of Cecil's distant relationship to Miss Charmant, for whom Boker, like most of the girls, would happily lay down his life.

And so Boker puts up with the wiles of the hypocritical Cecil, who has quite won over the girls, except Mabs, who is beginning to have doubts. Sara Harrigan's shoes unaccountably get mixed up with the kitchen rubbish—not exactly guaranteed to improve the elegance of either Sara's footwear or her temper—and Miss Bullivant is involved in another incident—and most incidents are red-rag to that lady! Then money is missed from Miss Charmant's handbag and our page-boy hero is blamed and faced with the sack. Only Mabs suspects the real culprit, and following the same storyline as the earlier Boker tale the dramatic denouement comes at the concert. Cecil is thoroughly enjoying the limelight, when Mabs makes a last minute change to her dance and grabs Cecil's ukulele, to throw it up into the air and let it crash down on the stage. Then she calls to Miss Charmant in front of the astonished audience. There, in the shattered instrument is the missing money. Once more, the encore of triumph for the Cliff House chums and their faithful page-boy.



I wonder how many collectors, or I probably should say, Greyfriars enthusiasts, have noticed two illustrations in two different series of the MAGNET which have a certain similarity.

I refer to MAGNET 1273, dated June 18th, 1932, story entitled 'Coker's Camera Clicks'. On page 5 there is a picture by Leonard Shields depicting Fisher T. Fish counting his money, with George Wingate talking to him from the study door.

Now check MAGNET 1655 dated November 4th, 1939; this story is called 'The Tuck Hamper'. On page 7 we have Fish again counting his money, this time with five juniors talking to him from the study door. The picture this time is by C.H. Chapman. But note the similarities: - the picture of George Washington flanked by American flags; the clock and small picture on the mantelpiece; the fireplace; the cupboard, surmounted by books in the corner. Even the door has a certain sameness, the panels, knob and finger shields. Fishy's posture is almost the same, although in the later illustration he has a pen in his hand.

Both pictures show the U.S. junior with eye-glasses. In one of the early Bunter books, Macdonald showed Fishy without glasses, and as he had made several mistakes, I wrote mentioning these to Frank Richards. This is what he said: 'On one point I must put in a word for the artist. Fishy doesn't really wear glasses. These were evolved by an artist quite without the author's sanction, he being apparently under the impression that all Americans wear horn-rimmed spectacles ... which really isn't so at all. I don't think you will find any mention of Fishy's specs in the stories: though I have to admit that A.P. sub-editors were quite capable of altering the text to square with a blunder in the illustrations. They did this once in my 'Rio Kid' series, I remember only too well. In the earlier MAGNETs you will find Fishy depicted entirely innocent of specs.'

Going back to the illustrations, in the Holiday Annual for 1940, page 221, will be found a further variation on the same theme, as it were. Entitled 'The Greyfriars Portrait Gallery' the full page has in its six portraits a picture of Fisher Tarleton, which could be a further frame on a strip of movie film of the 1939 MAGNET illustration. It looks as though it was taken before the door was opened causing Fishy to look round. Again the artist is Chapman. I find that I am faced with the question, do I prefer Fisher T. Fish with glasses as most artists portrayed him? Or without, as his creator intended? What is your feeling on the matter?

Books



AT WAR WITH GREYFRIARS by Frank Richards

Published by Howard
Baker: a Book Club
Special - £18.00

Reviewed by Eric Fayne.

The great charm of this wonderful volume is found in the particular period - early Autumn 1915 - when the 6 issues in the book first saw the light of day. The Magnet had gone back to its generous size of 32 pages, and the price was still one penny. So far as Greyfriars goes, it must be admitted that there is nothing memorable in the stories of mid-1915. Yet they are packed with interest for the old collector of the newish fan, and, from the fact that they were rarely if ever reprinted, there is a welcome freshness in the reading matter.

The first tale in this volume, 'The Fellow Who Won', is a substitute effort, but it is by no means a bad story, and it stands up well to the eye of any critic. Russell is brought out from the supporting cast, to play the lead. He shows cowardice in an encounter with the Highcliffians, and, in consequence, is sent to Coventry by the Remove. But, naturally he redeems himself with one of those gallant rescues, and the final chapters take an original twist when Russell, coached by an old fighter, Jimmy

Wyatt, takes his place in the Public Schools Boxing Tournament at Aldershot, and manages to outpoint the star boxer from Eton.

