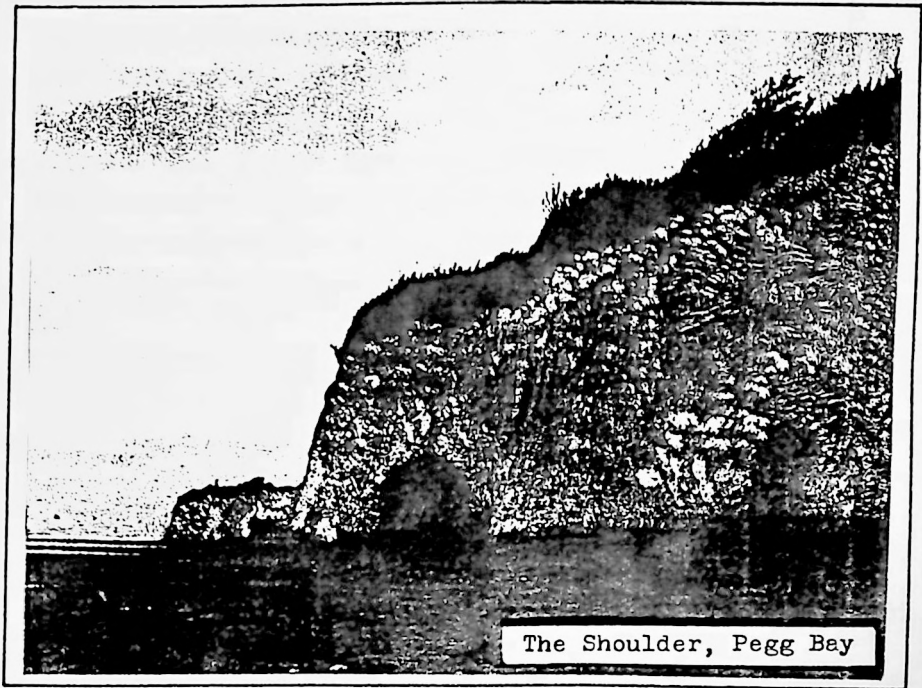


A GUIDE
TO
THE GREYFRIARS DISTRICT



D.R.SPIERS

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Introduction

From the earliest days of the chronicles of Greyfriars School written by Charles Hamilton under the pen-name Frank Richards, in the pages of the Magnet and the Holiday Annual, there appeared a succession of maps and diagrams of the topography of the Greyfriars district, though in all cases over the years these were prepared by substitute writers, as Frank Richards did not seem to concern himself overmuch with this interesting aspect of his greatest of school sagas, Greyfriars.

After many hours of research through the pages of Magnet, Schoolboys Own Library and Holiday Annual, and following a limited correspondence with Frank Richards, I gained the distinct impression that his Greyfriars locations were actually based on many buildings and natural features which he had previously seen and explored in different areas of the south of England and, in the case of some of the travel series, in other places abroad, though he was perhaps a little reticent about these. This theory was greatly reinforced by items appearing in the Collectors Digest and Collectors Digest Annual over the years, including:

- (a) An account entitled "An astounding adventure" by Jack Corbett, pp.75-82 of the first (1947) Collectors Digest Annual.
- (b) Collectors Digest of April, 1963, p.29 "Echo of the Autobiography", by William H. Gill, in a letter to the Editor of Collectors Digest.

The impression gained from Frank Richards himself, together with the above two items, prompted me to write the article "Concerning the origin of Greyfriars", pp.23-26 of Collectors Digest, January, 1964 and also a further article and map in C.D. Annual for 1965, pp.117-118.

Now, after more years of exploration through Greyfriars stories and the pages of Collectors Digest, and despite the appearance of another well-prepared Greyfriars map in the meantime, I am yet more convinced that the maps forming part of this account are authentic.

I have included a reference list of all known Greyfriars maps to date.



Greyfriars maps, past and present

Many maps and plans of the School and locality have been produced through the years since the beginning of the Greyfriars stories by Frank Richards early in 1908.

