STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 49 No. 586 OCTOBER 1995

Norman Wright
David Ashford

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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Between Friends

THE ANNUAL

Orders for our Annual have been coming in at a very satisfactory rate and I am now providing, as promised last month, a 'preview' of some of this year's contents. Les Rowley, whose warmly nostalgic articles are always so much appreciated, is in particularly mellow mood with *Laughter and the Love of Friends*, which shares with us several of his real-life and fictional friendships. Greyfriars is much to the fore. There are treats too from other doyens of Hamiltonia. Roger Jenkins guides us on a round of dramatic rebellions at the Hamilton Schools while Peter Mahony contributes a vivid and affectionate portrait of Tom Merry under the sub-heading of *Hamilton's Thousandth Man* and Ted Baldock gives us some more of his celebrated Greyfriars vignettes. As a contrast with the school stories which we always associate with Charles Hamilton, we are happy

to be able to include another of the hitherto unpublished fairy-tales which he wrote for his niece Una when she was a small child.

Articles on E.S.B. and Blakiana are promised and will be trailed in next month's C.D. We shall also be reprinting an unusual long-ago tale by Brooks about a female detective (not Eileen Dare, but an intrepid investigator from far earlier days).

I am delighted that this year's Annual will include *Biggles of the British Empire*, an 'in depth' and perceptive study of W.E. Johns's greatest hero by Dr. Jeffrey Richards. Derek Hinrich takes an incisive look at Mr. Lestrade's role in the Sherlock Holmes canon, and Bob Whiter, in words and pictures, recalls the Christmases of his London pre-Second World War childhood in wonderfully atmospheric detail.

There is, of course, very much more - and I shall be giving further appetite-whetting foretastes in next month's C.D. If you would like to receive a copy of the Annual and have not yet sent me your order, please remember to do so in the near future. The cost is £9.80 for readers in the U.K. and £11.00 for those who live abroad (both prices include postage and packing).

THE SECOND WORLD WAR - FIFTY YEARS ON

I was away in California at the time when the fiftieth anniversary of VE Day was celebrated here so, in August, it was particularly gratifying for me to be able to watch on TV the VJ commemorative events. The open-air service and veterans' march-past down the Mall were truly moving. So too were the next evening's events, with the sight of the 'little ships' recalling the horrors and the heroism of the Dunkirk evacuation. The fireworks over the Thames were simply thrilling, and the musical splendours of the performance in Horseguards' Parade were magnificent. Perhaps, however, the final event of that memorable weekend most clearly conveyed everyone's thankfulness for peace and freedom, as well as a sense of national pride. It was sheer joy to see all those children (and adults) accompanying the Queen and Prince Philip on their return journey from Horseguards' Parade to Buckingham Palace, and then sharing the less formal musical celebrations which took place there.

We have so many potent memories, both private and public, of the vicissitudinous years that led, eventually, to victory and peace in 1945. This

month in the C.D. we have the opportunity to read extracts from some of the letters written by Charles Hamilton in the last stages of the war, and to savour his comments on a variety of subjects from 'doodlebugs' to the unsuccessful plot to assassinate Hitler.

At that time, of course, with the MAGNET demised, no Greyfriars stories were pouring from his typewriter. Happily, however, the retirement of Harry Wharton and the redoubtable Fat Owl was only 'for the duration' - and the revivifying Bunter books were fairly soon to be launched.

MARY CADOGAN

* *

MYRA ALLISON 1907 - 1995

(A Tribute from the Rev. Geoffrey Good)

The passing of Myra Allison marks the end of an era for the Northern book Club. Her late husband, Gerry, was a founder member, well-known and respected in Hobby circles, and at all times a capable contributor to the life of the Northern Club.

At meetings he was often accompanied by Myra - a 'regular' in the kitchen 'doing' refreshments.

Myra died on 30th August at Ferndale House, Crosshills, where she had resided for the past 4½ years and the funeral was on 1st September at Skipton Crematorium.

Good times and bad times and all times pass over, but we Hobbyists, especially those of us in the north, will ever hold pleasant memories of both Gerry and Myra and be grateful for the Hobby interest they stimulated in us and for the help they at all times unstintingly gave.

From Mary Cadogan: ...

I would like to add my personal appreciation of Myra and Gerry Allison. Both were extremely kind to me when I first became interested in book collecting. They lent me books and papers, and were extremely hospitable when I was able to visit them in their Yorkshire home.

* *

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THE NIGHTMARE "BOOK FAIR"

by Donald V. Campbell

I was thinking the other night - my best thinking is done in the "wee small hours" - and wondered what the turning point was. Turning point, that is, towards my interest in old books and papers. Or was it always part of me? Within sensible measures - yes.

Watching the wonderfully happy one-year old granddaughter at play told part of the story. She can't talk, or read, or understand philosophy. But she was happily turning over the pages of a picture book. Not because it was there but because it gave her pleasure and she knew that the pages of books were meant to be turned over, inspected, and the pattern continued with.

So, the interest can be nurtured in some way. With luck she might become the ace reader of all time. Or the finest writer of humour for girls since Evadne Price. Or a dusty critic of nostalgia, wallowing in it and hunting at the turn of the century at the last of the book fairs. The last of the book fairs?

Some would suggest that the printed page is already dead - despite all the Ken Folletts and James Herberts; regardless of the P.D. James and the Ruth Rendells. Dead! To be supplanted by the computer screen. What a thought! The computer has no detectable unique smell of mustiness long-gathered across the years. It doesn't go yellow at the edges nor have the excitement engendered by the discovery of an ancient flower pressed between its leaves - or should I say discs?

A lap-top, read in bed has, I suppose, the advantage of its own lighting system. Not necessary to hide under the bedclothes with a torch in a private-tent-world.

At the literary disc fair of the future how does one browse? How to "flick" through the pages (screens). Will it be possible or sensible to ask of the "bookseller": *"Is this a genuine "first" or has it been copied and triple-copied around the counties?"* By 2020 (or even next year, so quick is the change process) the computer disc will take up even less space and be capable of holding a thousand sets of Arthur Mee with room for many more. Or will the disc-fair of the new era be a solitary pursuit - logged onto and "surfed" through a worldwide disc-fair "Internet"? No matter how you measure it this nightmare scenario is just that - a nightmare. Someone said the other day that the "currency" currently held in a copy of **The Magnet or The Gem** is probably of diminishing value. What was not mentioned was the corollary to that idea - "diminishing at the same rate as we Old Boys and Girls pop our clogs!".

The nightmare scenario might be a true vision but I am heartened by the appearance of young aficionados who have gone beyond turning the pages of picture book and have discovered Bunter or William or Biggles or Rupert or Angela (that "brick" of old) or Elsie J or Enid Blyton. Having made a discovery they create the nucleus of a collection (just as we did those aeons ago).

The Old Boys and Girls of the future will - no doubt - find some new and worthy authors to natter and nadger about. To question, query and quibble over. Frank Richards and Edwy Searle Brooks may become a distant and genuinely historical memory in the next century but my hope is that libraries will flourish, that quirky booksellers will still be there - musty shelves, clutter and all - and, that the old and the young might still foregather in clubrooms to discuss and ponder, and to laugh and cry over some new or re-discovered adventure.

* *

AN INTRODUCTION TO UNCLE'S WARTIME LETTERS

by Una Hamilton Wright

Throughout the second world war my uncle continued his regular correspondence with Dolly, his youngest sister, my mother. Some times there would be extra letters if something really important occurred. Having been ordered off the coast he was living in the Hampstead Garden Suburb and he wrote about the lives of his neighbours and the effect the bombs and doodle-bugs and V2s had on them. He complained that the All-Clears murdered sleep more effectively than the Alerts.

The German Generals' Bomb Plot to murder Hitler especially interested Uncle. He believed that the bomb was a terrorist's weapon and that the Generals were all upper-class Germans who would not deign to use a bomb against their Leader. Uncle had a fixed belief that people acted within the range of their own characters and did not go outside those limits. In BILLY BUNTER BUTTS IN on page 106 he puts his theory into Lord Mauleverer's mouth: "You see, the thing seems to speak for itself - clear as daylight if there's anythin' in evidence. But evidence, of course, is only bunk". Mauleverer shook his head again. "A chap doesn't do what it isn't in him to do, and it's not in you to do a thing like that. So I've not much use for the evidence." (Wharton had been accused of knocking out Wingate in the dark and Mauleverer alone was not convinced by the circumstantial evidence which apparently proved that Wharton had committed the crime.)