The overall title tale, 'At War with Greyfriars', is good fun, even if it takes some swallowing. Gosling has to be away from Greyfriars for a time, and his place is taken by a new porter named Bunn, who is Ponsonby in disguise. And Bunn gives our old pals a high old time before his real identity is discovered. This last story brought an end to the Red Covers which had graced the Magnet since the beginning. The 'golden' cover has gone, temporarily, the editor assured us - but it never came back. The change was due to the shortage of dye, and it is interesting that the Gem's blue cover continued for nearly a year after the Magnet lost its red overcoat.

The first white cover yarn is 'Backing Up Bunter'. Mr. Bunter comes a cropper on the Stock Exchange, and the Greyfriars fellows rally round the plump son in the Remove. Next came 'Coker's Canadian Cousin', which introduces a broken-down actor named Snooks, who is persuaded by Skinner to impersonate the gallant cousin.

'A Lancashire Lad's Luck' is a long-forgotten tale, and an intriguing one, considering the announcement that the Editor of the Magnet was to make the following week. A great story-writing competition, in the tale, is organised by a popular weekly paper. Linley, Bunter and Fish enter for the competition, and the yarn ends predictably. To wind up the volume, we have 'Champion of the Oppressed'. The 'champion' is Coker, who takes in hand the bullying prefect, Loder. This oppressive youth is crushed by Coker, and Coker becomes the bully of the juniors. Unremarkable, yet a joy.

The advertisements in this beautifully bound treasure are a dream of nostalgic delight. There was clearly no paper shortage, pro tem, for several new papers are advertised. One is a new 3d Library - 'The Sexton Blake Library' - and No. 1 contains 'The Yellow Tiger'. Surely, if reprinted today, it would become a best-seller. And the new Greyfriars Herald is announced to be published at a halfpenny. The Editor spreads himself in heart-warming, but weird, editorials. One feels that the Editor did very much as he liked, with little or no supervision from the top people. He says he will issue the Greyfriars Herald as a separate entity, if readers want it. Then he announces that the response has been apathetic. So will they vote - yes or no for the Greyfriars Herald. Then he gives the result of the vote: FOR the G.H." 105, 725; AGAINST the G.H.: 4. And readers in those days must have taken it all with a grain of salt.

And then he comes in with an astounding question: Can you write a Greyfriars story? Magnet readers are invited to submit a 30,000 word story of Greyfriars. The Editor will award £15 for what he considers the best story submitted - and perhaps he will publish the winning tale. We wonder whether he will publish it under the name of Frank Richards.

Surely the most astounding editorial ever to feature in any boys' paper! Obviously, one would think, the object was to find more sub-

writers, just in case. Was he worrying that possibly Frank Richards might be 'called up'?

Ah, me! What days they were! A lovely volume to lift your spirits.

THE DISNEY STUDIO STORY by Richard Holliss and Brian Sibley
Reviewed by Mary Cadogan Published by Octopus Books - £16.95

Anyone who has read Richard Holliss's and Brian Sibley's earlier books on aspects of the Disney phenomenon will know that these two authors do marvellously meticulous research, and that they always produce lively, informative and intriguing texts. This is their major work to date; it is a wonderful history and an intimate study of the achievements of the Disney Studios, during Walt's time and afterwards. Truly a bumper book, it contains a wide range of illustrations, many of which are in full colour, and it is a celebration not only of favourite cartoon characters like Mickey, Minnie, Donald, Snow White, Pinocchio, Dumbo, etc., but of the contributions of the real life stars who lent their lustre to roles such as Mary Poppins or Long John Silver. A perfect choice if you have a book token to spend, and want to chase away any January blues!

The pictures shown here from the book show Walt Disney at the drawing-board, as he depicted himself on his first calling-card, and a scene from the 1935 film, Mickey's Fire Brigade.