These are summarised in the following list:

- (1) Sketch of Greyfriars and locality, said to be by H.W.Twyman. (original not seen) Magnet 409 of 1915.
 - (2) Re-drawn reproduction of (1), signed 'Gran', Holiday Annual 1920, p.25.
 - (3) Miniature reprint of (2), Holiday Annual 1921, p.14.
 - (4) Sepia plate of school and surroundings, signed, P.J.Hayward, Holiday Annual 1921, p.40.
 - (5) Aerial view of school and grounds, unsigned. Holiday Annual 1922, p.20.
 - (6) Ballad and sketch of school, signed, E.E.Briscoe. Holiday Annual 1923, p.11.
 - (7) Ground-floor plan of Greyfriars, unsigned. Holiday Annual 1923, p.50.
 - (8) First-floor plan of Greyfriars, unsigned. Holiday Annual 1923, p.52.
 - (9) Aerial view of school and locality, unsigned. Inside front cover, Magnet 1672 of 1940. Later reprinted by Bill Martin.
 - (10) Re-arranged version of (9), signed, W.H.Broster. Collectors Digest Annual 1958, p.71.
 - (11) Article and scale map of area, signed, D.R.Spiers. Collectors Digest Annual 1965, p.117.
 - (12) Reprint of (2). Billy Bunter's Holiday Annual 1967 (Odhams, 1966), p.16.
 - (13) Colour plate of school and area, unsigned. B.B.H.A.1967, p.17. Attractive. Possibly colour reprint of (5) (?)
- For further notes on (9) and other maps see article by W.O.G.Lofts, Collectors Digest June 1957, p.155.
- (14) A further map of Greyfriars appeared on the end-papers of the Greyfriars School Prospectus by J.S.Butcher, Cassell, London, 1965, which also contained various reprinted school plans; this map bore a marked resemblance to the Howard Baker Map of 1969.

On early maps and orientation

In general the early maps of Greyfriars suffered greatly from incorrect orientation and lack of scale, with the principal basic fault being the siting of Pegg Bay on the South coast instead of on the East coast, where it should face east towards the southern end of the North Sea, as often made clear in the later Greyfriars stories; this correct siting of Pegg Bay seems to provide the authenticity of any Greyfriars map.

I think most readers cannot fail to accept that the imaginary Pegg Bay was sited at the actual Pegwell Bay, as shown on a map of Kent; this being so, it follows that Dover, Folkestone, etc. may be correctly situated on the South coast. Therefore, using the remaining points of the compass, it should be reasonably simple to site other actual large towns satisfactorily (London, Canterbury, Ashford, Margate, etc.), before going on to place the smaller (imaginary) towns and villages of the Greyfriars area and to match them with existing locations.

In fact, no single one of the early maps was entirely wrong as many of the familiar landmarks and locations were well drawn but incorrectly sited - with particular emphasis on many of the local inland places appearing in the stories. Sadly, all these inaccuracies, plus the all too often contradictory descriptions, particularly in the early stories, led to great confusion amongst the readers.

However, having established reliable 'markers' to north, south, east and west, it becomes rather less difficult to position remaining inland locations by making use of the many good descriptions provided in the Magnet or S.O.L., especially in the later tales from the 'Golden Age', a few of which are listed below.

- (1) S.O.L.183 (Jim Lee series) - 'to Friardale Station, to cliff path with the great blue Pegg Bay spread out on his left, debating whether to call in at Cliff House' -
- (2) Magnet 1374 - 1382 -
 1377,p.12 - 'Sir Hilton had floated down river from Popper Court, intended to visit his island' -
 1377,p.22 - 'The empty boat drifted away down to Friardale' -
 1378,p.11 - 'The old wharf in Friardale' -
- (3) S.O.L.233 (Cave Phantom) - 'from Greyfriars, down Friardale Lane to the cliffs above Pegg, then on by the rugged cliff path to Hawkscliff' -
- (4) S.O.L.328 (Detective Bunter) - 'Joyce let his cottage and now lived at Woodend, a village several miles away (on the other side of Greyfriars)'--

Some of the villages mentioned in Greyfriars stories or marked on some previous early maps may, in some instances, have originated in the substitute stories or been found in some of the early Magnets, since when they may not have been mentioned; these I have not marked on my maps as I cannot find any further reference to them. They include Burchester and Burstead, Cotwood, Laverock and Medstead.

Green Hedges and Seven Elms have also been mentioned on early occasions, since when they appear to have fallen out of use.

Though also mentioned at rare intervals, I have marked the villages of Braye, Cliffe, Woodend and Woodford on the maps as they appear to have been used more frequently, especially in the later stories.

Blackwood is another village, with a railway station, which is mentioned occasionally as being the nearest to St. Judes School, and is situated between Redclyffe and Lantham; see Magnet 1307 (Valentine series) on pp. 16 and 20.

Frank Richards was never sparing with descriptive material in his writing though some passages could be rather misleading to readers at times.

It seemed to me that a school saga which undoubtedly reached such a high standard of quality in every way could only be enhanced by the addition of an authentic background in the form of reliable maps.

This was the main reason for this short account and for the building-up of the accompanying series of maps, though I must admit to a great satisfaction in providing what I believe is an answer to the vexed question of the Greyfriars locality. It is possible, in the light of further research, that some minor modifications may still prove to be necessary, though every effort has been made to ensure accuracy.