Uncle was very impressed with the idea of tactical bombing and thought that 'Mr. Harris and His Bombers' could bring the war to an end in six months and save countless lives if we could mount fifty 1,000 bomber raids in quick succession. That would end the matter.

Unfortunately, my mother did not keep all the wartime letters and so there are gaps in them, even pages got torn in half, the really interesting parts being kept. She had no idea that posterity would be interested!

My dear Dolly,

Perhaps you would like a line or so for the week-end. Probably you have seen in the papers that the fly-bombs have been coming over rather thick and fast. There have been lulls for as much as six to twelve hours, but generally they have been coming over all the time since Monday evening, rather more by night than by day: and the weary siren keeps on and on and on. However, it has now almost ceased to wake me when it howls at night - one can get used to anything. For a time, the alerts lasted all night: now generally the siren puts in a howl or two, and I hear it if a crump has awakened me. I hope we shall soon go back to all-night alerts - and if they could be made to last round the clock, it would be a great benefit.

I suppose you have seen the Thrilling News that the German Generals have risen against poor old Adolf. The fly-bomb must have been the last straw --- wasting resources on beating the enemy when they wanted more and more foot-soldiers to chuck on the guns. Not that the fly-bomb can beat us, of course: but it is Hitler's only remaining chance. Hitler is very intelligent for a Hun. He has got it into his head at last that a soldier with a bayonet in Paris or Bayonne cannot damage people in London or Reading or Bristol. This great discovery is still hidden from his Generals... but Hitler, with all his faults, is not a coward, like Mussolini: and I have not the slightest doubt that he will squash the bunch. Nevertheless, it is a plain sign that the end is coming: rats do not desert the ship till sinking is certain. I have an idea that Hitler will now take the bit between his teeth, stop playing at soldiers, and begin real war --- and the incessant fly-bombs this week rather look like it. If he does this, there is a hilarious time coming ... and real war be made back at Hitler, - which means Mister Harris and his bombers.

On the other hand, Germany may be --- as the journalists hint, in a state of disintegration: in which case, perhaps they are popping off their stock of fly-bombs as a final flourish, before they close down - sort of giving 'em away in an end-of-the-season sale. But my own opinion is rather that we are going to have some real war now, for Hitler must be in a desperate state. A retired plumber cannot hope to make peace with the old school tie - the social gulf is too wide for discussions. Hitler must win or die, just as the old school tie must win or clear off to the United States. A badly wounded tiger is sure to peg out, but is very dangerous so long as he can claw. So I cannot help thinking that we are going to get the genuine goods for a time at least.

The poor devil's Navy is no good: his Army, of course, is as useless as all armies: his Luftwaffe is moulting, short of oil and guts. Only the scientific branch is any use --- and in sheer desperation, he may come down to using real weapons and throwing all his toys aside. This would mean fly-bombs by the thousand instead of the hundred, and rocket-bombs or some such gadget, to follow them up. This obviously is Adolf's best guess: but he is such a poor fool that he may not see it...

My green peas are a very poor crop owing to the poor soil and the rotten bad season this year. I hope to get some to send you in a week or two, but they will not be very good. Nothing seems to thrive in this place but potatoes: cabbages are eaten up by insects, of which there is a plague. It is the vilest patch of ground I have ever tackled: quite different from the old one in Midholm.

I hope you are keeping well, my dear.

With love, CHARLEY.

My dear Dolly,

"Over to you!" still seems to be the maxim at Calais. They come like the Oysters in Wonderland:

Four other fly-bombs followed up,
And yet another four,
And thick and fast, they came at last,
And more and more and more,
All dropping down on London town,
And bursting with a roar.

One crump woke me last night, and I could not sleep again for a long time, - the others were all distant. I was getting off nicely about six o'clock when a fiend in human form sounded the all-clear, and like Macbeth murdered sleep. So I got up at seven, and feel as if I had been on the tiles. Alerts, crumps, and all-clears are chasing one another's tails as usual this morning...

Don't believe all you hear about fly-bombs. I have just heard of a man who counted sixty crumps in one night. Of course, it may be true - it is different in different spots. The record here is about thirty in a night. But people who remain awake to listen to them may hear more. But I cannot help suspecting that in some cases slamming doors, and such things, are mistaken for crumps. From two sources, some time ago, I heard that Highgate Archway had disappeared. Then a later traveller reported that it was still there. Once I heard that Barker's were in a sad state of disintegration. So I rang them up and asked innocently if they were still delivering! The answer was that they were. So I concluded that they were not terribly disintegrated. Yarns like these probably increase in volume as they spread outwards from London. Beyond broken glass, I do not think that any great damage has been done, so far. The alert is now sounding for the umpteenth time as I write. It is very odd that it has the effect of raising the spirits, while the horrible wail of the all-clear is very depressing... Now the crump has just gone: it generally comes a minute or so after the alert. That gives time for the poor old ladies to get under the upturned settee!

The Hitler affair is very interesting: the journalists are making all they can of it, and Stockholm is beating its own record for lying. The dear old Daily Mail this morning tells of a "rebel radio" in German - obviously a Russian dodge. It is perfectly clear that although Hitler has had a bad jolt, he is as secure in the saddle as ever. It is all only a sign of the times. Hess was No. 1 Sign --- this is No. 2. The profiteers need not worry just yet.

It is very difficult to work out what may have happened: but a little common-sense helps. In the first place, Colonel Graf von Stauffenberg did NOT throw the bomb, or place it ready: he never touched it, if there was a bomb at all, which I rather doubt. The bomb is a guttersnipe weapon which no man of good family would touch, even in France or Italy: indeed, I doubt whether even in Russia a man of the "boyar" class, if any still survive, would throw a bomb. Colonel Graf von Staffenberg probably wears a sword, which military men still regard as a weapon, and he would be likely to use it, or if he is more modern, a revolver or perhaps an automatic. But it is no use telling us that a man of the Von Stauffenberg family threw a bomb, like a communist guttersnipe, because quite certainly he never did anything of the kind. If a bomb was thrown at all, it was by a Communist with Russian connections. The dear journalists, of course, don't understand these class prejudices, which do not exist in Balham. But they might be able to judge the "Vons" by our own Old School Tie, if they had any judgement. The Old School Tie will take a cushy job, or will perform masterly retreats without a thought of shame: but it will not spit in the street, or blow its nose with its fingers. No more would it throw a bomb, and there is not a single "Von" in Germany who would do so. Neither, in France, would a "De" do so --- only the Duponts and such. Apart from this, it is difficult to make out what has happened to Adolf. It is quite possible that he got jumpy about nothing, or next to nothing, knowing that the sacked generals were feeling vicious. Perhaps also he thought it time to make a few examples.

With love.

CHARLEY.

Dear Dolly,

The evening paper to-day states that the Russians have crossed the Vistula. This seems to me impossible, and it cannot be true. To a journalist, of course, the Vistula is only one more big river, after the Dnieper, the Dneister, and the Bug. Actually it is Germany's last hope of keeping the Russians out of Germany and even then East Prussia would have to be abandoned. If the Russians really are across the Vistula, the war must be over before Xmas, for it could only mean that the German army is not merely retreating, but is fleeing. But I do not believe that it is true. It is rather too good.

The position is very interesting. Hitler has a big army in the Baltic countries, and it looks as if this will be cut off, Adolf leaving the order to retreat too late as usual. But it is quite possible that the Baltic army is intended to take the Russians on their right flank and bring about a new Battle of Tannenberg, like Hindenburg's one in the last war, when the Russians were cut to pieces. It is quite possible that by getting rid of his generals, Hitler may pull ahead again - nothing is so fatal to an army as having a professionally trained general in command, especially if he served in the last war. That is what is the matter with us, and has been the matter with Hitler so far. We must hope that the German generals have power enough to push on to complete defeat...

There have been alerts on and off all day to-day, but I have heard only one or two crumps. Probably they are now getting the range more accurately: they cannot want to waste them on North London suburbs. I think that here we get those that over-shoot the mark: in Clapham they get those that fall short. I hear that Regent Street has been rather messed up: but one hears such a lot of things. The beastly things have a way now of lingering before they drop --- the Hun varies the entertainment from time to time.

With love.