DICK RODNEY RETURNS TO ST. WINIFRED'S

by H. Heath

I

Dick Rodney had been the sole occupant in the railway compartment ever since the train had left Kingsford Junction. As he had been so immersed in his thoughts, it was highly probable that he was unaware of this fact.

Eventually he stirred and transferred his almost mechanical gaze from the empty seat opposite him to glance out of the window. The scenery in the June sunshine was familiar to him, and the serious expression on his face relaxed into a faint smile.

"Not long to Chade now", he murmured.

Ever since he had requested his widowed mother to take steps to have him transferred from Greyfriars to the newly built St. Winifred's, Dick Rodney had wondered long and hard how he would feel on returning to his old school. He had been happy at Greyfriars in the company of his great friend Jack Drake. However, after Drake had left Greyfriars to become assistant to Ferrers Locke, the detective, Rodney had become very unsettled, so much so that his request to return to St. Winifred's had been granted almost immediately. There was no doubt that his old school was more than happy to have him back.

As he stared out of the train window he recalled wistfully the time when as a new boy he had first met Drake, and despite the long running feud with Daubeny & Co., many happy days at St. Winifred's. How he wished that his friend could be with him now, but alas that was out of the question. Nevertheless he expected to be much happier at St. Winifred's, although fully aware of a possible cloud on the horizon. The subject of Vernon Daubeny of the Shell had been uppermost in his thoughts for some time during the journey.

Rodney's thoughts had been full of nostalgia. He remembered fondly the old Benbow, a warship dating back to the Napoleonic wars, which had served as a temporary school whilst St. Winifred's was being rebuilt. Then when the old ship had sailed to the West Indies and South America, the vivid memory of that dangerous adventure in the wilds of the Orinoco came alive to him. It was during this adventure that Drake and Daubeny had really become firm friends.

Despite this, Rodney had always had the lingering doubt that Daubeny's reconciliation with Drake had only barely included himself. How permanent Daubeny's reformation had been was another question, particularly with the unscrupulous Egan at his side. He would soon know, and he tried to dismiss Daubeny from his mind. There were after all his many friends in the Fourth to meet and be with again - Estcourt, Sawyer Major, Rawlings, Conway and Norman, to name only a few. He

had written to Frank Estcourt and so his arrival would not come as a surprise to his friends.

Estcourt's reply had been brief, but there was no disguising his delight at the news of Rodney's impending return. The reply contained the news that on the departure of Rodney and Drake to Greyfriars, Vernon Daubeny had been elected junior captain by a very small majority. Estcourt had also stressed that following his election to Drake's old position, Daubeny had excluded all 'Bucks' from the football and cricket elevens.

The train drew in at Chade station, and Rodney alighted with his luggage. He gazed expectantly around, knowing that Estcourt would be there to meet him. He waved cheerily as he saw a familiar figure wearing the green and white school cap hurrying up the platform to him. Rodney felt better already.

II

Tea in Study No. 3 in the Shell had begun on a much subdued note. It was clear that Vernon Daubeny and his two study mates, Egan and Torrence, had something on their minds. It was Egan who broke the silence.

"That dashed hooligan should have arrived by this time!"

"Yes, I believe that Rodney will be here by now", said Daubeny quietly. "And it's no use calling the fellow names."

"You know what will happen Daub", snapped Egan.

"I'm sure you will tell me again", replied Daubeny with a sigh.

The subject of Rodney had been under discussion in Study 3 for the past several days.

"He will be greeted with open arms in the Fourth", said Egan unpleasantly.

"Why should that worry you? He was always popular in the Fourth."

"If Rodney puts up against you for the junior captaincy of St. Winny's, he would almost certainly win - I am sure you realise that."

"I believe you're right", drawled Daubeny. He glanced at the third occupant of the study. "What do you think of Rodney being your junior captain, Torrence?"

Torrence gave a shrug of his shoulders. "Does it really matter?" he muttered, plainly bored with the repeat of previous discussions.

Daubeny looked at Egan with a smile. "There you are! The prospect doesn't bother Torrence or myself! I'm blown if I know why the thought bothers you so much Egan. It certainly wouldn't make the slightest difference to you as far as I can see."

"You mean, like yourself, he wouldn't select me for the football or cricket teams", snarled Egan viciously.