I have had a great deal of real pleasure during the preparation of this work and therefore I would like to make the result available to any other interested readers; I hope it will prove to be useful and perhaps help to induce continued exploration into the pages of Greyfriars history. Incidentally, as these are basic maps, some individual readers may like to mark in their own ideas of certain features such as the erratic wanderings of Oak Lane; extra copies of the maps may be obtained from this address at £1-50 per set, post free. I am always happy to exchange correspondence on this most fascinating subject, as long as it is not of a purely controversial nature.

GREYFRIARS - MAP ONE.
SCALE 1 INCH = 1 MILE



Spence
85





A summary of notes and references to locations in the Greyfriars district

Though some confusion was certainly caused by the conflicting nature of certain descriptions of the Greyfriars district, either from the early Greyfriars stories or from the work of substitute writers, it must be acknowledged that Frank Richards, who in later years produced a great deal of very fine descriptive work, made surprisingly few errors, as is shown by a careful exploration through the pages of the Greyfriars stories; in fact such errors were so few that strength may well be added to the theory that Frank Richards, after the early Magnets, built up a decidedly clear picture of the district, and that he had either an extraordinarily good memory or some alternative method of recording such a picture. After the initial slight confusion arising from early and substitute stories, he may well have decided that some of the place-names, as with some of his early characters, would benefit from a little judicious pruning.

Whatever the true state of affairs it must be evident to any careful and painstaking student that Frank Richards's main layout of the Greyfriars district was indeed as shown on the maps accompanying this work.

Most references in the following list of towns, villages, buildings and natural features are selected from the pages of the Magnet and School-boys Own Library and they include some of the best examples of Frank Richards's descriptions of the area. It must be emphasised, however, that it is only a selection; for there are many more in the pages of the Greyfriars 'history'.

Anchor Inn (Pegg Harbour)	S.O.L.367, M.1312/14
Braye (village)	S.O.L.267, M.1201/03
Black Pike (coastal l'mark)	S.O.L. 99, M. 166/168
Bleck Rock (coastal)	S.O.L.410, M.1273/75
Cliffe (village)	S.O.L.233, M.1087/89
Cliff House School	S.O.L.233, M.1087/89 (at Pegg Green)
Cloisters (Greyfriars)	S.O.L.211, M.1039/41
	S.O.L.239, M.1110/1161/62
Courtfield (town)	Various references, S.O.L. and M.
Cross Keys Inn (near R.Sark)	S.O.L.277, M. 923/25

Fir Lane (Cloisters wall)	S.O.L.247, M.II72/74 S.O.L.400, M.1303/05 S.O.L.407, M.1271/73
Friardale (village)	Various references, S.O.L. and M.
Frier's Oak	M.1224 (copse, side of School)
Frier's Spinney	S.O.L.183, M. 781/84 (Redclyffe Lane)
Hawkscliff (village)	S.O.L.233, M.1087/89
Highcliffe School	M.1528 (near Courtfield)
Hogben Grange	S.O.L.313, M.1215/17 (Lancaster series)
Lantham (town)	Various references, S.O.L. and M.
Lantham Chase	S.O.L.265, M.II98/1200
Oak Lane	S.O.L.376, M.I331/32/34, M.1529
Pegg (village)	S.O.L.233, M.1087/89
Pegg Bay	S.O.L.183, M. 781/84 S.O.L.233, M.1087/89 S.O.L.410, M.1273/75
Pegg Green	S.O.L.237, M. 996, 1016, 1137
Popper Court	S.O.L.404, M.II57/59, 1529
Popper's Island	S.O.L.376, M.I331/34 S.O.L.382, M.I338/40, 1528, 1535
Priory (Friardale)	S.O.L.183, M. 781/84 S.O.L.231, M.II26/28
Redclyffe (town)	Various references, S.O.L. and M.
Redclyffe Wood	S.O.L. 328, M.I253/54
St.Judes School	S.O.L.403, M.I306/07, 1311 (Redclyffe)
Sark (river)	Various references, S.O.L. and M.
Sark Abbey (ruins)	M.1530
Sea View Bungalow	S.O.L.394, M.I297/99
Seven Elms (village)	S.O.L.263, M.II95/97 (Tatters series)
Shoulder, The	S.O.L.233, M.1087/89
Three Fishers Inn	S.O.L.225, M.III3/15 S.O.L.340, M.1292/95, 1529, 1535
Topham Croft (Lantham Rd.)	S.O.L.361, M.II46/48 (C.Cracksmen series)
Woodend (village)	S.O.L.235, M.II29/33/34 S.O.L.328, M.I253/54
Woodford (village)	S.O.L.233, M.1087/89