CHARLEY

Dear Dolly,

The price of postage remains prohibitive: but in the era of the doodle-bugs I will write more frequently, regardless of expense. The "Genteel Suburb", as a neighbouring lady described it, is no longer a study in Still Life. Actually, it is getting a little wearing, as it is almost impossible to sleep at night except in bits and pieces. On Saturday night there were eight "crumps" in five minutes - the record so far. There were a lot more afterwards, but planted out more spaciously. But by good fortune the all-clear did not sound till Sunday, so I was able to sleep from 1 to 7. The distant crumps do not wake me: only when they shake the doors. It would not be so bad if they would keep the siren silent: but I suppose the Civil Defence must do something to earn its keep. I think myself that it was a mistake to stop the barrage: the guns would stimulate people, though of course they ought to use blank charges: they are very dangerous when leaded with ball. The happy Hun is now sending over doodle-bugs which do not buzz, by way of variety... For damage, it is not to be compared with the Blitz: but it has a more wearing effect on people, probably because it is so weird...

On Monday I was able to be useful, abandoning my customary role of the merely decorative One of the evacuees, in tears, announced that her sister at Plaistowe had been "blasted out": letter of course delayed in post, and the poor woman waiting for an answer, whether she could come over for refuge. Alert being on, telegrams were off: exchange kindly stated that it would be "probably a good many hours" before a telegram could be sent. Then I had a brain-wave! I rang up the police-station at Plaistowe and asked them if they could send a message round to the poor soul. Of course, they did. So there was communication established, in spite of Hitler and all his works! It is worth while remembering that the police will do these things, in case of necessity... If only the war could have been handed over to the police, it would have been finished long ago.

It has been frightful weather lately - the Devil is helping his favourite son Adolf as usual. I really believe that the airmen get some of the doodle-bugs on fine days: at all events, I notice that they hardly ever come here when it is clear and sunny: Of course, they may be going somewhere else: but I think the Huns are afraid to pop them off when it is fine. Probably they cannot do so without revealing the starting-place, and in fine weather this might bring a bomb down on their nuts.

I am very thankful that the Long Vacation is now on, for Oxford is well within the range. Probably it will fizzle out before next term. The Hun is a changeable animal: and probably Hitler hasn't sense enough to understand that this might be a winner, if pushed on.

We sleep downstairs now: I in the drawing-room, and the female of the species in the shelter under the stairs. I think there has been a general Descent of Man since the doodle-bugs came, and there will be a lot of upper rooms to let --- but probably no takers.

With love,
CHARLEY.

(Copyright Una Hamilton Wright)

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ROY WHISKIN writes:

Among my many interests I collect postcards of Ramsgate and recently came across a comic one drawn by Thomas Henry. I enclose a copy of this with a cover drawn by the same artist. THE SCHOOLBOY'S ANNUAL was published by the same press as BOY'S OWN PAPER (Lutterworth).

On a recent visit to Broadstairs I went round an exhibition at the Library of 'Personalities Associated with Broadstairs'... I am pleased to say there was a section on Frank Richards. He was in good company, including Queen Victoria, Jack Warner, Ted Heath, John Buchan, Sir Alexander Korda, Charles Dickens and Annette (Muffin the Mule) Mills.

Last month I bought a book called HISTORIC BOYS by E.S. Brooks, published by Gresham Publishing Co. Ltd. The book is about the careers of a dozen boys of different countries and times ranging from *William of Normandy - The Boy Knight* to *Marcus of Rome, The Boy Magistrate*. I'd be interested to hear from the Nelson Lee experts whether the author is in fact 'ESB'.

About to Get Tanned at RAMSGATE

* *

LIGHTNING!

by Ray Hopkins

Forearmed with the knowledge that Willy Handforth has the largest collection of pets at St. Frank's, it will come as no surprise, he being potty about small animals, that he eventually becomes the possessor of a larger one in the shape of a handsome greyhound and promptly christens him Lightning. This changes the sequence of his previous acquisition, a snake, a monkey and a rat who were all given proper names (Sebastian, Marmaduke and Rupert) rather than attributes.

When Willy's eye first falls on the greyhound, the dog does possess the speed which earns its name. Willy and his Co. (Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon) are watching two men accompanied by a harnessed, blanketed greyhound who are evidently on their way to the new Bannington Arena recently opened to dog racing. Willy waxes indignant at the way the dog is encumbered and calls his wrath down on all who patronise dog racing, and thus cause greyhound owners to restrain their animals rather than let them run free.

A foolhardy rabbit runs across the dog's vision and before the men can restrain it the greyhound has tugged the harness out of its owner's hand and is off up the hill after the rabbit. Inevitably, that scourge of quiet country lanes, a two-seater sports car, being driven much too quickly, roars over the top of the hill. The rabbit escapes through the hedge but the dog is struck and rolls over to the grass verge, unconscious, dusty and bleeding. Willy is shocked into immobility and continues to stare disbelievingly as he sees the owner look down at the dog and then kick the apparently lifeless body into the ditch. The two men go off, the owner calling damnation upon the head of the reckless driver for killing what was to have been the source of a large fortune to him. Other than that, he shows no regret for the fate of the dog.

Willy, mourning the untimely death of a living creature and intending to bury the dog, lifts the greyhound out of the ditch and runs his hands over the damaged body. To his surprise it appears that there are no broken bones and to his joy he finds evidence of a weak heartbeat. He tells his Co. the dog is his now "by moral right" and he's going to care for him and get him well again.

And in the two weeks that follow, a new and surprising side of Handforth Minor is revealed. Sitting quietly for hours on end is not one of the more usual attributes of the mercurial Willy. All his spare moments are spent with the greyhound, secreted in one of the lesser-visited boxrooms, and he is heavily backed in his mission to save the dog by no less a person than Nelson Lee himself. This in direct contradiction to his major who thinks a vet's surgery would be a better place.

Also, in that same two weeks, the greyhound makes a substantial return to health, although he is not yet fit to race again. But Willy has no intention of letting the dog race; he has now been elevated to the role of pet. But all does not run smoothly for Lightning and his caring new owner.

Bill Brice, the original owner, overhears Gore-Pearce and his caddish friends Gulliver and Bell, on an unauthorised expedition to the Bannington Greyhound racetrack, discussing Willy's new acquisition and realises they are talking about the dog he had left for dead in the ditch. He offers them a sizeable amount of money if they will let him into the school at night so that he can reclaim his own property and, as the greyhound is now well enough to spend his time in the outhouse with the other pets of St. Frank's, Gore-Pearce and Co., not being averse to doing either of the Handforth brothers a bad turn if Brice will make it worth their having to get out of their beds, agree to this criminal act.

Brice welshes on his promise to the Study A cads of the Remove and, despite having promised Gore-Pearce £20 and Gulliver and Bell £10 each, when the time comes to pay up he tells them to push off and drives away with Lightning with every intention of making him race again under the dog's original name of Domino.

Gore-Pearce and Co. now veer their hatred around in the direction of Brice and make another visit to Bannington Stadium in the hope of seeing him with the dog and so informing Willy where he can find Lightning. But Brice is too clever to race the greyhound at Bannington again and has switched his activities to the Helmford Racetrack some twenty miles away.

Willy finds on his study table a race card for that evening's runners at Helmford, the names of Brice and Domino immediately hitting him in the eye by the red ticks that his unknown informant has placed there. This card Gore-Pearce had obtained from his bookie at the Bannington track when he enquired of the whereabouts of Brice and his newly recovered greyhound. Gore-Pearce, not being famed for doing good deeds for others would be the last person Willy would suspect of being his friendly passer of good news.

Willy enlists the aid of his brother to drive him over right away in the celebrated Austin Seven to Helmford Stadium. They are just in time to see Lightning at the very end of the line of racing dogs, moving slowly and stiffly in an effort to catch up to the dog ahead

of him, and obvious in pain. Willy leans over the rails and calls out the name he had given him. The dog stops, looks over toward the boy who had taken care of him and then jumps, barking madly, into Willy's outstretched arms.

But Edward Oswald and Willy are fated to not get away that easily with Lightning. Brice, waiting at the finishing post, is startled to see the dog leave the track and the two Handforths make for the exit. "Stop those boys!" he shouts. Before they are able to escape to the outside world they are halted by Sir Herbert Rodney, one of the directors of Helmford Stadium. He tells them he recognises the dog as being one stolen from himself. Lightning, still in Willy's arms, is joyfully licking him, and Willy holds him even more tightly as he realises he may not have to give up the dog to the far from tender ministrations of Bill Brice, but that he may be going to lose him in any event.

Sir Herbert Rodney says he wants to confront Brice with the dog he stole from him and that he will return to them after he has had the dog medically examined for any injuries he may have sustained by being forced to race before he was fully recovered. Sir Herbert recognises Brice as a kennel-hand in his employ at one time, but Brice escapes before the baronet can accuse him of the theft.