"Exactly!" grinned Daubeny, "and that goes as well for Seeley, Chilcot, Vane and the rest of them!"

"All our friends!" Egan hooted indignantly.

"Friends when we play a little game of nap or have a quiet smoke", corrected Daubeny coolly.

"Oh rats!" said Egan ungraciously. "I cannot understand you Daub being so thick with Estcourt, Rawlings and the rest of that gang of fags where football and cricket are concerned. Why, Troope is the only fellow in the Shell besides yourself to play for the junior eleven."

"That's because he can play football and cricket" said Daubeny calmly. "And players of his calibre are rare in the Shell."

Torrence gave a faint chuckle, but the look on Egan's face grew even darker as he gave an angry exclamation.

"No need to get upset about such a trifling matter", said Daubeny as patiently as he could. "I know that you could never accept it, but Drake and I parted good friends. And that happy state of affairs included Rodney."

"I was never sure that it did include Rodney."

"I was never quite sure myself", admitted Daubeny. "But it certainly does. As regards putting up for the captaincy, I just cannot see him doing it."

Torrence nodded in agreement. There was no doubt that he shared Daubeny's opinion, and they were both well aware of Egan's deep and bitter feelings towards Rodney and Drake.

Daubeny rose to his feet. "Now I'll run along to the Fourth Form studies and pay my respects to the best bowler that the St. Winifred's junior eleven ever had."

This was too much for Egan. He shook his head vigorously and chocked back angry words before leaving the study, slamming the door after him.

Daubeny grinned at Torrence. "He'll come around, he always does. Coming along?"

"Righto", replied Torrence, and the two Shell fellows left the study.

It was very evident that Study No. 3 in the Shell had divided views on the subject of Rodney. There was little doubt as well that with Daubeny taking such a strong line, Egan would find himself very much on his own with his views, even amongst the Bucks.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

ALWAYS WANTED: Rupert Annuals Pre-1970 and One Shilling Adventure Series. William books in dustwrappers. Please offer to John Beck, 29 Mill Road, Lewes, East Sussex.

DO YOU BELIEVE IN FAIRIES?

by Mary Cadogan

During December an exhibition was held at the Medici Galleries in London to mark the centenary of the birth of Margaret Tarrant, an artist and illustrator of children's books who was immensely popular throughout the 1930s. In common with many children of my generation I loved her pictures, whether these were of ordinary boys and girls, of religious scenes, of animals or of fairies. I suppose it was her fairy themes which most intrigued me; almost everyone knows her famous picture of a small boy and girl admiring Peter Pan's statue in Kensington Gardens, while 'real' fairies (as distinct from those carved upon it) fly around it. A reproduction of this hung in my bedroom, and, much later on, in my daughter's room. Alas, many of the children (or at least their parents) of the 1960s and '70s seemed to lose the taste for magic. Margaret Tarrant's wonderful pictures must have been deemed 'old fashioned', and it became impossible to buy reproductions of many of her woodland magic scenes. Recently, however, some of the children's books which she illustrated have been reprinted. Also Medici have published **MARGARET TARRANT AND HER PICTURES** by John Gurney, a slim but extremely

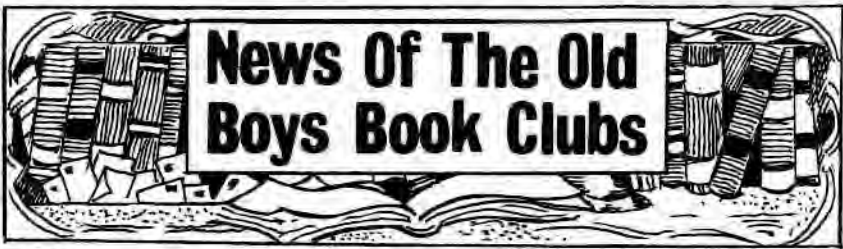


engaging book which costs only £1.25. This gives a brief outline of her life, and contains full colour reproductions of a wide range of her illustrations. These include not only some of the best known but also several that it was a joy (at least to me) to discover for the first time - her Brownie and Girl Guide studies, for example. Happily too Medici have increased the range of postcard reproductions of her pictures, and many large prints are also available. Of course Margaret Tarrant's pictures are pretty, but there is much more to them than just this. They represent innocence, enchantment and the sense of joy

which is so important in every child's life. And, as John Gurney's book points out, her decorative borders with flowers, leaves 'and the flowing lines of the dancing figures have their source in the Arts and Crafts Movement and the Art Nouveau style of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries'. Unfortunately, without colour we cannot do full justice to her work, but the black and white pictures reproduced here from the book

might revive memories of Margaret Tarrant's charming pictures for some of you.