Unfortunately, while the Handforth brothers wait just inside the stadium they are spotted by the Fifth Form master at St. Frank's, Mr. Pagett, passing on top of a bus. He forbids them to make any explanation as to why they are there and orders Edward Oswald to drive him back to the school immediately where they will be hauled up before Dr. Stafford for being caught out of bounds.

Willy and Edward Oswald are saved from a threatened caning by the hurried arrival of Sir Herbert Rodney and Nelson Lee. Sir Herbert intercedes for them and startles the Head considerably by telling him that Lightning is worth five hundred pounds. Dr. Stafford feels that a boy should not be allowed to own an animal that valuable. Sir Herbert qualifies his statement by saying the dog's injuries make him now of no value except in the role of a pet. Willy listens with joy as the Director of Helmsford Stadium says the dog belongs to him by all moral rights for the great love and care he has shown Lightning, and he therefore hands him over to Willy knowing he can place him in no better hands. Happy endings all round for boy and greyhound!

(The above incidents are from NELSON LEE LIBRARY, First New Series, 128-131, Oct-Nov 1928)

* *

RAINMAKING

by J.E.M.

Always an enthusiast of old dance music, I recalled during the recent drought several popular ballads of the Thirties which had rain (or the lack of it!) as their theme. "Rain, When's it Going to Rain Again...?" and "A Little Rain Must Fall" were just two which came back to me. An even older generation might wryly have remembered "It Ain't Gonna Rain No More". Such expressions of pop culture show that we have never been very happy with the weather. Indeed, we have long dreamed of being able to control it. At the beginning of the afore-mentioned Thirties, experiments to create rainfall by bombarding clouds with chemicals were actually carried out - a scientific venture which did not go unremarked in the annals of Sexton Blake.

In *The Rainmaker* by Anthony Skene (Union Jack, No. 1505) Blake's great adversary, Zenith the Albino sought to exploit a scientist's secret formula which could not only create rain but limit it to certain areas while causing drought elsewhere. Employing an ancient crone called Ma Shipley, Zenith was able to persuade gullible farmers that she was a witch with genuine rainmaking powers. Blackmail was Zenith's immediate aim since he was desperately short of ready funds. Negotiations with a foreign power followed but

complications arose when the country concerned attempted to steal the formula and kill all who had knowledge of it. Enter Sexton Blake, with the final result that the agents of the unscrupulous foreign government were caught and the formula handed over to our own rulers. Zenith escaped by the skin of his teeth - and, of course, largely empty-handed.

Perhaps, on reflection, this story has an important message for aspiring weather-controllers. Greed, violence and power politics would soon take over their efforts and, without Sexton Blake, who knows where we might all end? Perhaps it is better to suffer the slings and arrows (or droughts and deluges) of our outrageous weather.

Incidentally, the UJ story is one of Skene's liveliest, the glittering Albino in fine form, the rural setting for all the goings-on most authentic. There is also a memorable cover by our old friend Eric Parker, although the interior drawings are by another pen.

(Footnote: The real-life rain making experiments were largely failures. At best, not cost-effective; at worst, totally useless. And, of course, no-one pretended that areas like the Sahara could ever be irrigated in this way.)

* *

FROM J. RANDOLPH COX

I was delighted to see the article on Hamilton Cleek by Bill Lofts in the June C.D. This series has intrigued me for years, both for its stories and its complex bibliography. It may be merely a matter of semantics, but I question the use of the word "few" to identify the ones written by Hanshew before his death. My listings of the stories that appeared before 1914 in *Cassell's Saturday Journal*, *People's*, and *Short Stories* (the last two were published in the United States) indicate 25 to 30 short stories had appeared before Hanshew died. That his wife and daughter took up the series is attested to by Henry Holt in the preface to *The Riddle of the Winged Night* (John Long, 1931) which was solely the work of Hanshew's daughter Hazel. They may have done so with the first true novel, *The Riddle of the Night*, published as a serial in *All-Story Weekly* in 1915 before the book came out in this country from Doubledate, Page.

The first book to appear (*The Man of the Forty Faces*, 1910) contained 12 stories; it was reprinted in 1918 as *Cleek the Master Detective*. In between (1913) the contents were reissued with the story titles removed, the text divided up into chapters, one story removed and another substituted. This "novel" was retitled *Cleek, the Man of the Forty Faces*. One would have to go into a discussion of Hanshew's publishers (Cassell in London and New York; Doubleday, Page in New York) to find reasons for all of this. Part of it may be that Hanshew (who had lived and worked in the United States before 1899) was trying to establish himself with an American publisher just before his death. The publisher of *Short Stories* was Doubleday, Page.

I have been trying to obtain copies of as many of the Cleek stories in their magazine and newspaper appearances as possible in order to unravel the many revisions of the stories

as they moved from magazine to book form. *Cleek of Scotland Yard* (1914), for instance, looks like a novel, but is made up of eight whole stories and part of a ninth, with much bridging text supplied.

Bill may be correct in saying that the *Chums* stories in 1919-1920 were reprints, but I have not been able to trace them to their earlier versions. Working with opening lines for comparison is nearly useless since most of the stories open with variants of the same stock phrases. If anyone has further information to convey, or thinks they have texts I may not have seen (I have a dozen American stories as yet with no British counterparts, and about 15 British stories for which I can find no American version), please get in touch with me

(Mr. J. Randolph Cox is the Editor of the American magazine *Dime Novel Round-Up*).

* *

MORE ON THE 'RAY SAVILLE' SCHOOLS

by Bill Lofts

Since the publication of my article in the July C.D. about the possibility of 'Ray Saville' being the famous writer Malcolm Saville in his early days, a number of readers have written to me, asking if I could give more details of the school of Fellsgate. Further investigation indicates that, apart from this school, Ray Saville wrote about Barchester and St. Judes, Fellsgate however, being the principle school.

There seems not the slightest doubt that the writer (whoever he was) was greatly influenced by Charles Hamilton's famous schools of St. Jim's and Greyfriars! Either as a boy or an adult reader. Fellsgate had a Famous Five in the Lower Fourth - but known as The Frightful Five to give it some variation. There was also a German Master who was the double of the one at Greyfriars in First World War Magnets and spoke the most appalling English. Fellsgate School was built on the site of an old monastery - I seem to have heard of that before.

Barchester School had a fat boy who was always eating, his name being Billy Bond. Also it had a double of Mauleverer. St. Judes had a De Vere, who was the twin of D'Arcy, and so on.

The writing of the stories was in a slap dash vein that reminded me of Fred Cook, a Magnet and Gem substitute writer of the same period, who never revealed to me any of his Aldine stories.

Another interesting fact was that around the same time, and mingled with the 'Ray Saville' tales, were stories by 'Hedley Scott' that hid the identity of Hedley O'Mant, who was at various periods editor of both Magnet and Gem. Charles Hamilton accused him of pinching his creation Ferrers Locke. O'Mant did work at Aldine Publications on leaving school, but left later for A.P. So the mystery somehow deepens all the time. I don't think O'Mant was 'Ray Saville'. Whatever his shortcomings he was a far better writer.

(Editor's Note: From all that I know of *Malcolm* Saville's career, I doubt that he can have been 'Ray Saville'. Does any C.D. reader have light to throw on the mysterious Ray?)

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WHAT BECAME OF MATT BRADDOCK by Martin Waters

I was greatly interested in Donald Campbell's article on Matt Braddock in the September 'CD'. The character of this wartime aviator used to fascinate me in years gone by, and like Mr. Campbell I have often wondered what became of Braddock in the post-war world.

One thing is fairly certain, Braddock would not have settled in the post-war RAF. I am sure that the atmosphere of the peace-time air force would have grated very heavily indeed on a man of strong character like Braddock. It is also worth remembering that Brad would have been over thirty years of age by the end of the war, which is rather old for operational flying.

Braddock had been a steeplejack in civilian life, I think it fairly certain that he returned to his old trade. Brad would probably work on a self-employed basis, or possibly as a member of a small firm. I think it most unlikely that Braddock would have run a pub: he was a staunch teetotaller, he always claimed that alcohol affected the eyesight. I think it even more unlikely that Braddock would have entered the 'city'. A man like Braddock of humble background and with an aggressively working class outlook would have no place in such an institution. I seem to recollect that 'Alf Tupper;, another popular character from the 'Rover', was tipped to become an MP when he had hung up his running shoes for the last time. This seemed a rather unlikely suggestion, and I think that Braddock as a financier is even more unlikely.

It is possible that Braddock may have served as a part-time flyer with the Auxiliary Air Force, or as an instructor with his local ATC squadron during the post war era, but it remains only a possibility.

Matt Braddock has always struck me as a supreme example of the type of man who achieves great distinction in a very narrow field. Take away that narrow field - the wartime RAF, and he becomes a nobody. I have spent most of my own life in uniform and I have often become aware of the difficulty that many former servicemen counter when returning to civilian life. I think that the remainder of Braddock's life may not have been a very happy one. He would have the guts and initiative always to earn a decent living. He would have his small circle of good friends - George Bourne, etc, and he would continue to be an outstanding darts player. Apart from this, the rest of his life would be rather drab and perhaps something of an anti-climax.

MARK TAHA writes:

I read Donald Campbell's article with interest. I've only ever read picture-stories of Braddock but will catch up with the written ones some day. It's interesting to speculate on his post-war career. I know he'd been a pre-war steeplejack. Would he perhaps have tried to start his own airline, or at least have stayed a pilot? Or would he perhaps have (since I doubt if he and the peace-time RAF would have suited each other!) become some kind of Biggles type agent?

* *

BOOK REVIEWS

LIGHTNING SWORDS! SMOKING PISTOLS! by Norman Wright and David Ashford (Published by the Museum Press) Reviewed by Jeffrey Richards.

The swashbuckler is one of the great genres of adventure story. It is at its best the quintessence of pure style and a celebration of those unfashionable virtues-chivalry, gallantry, patriotism, duty and honour. There have been books about swashbuckling novels and swashbuckling films but until now there has been no book about swashbuckling comic strips. That lack has been handsomely remedied by Norman Wright and David Ashford in the evocatively titled *Lightning Swords! Smoking Pistols!*

Erudite and enthusiastic in approach and encyclopaedic in its range, this is a rattling good read from start to finish. The authors devote each section of their book to a different swashbuckling theme: Robin Hood and his outlaws, the heroes of medieval chivalry, Dick Turpin, Claude Duval and the gentlemen of the road, the pirates of the Spanish Main and D'Artagnan and the King's Musketeers. The historical and fictional career of each of the great swashbuckling heroes is accurately traced and their appearances in comic strips charted. In addition, the book is lavishly illustrated and so we can marvel at the sweep, delicacy, atmosphere and visual power of the great comic strip artists such as Frank Bellamy, Patrick Nicolle, Frederick Holmes, Septimus E. Scott and Stephen Chapman, whose work is carefully assessed and analysed.

They heyday of the swashbuckling strip was the 1950s and early 1960s and it confirms that the chivalric code, which was reformulated in the 19th century and promoted in juvenile literature as a valid and viable value system for life, remained an important part of the ethical inculcation of the young. It is also interesting to observe the cross-fertilisation of the comic strips with films and television. There can be little doubt that the imagery of the great swashbuckling films of Errol Flynn *(The Adventures of Robin Hood, Captain Blood)* and Douglas Fairbanks Sr. *(The Three Musketeers, The Iron Mask)* strongly influenced the comic strip artists. Direct comic strip adaptations of such 1950s epics as *Ivanhoe, Quentin Durward* and *The Knights of the Round Table* were made. Indeed the strips themselves could easily have served as the storyboards which are now an integral part of film-making, defining and describing each shot before it is realized on the screen. But the 1950s was also the heyday of the swashbuckling television series - *The Adventures of Robin Hood, The Adventures of Sir Lancelot, The Buccaneers, William Tell, Ivanhoe* - and they stimulated juvenile readers' interest in the strips. Indeed one television series - *The Gay Cavalier* - was actually inspired by the comic strip adventures of the cavalier highwayman Claude Duval.

The 1960s saw a new value system come to prevail in society and culture and with it the swashbuckling strips were eclipsed. The violent, tough, cynical, and in some cases almost psychopathic heroes who came to dominate films and comic strips were a far cry from the style, gallantry and grace of Robin Hood, Dick Turpin, D'Artagnan and Captain Blood. But thanks to the dedicated work of Messrs. Wright and Ashford, we can once again enjoy the exploits of the swashbuckling heroes in their prime.

(This book can be ordered from 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, WD1 4JL. The cost, including postage and packing is £14.00. Cheques should be made out to The Museum Press.)

WHAT WAS IT REALLY LIKE. Review by Alex Cadogan.

For many of us, flying stories come high on the list of our childhood favourites. Stories from the Thomson papers, the American pulps - particularly "Flying Aces" - those of W.E. Johns and many others.

Many of these had Great War themes. And although some authors, like Johns, did take part in the Great War, one wonders how accurately the stories themselves reflected what actually happened. So how fascinating it is to read, as an adult, an authoritative account of what it was really like. And this one can do in a new book by Ralph Barker: "The Royal Flying Corps in France". To be a little more precise, this is a sequel to an earlier book and covers the period from what came to be known as "Bloody April" 1917 to Final Victory.

Barker has to be congratulated on interweaving a factual account of the ebb and flow of the overall conflict and the role played by the Air Services with fascinating anecdote about individual exploits and operations.

Despite our preoccupation with league tables of "aces" and the number of their victories, it becomes clear from early on in the book that this is unfair to a vast number of truly gallant men who made an equal, if not greater, contribution. These are the men who repeatedly penetrated the lines in slow, vulnerable aircraft to reconnoitre, photograph, artillery spot, strafe and bomb the enemy.

Trenchard himself said, "a working (reconnaissance) machine will never have a chance against a fighting scout". And there was the hazard presented to low-flying machines not only by enemy small-arms fire, but by our own artillery. Above Vimy Ridge it was "an aerial minefield of 'friendly' shells". When the balance sheet of a day's air operations is drawn up, the number of machines lost is far from being the major criterion, the disruption of enemy troops on the ground could be of much greater importance.

The characters and states of mind of aircrews are intimately portrayed by Barker from memoirs, letters and diaries. Not surprisingly attitudes varied from the brash "gung-ho" to the imminently shell-shocked. In the words of the famous Billy Bishop, "each combat becomes more and more enjoyable", and later, "To me it was not a business or a profession but just a wonderful game". All of this when the expectation of life of a newly arrived pilot in "Bloody April" had fallen to a mere 17 days, and never far from mind was the awful fear of being parachuteless and descending in flames.

The resistance of the RFC authorities to the development of parachutes was remarkable and really insulting. The Air Board, for instance; "the presence of such an apparatus might impair the fighting spirit of pilots and cause them to abandon machines which might otherwise by capable of returning to base for repair".

Ralph Barker throws light not only on the attitude to parachutes but the problems of shooting down Zeppelins and air tactics in general. The extreme youth of so many of the participants continues to amaze. Nineteen-year old Ewart Stock was Deputy Flight Commander at Flex when a few months earlier he had been opening the batting at Caterham School.

Although eminently readable, this new book illustrated with photographs taken at the time does not sensationalise or trivialise. It has obviously demanded considerable research, and while telling us much about the R.F.C., R.N.A.S. and R.A.F. in the wider context of the Great War, it reminds us once again of the terrible suffering and human resilience in those awful times.

THE ROYAL FLYING CORPS IN FRANCE: FROM BLOODY APRIL TO FINAL VICTORY by Ralph Barker is published by Constable, £18.95.

A HARVEST OF MEMORIES: THE LIFE OF PAULINE GOWER, M.B.E. by Michael Fahie (Published by GMS Enterprises Ltd. at £19.95). Reviewed by Mary Cadogan.

The name of Pauline Gower became known to me when I read some of her flying stories in the GIRL'S OWN PAPER at the end of the 1930s, and when, during the war, she took over the magazine's regular aviation articles after Captain W.E Johns gave up his 'Between You and Me and the Joystick' column. By then she was Commandant of the Women's Section of the Air Transport Auxiliary. As a G.O.P. reader I also knew that in 1947 she had died, unexpectedly at the age of 36: the paper devoted a whole page obituary to her, and stated that 'so keen was she on her G.O.P. work that her last aviation article was written the day before she died'. The obituary did not explain the full circumstances of her death, and only much later on when I was researching my book about female flyers did I learn that she had died from heart failure after giving birth to twin boys. Now the younger of those twin sons has written this engaging and informative biography of his mother.