MIDLAND O.B.B.C.

There were only 7 present at our November meeting, but we receive letters from old friends who cannot attend our meetings. A specially heartwarming one was read from Ian Bennett. There was an item from our acting chairman, Geoff Lardner, and readings by Ivan Webster from Magnet 1299, and Keith Normington from a Herlock Sholmes book he had bought in New York! A quiz given by your correspondent was won by Betty Hotpon.

The December Christmas party, also attended by 7 members, was cosy and enjoyable. The programme included quizzes by Geoff Lardner and myself, and Christine Brettell. There was an amusing reading by Ivan Webster from the 8th chapter of 'Aunt Judy at Greyfriars', with Coker in trouble because of Bunter's antics with a Christmas hamper, and an item 'Take a Letter' by Geoff Lardner. The excellent refreshments at both this and the December meeting were provided as usual by Betty Hopton, Christine Brettell and Ivan Webster, to all of whom we are deeply grateful. Next meeting: January 31st.

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

Our December gathering was held at the Cherry Hinton home of Adrian Perkins. After a short business session our guest speaker, Mary Cadogan, discussed the general policy and the bright prospects foreseen for our C.D. We were given some insights into problems associated with the editing, reproduction and despatch of the magazine. Mary then talked about her books on Frank Richards and Richmal Crompton; the type of work these involved; the contacts with the Subjects' friends and relatives; and the books' reviews - some good, some just odd and others of mind-boggling daftness (a critic in one national magazine had taken her to task for not writing about all the wonderful stories of St. Frank's which Charles Hamilton had written in the name of Edwy Searles Brooks!!!).

During tea, Edward Witten treated us to another of his show business quizzes. We then listened to a recently broadcast interview with Anthony Buckeridge, mainly concerning Jennings, of course. Keith Hodgkinson's film showing of a Disney musical montage completed our meeting.

ADRIAN PERKINS

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Seventeen of our members were present at our December informal Christmas Party. We have read in the story papers of study spreads and tables groaning under the weight of food, and this certainly was the case at our gathering. After this scrumptious study supper we had the games of the traditional seasonal party. The Christmas Quiz was won by William Hirst. Joan Colman and Geoffrey Good read a hilarious piece from a send-up of 'The Twelve Days of Christmas'. A game of Bunter Drive was won by David Bradley.

We then had the cutting of the cake prepared by Joan, who had decorated it so well and in such fine detail with characters from our beloved papers - Billy and Bessie, Arthur Augustus, William, Larry the Lamb and Dennis, and one of the schoolgirls from the stories of Angela Brazil. The names of our authors were also iced around the cake. Geoffrey Good proposed a toast (lemonade available for those not liking sherry) to the Club and to our absent friends - notably Michael Bentley and Paul Galvin, both of whom were ill. We also remembered those who

had founded the Club, and a toast was given to Bill Williamson, a founder member and still a very regular attender.

A Very Happy New Year to all C.D. readers. Our programme for 1989 is now available, and copies can be obtained from the Secretary, Thornes Vicarage, Wakefield, West Yorkshire. We are always very pleased to have associate members of those who cannot make regular visits to us.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

LONDON O.B.B.C.

Thirty two members met under the hospitable roof of Bill Bradford's home at Ealing for the December meeting. After a formal reminder that the A.G.M. will take place at the Ealing Liberal Centre on January 8th, 1989, and hearing satisfactory reports from the Treasurer and the Librarians, the entertainment with a strong Christmas atmosphere got under way with a reading from the Cavandale Abbey series by Roger Jenkins. This was followed by the reading by Win Morss of an article from 'Heritage' magazine by Norman Wright about Bunter and his creator, after which we heard of the interest expressed by the Broadstairs Public Library in a possible Frank Richards exhibition there in the spring. We await further details from Mary Cadogan and/or the Library, and members felt the idea to be an inviting one.