Pauline Gower
(Photo credit: The Gower Family Archives)
Part of the GMS Enterprises Reprographic Collection

It is not only a vivid account of her life but his attempt to find out all about her achievements and to be able to relate more fully to her. Pauline Gower was the second child of Robert Gower, a conservative M.P., and despite, or possibly because of, not entirely robust health, she decided to become a pilot in the face of parental opposition. Her determination, persistence and hardwork were rewarded when, in the early 1930s, she became the youngest woman in the world to gain a commercial pilot's licence. For much of that decade she teamed up with another aviatrix, Dorothy Spicer, giving joy-rides and running an air-taxi service. Pauline flew, while Dorothy, an extremely skilled aviation engineer, took responsibility for keeping their craft airworthy. For a year or two they abandoned their free-lance flying work and joined the British Hospitals' Air Pageants - a kind of aerial circus, specializing in air races, 'crazy flying' etc.

It was very unusual in the 1930s for two young women to maintain their own aviation enterprise, and amongst their admirers was W.E. Johns. He wrote in POPULAR FLYING and other magazines about Pauline and Dorothy, and, with hindsight, I often think that he had them in mind as role-models when he created the fictional Worrals of the W.A.A.F. and her close friend and colleague 'Frecks' for the GIRL'S OWN PAPER in 1940. Those of you

who read the first story about Worrals may recall that she was ferrying planes from one airfield to another although in real-life Waafs did not perform this service - which was the job of the A.T.A. flyers. Johns knew, of course, that Pauline Gower was in charge of the women ferry pilots. The fact that Worrals, though not at such a high level, was ferrying planes adds credence to the idea that Johns had Pauline in mind when he created Worrals.

Pauline's A.T.A. commissions were ably fulfilled. Amongst her team was Amy Johnson, one of her long-standing friends, whose career and mysteriously circumstanced death are discussed in this book. In 1943 Pauline became the first female Director of the British Overseas Airways Corporation. She met Wing Commander Bill Fahie in 1944 and they were married in the following year.

Dorothy Spicer had married Ft. Lt. Richard Pearce in 1938 and, because of family commitments, had not become an A.T.A. pilot during the war. Like Pauline, she too was to die prematurely and tragically when, soon after the ending of hostilities, she and her husband were involved in an air crash in South America. It seems astounding as well as poignant that the two talented and attractive young women who had so determinedly made their living from flying during the 1930s should both have been dead just a decade later. A HARVEST OF MEMORIES is, in fact, a tribute to them both. As well as having an interesting text, the book includes a wonderful selection of photographs of Pauline, Dorothy, many other early flyers and people of distinction in public life. Details from Pauline's log-books and quotations from several of her aviation poems are also included, to provide insights into the 'almost rule-free world of flying' of the early 1930s.

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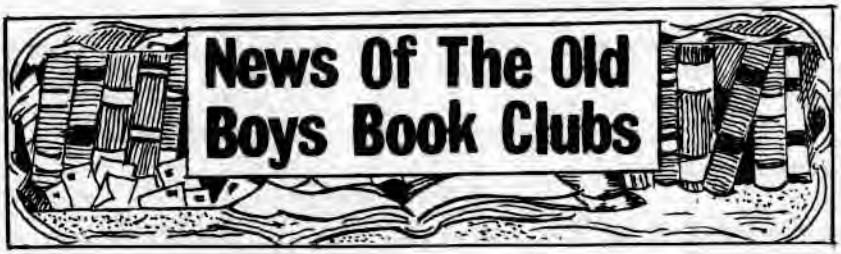

NORTHERN O.B.B.C. REPORT

A warm welcome was given to the seventeen present, especially to Derek Marsden who had made the journey from Liverpool to speak to us that evening.

We were sorry to hear of the death of Myra Allison, widow of Gerry. Both had been very much involved in the Northern Club and Gerry in the hobby as a whole.

The first item was a literary quiz by Cath and Eric Humphrey. We very rarely have quizzes at Northern Club but Cath and Eric made up for this by presenting us with a corker that really tested our knowledge of children's books. The first two questions were comparatively easy concerning the Greyfriars Famous Five and Enid Blyton's - but the rest! Joan Colman got the highest score, with our youngest member present - Richard Burgon - getting second prize.

Derek Marsden's well-researched presentation showed that he was an aficionado of the Thomson papers, he had voluminous handouts so we could see in the various Thomson papers how repeats of themes, stories, illustrations had been used, though not necessarily in the same paper. Some illustrations were re-drawn, some stories had characters changed

and some were produced in strip form. Even the free gifts took similar forms on occasions. Derek's presentation was so fascinating that we overran by 30 minutes, but this talk is recommended to other clubs and we shall be delighted to have Derek back with us next year.

Our October 14th meeting is our annual luncheon in Wakefield with Mary Cadogan, our President, and, we hope, Anthony Buckeridge, our Vice President, with Alan Pratt of London Club speaking on "The Hardy Boys". All welcome to our lunch and or evening meeting - please contact first. Our November meeting is the A.G.M.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

LONDON OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

A merry chattering throng gathered at the Roebuck Hotel for luncheon on Sunday, 3rd September. Thirty-five members and friends devoured a splendid meal interspersed with exchange of views and news. After the meal, everyone moved to the Harper home for more chat and tea.

The October meeting on Sunday 8th will be at the home of Peter and Dorothy Mahony in Eltham and the meeting on Sunday, November 12th will be at the Chingford Horticultural Hall, and the theme will be the Wild West.

SUZANNE HARPER

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E.S. Brooks Library

The problems operating the postal service have now been overcome. If you have sent me a request to borrow books and have not received a reply please contact me in writing at

21 Harcourt Field, WALLINGTON, Surrey, SM6 8BA

or by telephone on

0181 647 0508

I am looking forward to restoring normal service with the E.S.B. library and to being in regular touch with you all. Please accept my apologies for the present delay.

Phil Griffiths.

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WANTED: ENID BLYTON, W.E. JOHNS, CROMPTON. First editions in wrappers and ALL ephemera related to these authors. ANY original artwork related to Bunter, Blyton, Biggles, Eagle or other British comics and boys papers. ALL Boys Friend Libraries by W.E. Johns and Rochester. Many "Thriller" issues and first editions in wrappers by Charteris required. NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, WD1 4JL. Tel. 01923 232383.

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FORUM

TONY GLYNN (Southport): Just the briefest of notes to say I continue to enjoy the CD every month and am taking a great deal of delight in the series on lady illustrators. So many of my favourites are turning up and it was very pleasant to see Cecily Mary Barker featured.

Has anyone any information on Helen McKie, who died not many years ago? She might not be seen strictly as a juvenile artist but I have seen an edition of "Beau Geste" which she illustrated and, I'm fairly sure, another book on old-time French colonial troops. I remember there were some very lively line-drawings, somewhat in the style of Tom Browne and Will Owen. Maybe she did children's work, too, and I feel she'd be worth investigating.

E.H. JOHN GIBBS (Taunton): I was wondering if any of our readers could give me any information regarding *Boys of Our Empire?*

My daughter gave me a brief look at Vol. I and Vol. II which she purchased and is giving me at Christmas. They have very colourful covers - similar to CHUMS or BOY'S OWN in very good condition, covering the period from Oct. 27, 1900 to Sept. 27, 1902. I am looking forward to vetting them thoroughly at Christmas, but in the meantime I was wondering if any one has any information about this boys' paper.

TED BALDOCK (Cambridge): I went to a secondhand book sale recently, a small affair in the church hall. These are occasions which somehow I cannot resist. Most of the books were outside my sphere of interest, but always there is to be found a pearl or so among the dross. 'Real books', such as Henty and Brereton, show up fairly regularly, rather battered and well used, and, I am sure, much loved in their earlier life, all with text complete.

Who today reads Henty, Ballantyne, Kingston or Manville Fenn? Very few, I suspect, while many probably have no knowledge of them or their works. Yet what a rich heritage of romance and adventure have these writers bequeathed to our literature. There must have been few boys at the turn of the century who did not possess several volumes of these authors upon their shelves. It may be said that they constituted the standard Christmas and birthday gifts. Similarly, with the annual volumes of the B.O.P. and Chums. With what joy and anticipation did we look forward to the arrival of these weighty books, packed with thrills and adventure, from school stories to exploits at the far corners of the world. Veritable feasts which made the winter fireside and the summer seat in the garden very desirable places.

How refreshing to read are these old well established tales. They convey in their pages a moral stability somewhat difficult to describe, which when they were first published was accepted as normal. They seem now to stand like giants among the lesser fiction of today. The book which I bought was Kent Carr's 'Big Row at Rangers', one of her many first class public school stories. The writings of this lady, a true expert with boys' adventure stories, have always appealed to me since that long ago day when I first encountered her work in the B.O.P. My brother, several years my senior, was the subscriber. I recall that he was very jealous of his B.O.P.'s but somehow, by astute planning, I always managed to get a 'sneak preview' each month. It occurs to me now what a dreadful young 'fag' I must have been.

Thank you for - among other good things - A.W. Godfrey's 'Bessie at Wharton Lodge' (C.D. Aug. '95). I thought it recaptured perfectly the quintessence of so many Christmas episodes which we so enjoyed reading in the old days. They are ever fresh and never fail to give that wonderful sense of security and charm which, in my opinion has never been re-captured in more modern stories.

JOHN NICHOLLS (Bognor Regis): Thank you for the various book reviews. If it were not for the S.P.C.D. I'm sure we would miss out on a lot of these volumes.

I have at last found the 1949 C.D. Annual - so now I have a complete set to dip into every now and again.

EDWARD RAKE (Bristol): Regarding the monthly series now running in the C.D. called "Other Favourite Detectives", I recently bought at a Waterstone book sale a volume called "A Hundred Great Detectives". An unusual kind of book-buy for me because I have never been fond of crime stories, thrillers, or detective stories, and I have read very few of them in my life. But I am interested in some of the well-known 'tec creations. In the personalities, in the characters, of some of the famous sleuths, especially the quirky, eccentric ones, whose idiosyncrasies and life-styles bring them to life. I can believe in these as I believe in the boys of Greyfriars and the other famous schools.

As the book's dust-jacket says: "Here is a glorious celebration of fiction's greatest sleuths from Roderick Alleyn to Aurelio Zen, evoked in one hundred essays by some of the leading authors in the field; one hundred of them, to be precise ... All the most celebrated detectives of fiction from Victorian to ultra-modern are present".

It really is an arresting book (sorry about that). The book also contains massive lists of private-eyes who didn't make the first hundred!

DES O'LEARY (Loughborough): Congratulations! I think C.D. 585 is one of the very best I've ever read. I've often praised your varied choice of material which gives all devotees of our Hobby the chance to find something they really like. The C.D. for September really hit this target. I didn't know what article to read first.

I thought the Charles Hamilton letters were fascinating, showing how a true professional writer can adapt any material. Margery Woods' article was 'just the ticket', Cliff House *plus* Greyfriars. I thoroughly enjoyed Peter Mahony's 'genealogical' study of the ancient roots of famous Greyfriars names. I seem to remember George Orwell referring to the aristocratic family names used by Hamilton, which he attributed to snobbery!

I could go on *but* I have a gripe! I *hate* Donald V. Campbell!! For over a year I've been collecting material for an article on Matt Braddock for the C.D. Annual. I have the material but, as you know, an eyesight problem arose this year. However, I hope to resume work on it soon and maybe next year...

Seriously, I think Mr. Campbell picked on some very interesting points about Braddock's character which I hope to look at in more detail. Congratulations to Mr. Campbell for an article on one of Thomson's greatest heroes. (By the way, my working title is 'Braddock, the working-class Biggles').

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Des O'Leary raises an interesting point. If any C.D. reader has 'work in progress' of a nature which requires long research or writing time, he or she could log this up with me, so that duplication can be avoided. However, I feel sure that Des's promised piece will not repeat but be a complement to Donald's recent Braddock feature, and to the comments of Martin Waters and Mark Taha in this October issue of the C.D.)

* *

WANTED: CD back issues numbers 561, 559, 558, 551, 550, 548 and most issues before 207. GEOFF BRADLEY, 9 Vicarage Hill, South Benfleet, Essex, SS7 1PA.

* *

GEMS OF HAMILTONIA. No. 18. From John Geal.

Mr. Vernon-Smith. MAGNET No. 1330

Smithy is sacked; sent home, he tries to break the news to his father -

"I've got something to tell you, father" the Bounder got it out at last. "Suppose I left Greyfriars?" Mr. Vernon-Smith sat up and stared.

"I understand", Mr. Vernon-Smith smiled. "You're impatient. Plenty of time Herbert, my boy - plenty of time! You must be a boy before you're a man. I was never at a Public school, but I know its value; that's why you're there, Herbert. You're a keen, sensible lad, and I can talk freely to you. All you learn there is so much rubbish - granted! You'll never meet an ancient Roman in the City to talk Latin to. Ha, ha! The French you get there is useless, except as a foundation for learning the language elsewhere. You get shreds and patches of various subjects; nothing essential or useful in any of them. Unless you choose to learn, you learn nothing; and if you choose to learn, you'd have a better chance of doing it anywhere but in a Public school. All that's true, Herbert, but - "

"I mean - "

"But," went on Mr. Vernon-Smith, "you've not got to kick for yourself on the bottom rung of the ladder of life! If you had, a Public school education would be a handicap! You'd come away able to play games, and wanting to play games and disinclined to work. You'd know all about country cricket, and nothing about the foreign exchanges! You might be able to read who was it? - Livy, in the original Greek - "

"Latin, dad!" said Smithy, with a grin.

"It doesn't matter which, so far as the realities of life are concerned, as you know as well as I do, Herbert. The whole thing's piffle, from a practical point of view. But it's one of the graces of life - like music and painting. You will be able to afford it! And the games - that's really what the Public school exists for, and it's right, Herbert! Healthy mind in a healthy body - what?"

"Games - plenty of open-air exercise - that's what a boy wants! Physical fitness is worth all the book learning that was ever learned, Herbert! Get fit! That's the thing! Keep fit! You get fit and keep fit at Greyfriars! Education - real education - will begin after you've left. Don't be in a hurry for it! It's hard work when it comes."

"Yes! but - "

"I never had your chance, Herbert! At your age I was stamping and posting letters in an office - and saving up sixpencees. I should be a happier man today if I'd been playing cricket! There's a time for everything! Play cricket while you've got the chance, and the time! Everybody hasn't the chance, mores the pity!"

"But, father - "

"My dear boy," - Mr. Vernon-Smith waved his cigar at the Bounder - "don't say any more! You are tired of school - of stuffing your mind with piffle, and pretending to take seriously a lot of old donkeys who haven't brains

enough to be anything but schoolmasters! I understand! But it won't do. Toe the line, my boy - take your father's advice - "

The Bounder had to get it out now. "There's no choice in the matter, father," he said.

"What? What do you mean?"

"I'm sacked!" - It was out now!

* *

DO YOU KNOW?

from Jack Adrian

This -- for which I hold out no great hopes, but you never know -- is one mainly for the Modernists (i.e. post-WWII). In 1957 the AP's excellent picture-strip library *Thriller Comics*, analogous to the old pre-War *Boys' Friend Library*, issued an historical yarn set at the start of Bloody Mary's reign entitled *The Strong Room*. On any number of counts, this particular issue (No. 163) is a little gem. For a start, it sports a splendidly atmospheric colour cover by Septimus Scott (done, as ever with Scott, in oils on board, thus giving it that slightly 3-D effect), featuring thuggish, steel-helmed guardsmen hurling the be-ruffed hero into a cell, past a brutish jailer who is smirking sinisterly, and bare-chested (clever, that: it hints at torture-chambers lit by the hellish glow of braziers with hot irons in them, and sweating, half-naked torturers bent to their terrible tasks, without actually showing them).

The interior art is all the work of that superb stylist Patrick Nicolle, son (I think: possibly nephew) of the pre-War illustrator Jack Nicolle. Pat Nicolle was a fine draughtsman who exhibited enormous care in the matter of period furniture, domestic interiors, castles outside and in, accoutrements, vestments and habiliments, yet all in a style that was open and easy on the eyes: viewer-friendly, we'd say today. *The Strong Room* contains possibly his very best black-and-white work. For 64 pages he almost doesn't put a foot wrong (a pity that Father Wisby looks a dead ringer for Lord Otterbridge's sinister and saturnine manservant Michael -- 'it is rumoured that he is one of the finest swordsmen in England' -- and those who have a copy of the story will know what I mean; but there you go: you can't have everything).

The story itself is hectically paced and hectically, but entirely logically, plotted. It tells of John Aumarle, freed from the condemned cell in the Tower of London (the 'strong room' of the title) on the death of Edward VI and the accession of Mary, but pursued by a secret enemy so that he lives constantly in the shadow of the headsman's axe. At the end there is a shocking revelation. I first read the story when it came out in 1957 and it is no exaggeration to say that the denouement has stayed with me for decades. I can still conjure up Nicolle's superb depiction of the central bolt from the blue (the bottom bank of frames on page 49 as well as pages 50 and 51, for those interested) in fine-point detail even now.