Whilst we enjoyed the excellent tea provided by our host, Roy Parsons set us a 'paper' called 'The Magnet Triple Choice Quiz'. Chairman Phil Griffiths followed with a reading from 'William's Truthful Christmas', and Richmal Crompton's humour raised many chuckles. Then it was the turn of E.S. Brooks to enthral in Jim Sutcliffe's reading from 'The Spectre of Handforth Towers'. The programme ended with the playing of a cassette recording of a Kaleidoscope broadcast about Jeffrey Richards' book 'Happiest Days' and Mary Cadogan's 'Frank Richards: the Chap Behind the Chums'. Jeffrey Richard was interviewed and Gerald Campion spoke about, and read extracts from, Mary's book.

Many London O.B.B.C. members are saddened by the news of Norman Kadish's death, and they will endorse Maurice Hall's tribute in the December C.D., and join me in the condolences I have expressed to Norman's brother, Esmond, who is also one of our valued members.

LESLEY ROWLEY

Your Editor says—



It helps the C.D. if readers advertise their WANTS and FOR SALE book and story-paper items, etc. in it. The rates are 4p per word; a boxed, displayed ad. costs £20.00 for a whole page, £10 for a half page or £5 for a quarter page.



H. HEATH (Bexhill-on-Sea): My favourite school story writer, Charles Hamilton, disappointed me on only one occasion. This occurred in the GEM No. 1649 dated 23rd September 1939, when he transferred both Jack Drake and Dick Rodney from St. Winifred's to Greyfriars.
(Editor's note: Mr. Heath is trying to put things right! See his story about Dick Rodney in this issue.)

M. LEWIS (Folkestone): Looking at a reproduction of the SCHOOL-GIRLS' OWN cover in the October C.D., I seem to recognise the work of Leonard Shields. (Editor's note: This is correct; Shields was the main Morcove illustrator from the beginning of the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN until the end of its run; other artists were only very occasionally called upon to substitute for him.) I have also noticed that the tales of Jim Dainty & Co. in the RANGER seem to be illustrated by Shields. He must have done a prodigious amount of illustrations during that period... Did ever Chapman take over any other work, I wonder? I have never come across any other work of his except in the MAGNET, but in my opinion he wasn't a good illustrator. Food for thought!!!

D. LANG (Nottingham): Charles Hamilton seems to have an Edwardian courtesy and outlook - c.f. P.G. Wodehouse... in his earlier stories I sense a much freer discussion of all sorts of issues, topics and events of the time and of adolescence than in his stronger, mature writings twenty or thirty years on. Latterly the themes and drama were well set on a familiar pattern whose cohesion didn't allow the same play of all sorts of individual variables... Perhaps at the time of his early writing, he was himself still in contact with younger mixed company than he was later on... Perhaps some of his female stereotyping is due to his general use of strong stereotypes in certain characters (one for his contemporary Dr. Jung to discuss). With Bob and Marjorie I feel he is emphasising certain character strengths: loyalty in particular. Clara, from my limited acquaintance, comes across as a strong, independent character c.f. Ransome's Nancy, though with more developed feminine sympathies and tendencies - the young adult.

ENGLISH COMICS IN THE ANTIPODES : A REMINISCENCE

I grew up in the town of Tamworth (named after the one in Staffordshire) in the New England district of north-west New South Wales. As one of a large family, I was fortunate in my choice of parents! Among other things, they were enlightened in their belief that the educational imperatives of reading, writing, spelling and grammar were both facilitated and accelerated by a steady diet of "good English comics" (not to be confused with the "trashy American ones"). Accordingly the local newsagent had our standing order for "Tiger Tim's Weekly", "Puck" and "Champion", although it took some months for the weekly issues to arrive in Australia by the surface mail of that era.

But this was not enough for me. I discovered a second-hand book and comic shop, now long since gone, near the corner of Peel and Brisbane Streets (also names with English links). This small shop was owned by an elderly Mrs. Weaver. She became a permanent part of the familiar and comforting monotony of my childhood. At that early age (and also, I have been told, even now) I knew nothing of female fashions, but I remember distinctly that Mrs. Weaver's apparel (in common with that of Miss Havisham) never varied. However, unlike Dickens' lamented lady, Mrs. Weaver always wore black - a long black dress, black court shoes and a wide-brimmed hat of similar hue which never left her head, even indoors. Sitting in a high-backed chair in a darkened corner of the shop and surrounded by unsteady stacks of books, magazines and comics, Mrs. Weaver held court with her young retainers. As a special mark of favour, she saved for me the occasional second-hand copies of the "Magnet" and "Gem". These were eagerly perused and later exchanged - along with our three regular weekly comics - for any available copies of "Triumph" and "Modern Boy" in an arcane cycle of swapping, the rituals of which are properly understood only by the young (and, perhaps, much later by the not-so-young!). This was a halcyon age of innocence, a time to remember when the values, standards and perceptions of English comics ere also enshrined in the Antipodes. DON HARDMAN

FOR SALE: Comics: Bimbo (24) 1961-1966. Lion (29) 1968-1973 (Offers). World Greatest Detective Stories 1936, £3. Glamorous Musicals 1984, £3. Coronation Souvenir Book 1937, heavy gold cover (Offers). Physical Culture Mags. (2) 1936, 1939, £2. 21 Beanos 1980, 20p each. Football Book 1960, £3. F.A. Boys' Book 1960, £3. Mickey Mouse Annual (Offers). Billy Bunters Own (spine missing) £1. Buffalo Bill Library (2) £1 each. Bound comics: Whip Lash, Buck Jones, Kit Karson, Davy Crockett, Kansas Kid (Offers) Collectors' Digest 1986 to 1988, 20p each. (S.A.E.) WATSON, 1 CARTBRIDGE CLOSE, WALTON ON NAZE, ESSEX, CO14 8QJ.

A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

by Marion Waters

I wonder if some of our readers can explain the nomenclature of the various forms used in the schools featured in the pre-war story papers? To one who was not even born when Greyfriars, Cliff House and Morcove closed their doors for the last time, they are baffling to say the least.

I grew up under the post-war grammar school systems where one entered the first form at eleven years of age and took one's 'O' level examination at the end of the fifth year, when aged about sixteen. Two years in the sixth form followed, taking the 'A' level exam when aged eighteen. I know that the longer established public schools admit their new scholars direct to the third form when they are about thirteen years old. I understand that when Dr. Arnold was headmaster of Rugby, he abolished the first and second forms, new scholars entering in the third form. This action led to the formation of 'prep' schools to cater for younger pupils.

From my reading I notice that both Morcove and Cliff House have second forms, but no first forms, while Cliff House has both a third form and an 'upper third'. Can someone explain why the school should have two forms? In one Cliff House epic, the girls in the second form were described as being aged about ten years; surely second-formers should be about twelve or thirteen!

Turning to Greyfriars, I know that Harry Wharton and Co. are fourth-formers, but why is their form called the Remove? In a similar manner, what is the Shell in some of the stories?

I hope that this request for information does not appear too foolish to our older readers, but as one starts to develop an interest in the pre-war schools, their internal organization seems something of a mystery.

STILL WANTED: Sexton Blake Library 2nd Series, No. 453, 'On the Midnight Beat' and 411, 'Tragedy of West End Actress' by John G. Brandon. Joseph Ashley, 46 Nicholas Crescent, Fareham, Hants, PO15 5AH. Fareham 234489.

Golden Age MAGNETS, 1928-32. Many duplicates for disposal, most in excellent condition. £1.00/£2.50, or exchange for Red Magnets, particularly double numbers - 10 VG 1930's for 1 VG double number? SAE for list! Duncan Langford, 11 Hillview Road, Canterbury, CT2 8EY.

DAN DARE PILOT OF THE FUTURE FEATURING 'THE RED MOON MYSTERY' AND 'MAROONED ON MERCURY'.

Published by Hawk Books at £17.95. Reviewed by Norman Wright.