Still, this is not a critique but a *cri de coeur*: where did the story come from? On the opening 'splash'-page there is the legend 'Adapted from the novel by Jere Wheelwright'. What novel? More to the point, who was Jere Wheelwright? No author's name appears in between Wharton, Edith (*The Valley of Derision*) and Whishaw, Frederick (*Harold the Norseman*) in Baker's monumental and fully comprehensive *Guide to Historical Fiction* (1914). And nor does Jere Wheelwright appear to figure in the *English Catalogue of Books* from the 1890s through to the 1950s. Was he American, then? Did *The Strong Room* appear only in the States? Not according to an (admittedly cursory) examination of the relevant Library of Congress vols.

I made a reference earlier to the AP's *Boys' Friend Library* and it is true that rather more than one or two of the stories that appeared in the early *Thriller Comics* had already

appeared in the *BFL* after having been serialised in one or other of the multitude of pre-War boys' weeklies. Not, however, *The Strong room* -- at any rate according to my own records, and Bill Lofts' and Derek Adley's pretty well all-embracing *BFL* listing of some years ago. Perhaps *The Strong Room* was originally published pre-War by one of the AP's rivals in the juvenile field -- Newnes, say, or Aldine -- quite often plundered by the editor and writers of *Thriller Comics?* And perhaps not, since Jere Wheelwright, whoever he -- or indeed she -- was, does not appear in *The Men Behind Boys' Fiction.*

Wheelwright is listed as the author of one other issue of *Thriller Comics*, No. 112 *Draw Near To Battle* (January, 1956), a not-a-tenth-as-good tale of an American's exploits in Napoleon's 'Grand Army'. Was there such a writer? Or was it simply Leonard Matthews, or Joan Whitford, or Mike Butterworth, hiding, for some bizarre reason, under a pseudonym?

Yet I still have this lurking suspicion -- or do I mean foolish hope? -- that Wheelwright did exist, and did write hardback books. And I would almost offer gold to anyone who can come up with a First Edition hardback of *The Strong Room.*

Almost ...

* *

MORE LISTS FROM BRIAN DOYLE

GREYFRIARS BOYS WITH SPECIAL OR UNUSUAL ATTRIBUTES OR GIFTS

Henry Christopher Crumm (Hypnotist)
Oliver Kipps (Conjurer)
William Wibley (Actor and Master of disguise)
Billy Bunter (Ventriloquist)
Claud Hoskins (Musician and Composer)
Peter Todd (Law Expert)
Jack Drake (Detective)
Fisher T. Fish (Financier)
Dick Penfold (Photographer and Poet)
Christopher Clarence Carboy (Practical joker)
Dick Drury ('The Game Kid') (Boxer)

"You should have seen me handling those Highcliffe cads!" said Bunter. "Knocking them right and left! They had enough, I ran tell you! Stacey did what he could, and Wharton helped me a bit—but——" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Removites. "Oh, cackle!" said Bunter scornfully. "You wouldn't have cackled if you'd been in my place!"

SEVEN MOST PROLIFIC 'SUBSTITUTE' WRITERS FOR THE "MAGNET"

John Nix Pentelow (around 1914-18)
George R. Samways (around 1914-21)
Edwy Searles Brooks (around 1912-20)
Fred Gordon Cook (around 1919-26)
Stanley E. Austin (mainly 1920s and 1930-31)
William L. Catchpole (1919 and late-1920s)
Hedley O'Mant (around 1914-18)
(There were at least 25 sub. writers for "The Magnet". All stories were written by Frank Richards after No. 1220 in 1931.)

DOMESTIC SERVANTS OR STAFF AT GREYFRIARS

Mrs. Kebble (Housekeeper and house-matron)
Mrs. Marker (Deputy to above)
Alfred Mimble (Gardener)
Jessie Mimble (Tuckshop manageress and wife to above)
William Gosling (School porter)
Trotter (Pageboy)
Williams (Dr. Locke's chauffeur)
Robert (Pageboy prior to Trotter)
Emily (Housemaid to Dr. and Mrs. Locke)
Jane and Mary (Housemaids)

TWELVE PEOPLE IMPERSONATED BY WILLIAM WIBLEY

Archie Popper
Sir William Brind
Joe Bagshot
Prince Bomombo of Bongoland
Barker the Bookie
M. Charpentier
Hurree Singh
Mr. Twigg
Huggins (a bookie's runner)
'Ginger' (Vernon-Smith's cousin, Richard Vernon-Tracey)
Mr. Moon (Temporary 5th Form master)
'Grunter of Greyhurst' (Bunter parody)

* *

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963,964,965,970,974,978,981,982,983,988,989,
993,994,995,996,997,998,1003,1004,1007,1008,
1009,1010,1025,1035,1038,1046,1047,1048,1050,
1051,1052,1053,1054,1055,1056,1057,1058,1062,
1092,1094,1097,1109,1119,1133,1136.

HOTSPURS of years 1961, 1962 and 1963. Gen VG at £1.25 each, 10 or more £1 each.
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129,130,131,132,133,134,135,136,139,140,142,
144,146,147,148,149,151,152,155,156,158,159,
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199,200,201,202,203,204,205,209,211.

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523,524,528,529,530,548,533,553,555,556,561,
562,585,587,588,589,590,591,592,595,599,600,
601,607,610.

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YEAR 1974: 5/1, 12/1, 23/3, 30/3, 6/4, 18/5, 25/5, 1/6, 8/6, 15/6, 22/6, 29/6, 6/7, 13/7, 27/7, 3/8, 28/8.
YEAR 1975: 4/1, 15/3, 19/4, 31/5, 14/6, 23/8, 29/11, 27/12.
YEAR 1976: 3/3, 14/2, 17/4, 24/4, 1/5, 15/5, 22/5, 24/7, 31/7, 14/8, 11/9, 2/10, 13/11, 20/14, 27/11.
YEAR 1977:1/1, 15/1, 5/2, 12/2, 19/3, 26/3, 2/4, 9/4, 7/5, 4/6, 11/6, 18/6, 9/7, 27/8, 3/9, 15/10, 29/10, 24/12.
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YEAR 1962: 6/1, 13/1, 20/1, 27/1, 3/2, 10/2, 17/2, 24/2, 3/3, 10/3, 17/3, 24/3, 31/3, 7/4, 14/4, 21/4, 28/4, 5/5/, 12/5, 19/5, 26/5, 2/6, 9/6, 16/6, 30/6, 7/7, 1/9, 8/9, 15/9, 22/9, 29/9, 6/10, 13/10, 20/10, 27/10, 3/11, 10/11, 1/12, 8/12, 15/12, 22/12, 29/12.
YEAR 1964: 4/1, 11/1, 1/2, 8/2, 22/2, 7/3, 14/3, 21/3, 28/3, 4/4, 25/4, 2/5, 9/5, 16/5, 30/5, 6/6, 13/6, 20/6, 27/6, 4/7, 11/7, 18/7, 25/7, 8/8, 15/8, 31/10, 7/11, 14/11, 21/11, 28/11, 26/12.
ROVER 1965, 23/1, 30/1, 13/2, 27/2, 13/3, 3/4, 17/4, 24/4, 1/5, 8/5, 15/5, 22/5, 29/5, 19/6, 3/7, 10/7, 17/7, 24/7, 31/7, 7/8, 14/8, 4/9, 18/9.
ROVER 1972. 6/5, 13/5, 20/5, 27/5, 3/6, 10/6, 17/6, 24/6, 1/7, 8/7, 29/7, 5/8, 12/8, 16/9, 14/10, 21/10, 28/10, 4/11, 25/11, 9/12, 23/12, 30/12.

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717,718,719,721,723,724,725,726,727,729,732,
733,734,735,736,737,738,741,745,748,752,754,
763,765,768,770,780,782,783,784,786,801,814.

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1355,1356,1357,1358,1359,1360,1361,1362,1363,
1364,1365,1366,1367,1368,1369,1370,1371,1372,
1373,1374,1375,1376,1377,1378,1379,1380,1381,
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1391,1392,1393,1394,1395,1396,1402, 1403,1404.

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1197,1198,1199,1200,1201,1202,1203,1204,1205,
1206,1207,1208,1209,1210,1211,1212,1213,1214,
1232,1233,1234,1235,1236,1238,1241,1242,1243,
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R. Hibbert, 30, Alton Road, Ross on Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 5ND (01989) 564512

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