Hawk Books have just published the second 'Deluxe Collector's Edition' of Dan Dare and it is every bit as good as the first published a year ago. Two complete adventure strips are reprinted from "Eagle" comic, following on chronologically from where the first volume left off. The first offering is "The Red Moon Mystery", a compact story of 76 pages. The 'Red Moon' is a giant, controlled asteroid hurtling towards the Earth, its insect like inhabitants travelling the universe devouring all the plant life on the planets they encounter. The artwork is by Frank Hampson; his unique style of blending the futuristic with the commonplace gives his work an authenticity that makes it almost totally believable. The great advantage of reading the strips in volume form is that it fits on the lap better than a pile of "Eagle" comics!

The second story "Marooned on Mercury" follows directly on from the first. Dan and his crew, having successfully destroyed the Red Moon, are hurled towards the Sun by the force of the explosion. The strip recounts their adventures on the inner-most planet, where they meet again the totally evil Mekon. After the initial few episodes the strip was drawn by Harold Johns and it is interesting to compare Johns' crammed frames with the more precise though less action-packed work of Hampson. "Marooned on Mercury" is an exciting adventure with its fair share of gadgets and memorable images.

As a bonus the last eight pages of the volume reprint a Dan Dare strip from the second "Eagle Annual". Another reprint, from the first "Eagle Annual" appears in the splendid "Dan Dare Collectors Edition Calendar 1989" available from the same publisher at £5.95.

For those who regret not purchasing the first volume in the series, or who thought the 'Collectors Edition' a little too expensive a paper backed version is now available from Hawk Books at £9.95.



**By Roger Jenkins. No. 230: Magnets 1374-82:
Popper's Island Rebellion Series**

Charles Hamilton always regarded the Rookwood saga as eminently suitable for the initial use of certain themes, and he referred to this as 'trying it on the dog'. Whether this was because he considered that the weekly Boys' Friend

appealed to less discerning readers than the Magnet and Gem, or whether the shortness of the average Rookwood story lent itself to experimentation, is not clear. At any rate, Jimmy Silver and Co. had a barring-out on an island in the river, and in the next decade the same theme was used in the Magnet, though not all the same sorts of incidents.

Mr. Quelch had not yet returned to Greyfriars after the end of the Smedley series, and it was when Mr. Prout took the Remove that all sorts of trouble ensued. Fishy's famous account book, giving details of all his money lending transactions, fell into Prout's hands and, when Bunter at the last minute gave up the idea of squirting ink over Prout, Fishy seized the squirt himself and then picked up the book that Prout had dropped. Bunter was expelled and the Remove decided to stand by him. Harry Wharton met Mr. Quelch at the railway station and managed to give the Remove's version of events before Mr. Quelch heard any other accounts.

1934 was the last year when the Magnet stories revealed series development of full stretch, and the Popper's Island Rebellion manifested the change. Development, and extension of the main theme. There was the initial rebellion in the Rag, and then the Remove supported Bunter who refused to go home and camped about in the school. It was not until the end of No. 1377 that Popper's Island became the centre of the rebellion, and after that, apart from the expected assaults from various quarters, there were such diversions as a cricket match at Highcliffe and a bank robber hiding on the island. In addition, there was the continued hostility of Sir Hilton Popper because of their trespassing on his island though, as Charles Hamilton remarked, Popper Court was covered in mortgages but there were none on the island, possibly because mortgagees like to see the title deeds before they lend money.

The series was specially noteworthy for the remarkable display of character, apart from Sir Hilton Popper's. Lord Mauleverer came to the fore in a number of ways, and showed the astuteness that existed beneath his laziness. Mr. Vernon-Smith, on being told by Dr. Locke that his son was expelled, astonished the Head by saying that if Herbert had acted in any other way he would have been ashamed of him. But it was Mr. Quelch who kept the stage longest. He believed that Bunter was innocent, and the friendship between Dr. Locke and himself suffered a severe strain over the weeks. In the end it was Mr. Quelch who found the key to unlock the situation, and it was he who triumphantly led the Remove back to the school, uttering these memorable words to the Head: "I had no doubt that such would be the case, sir, when you were kind enough to place the matter in my hands".

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