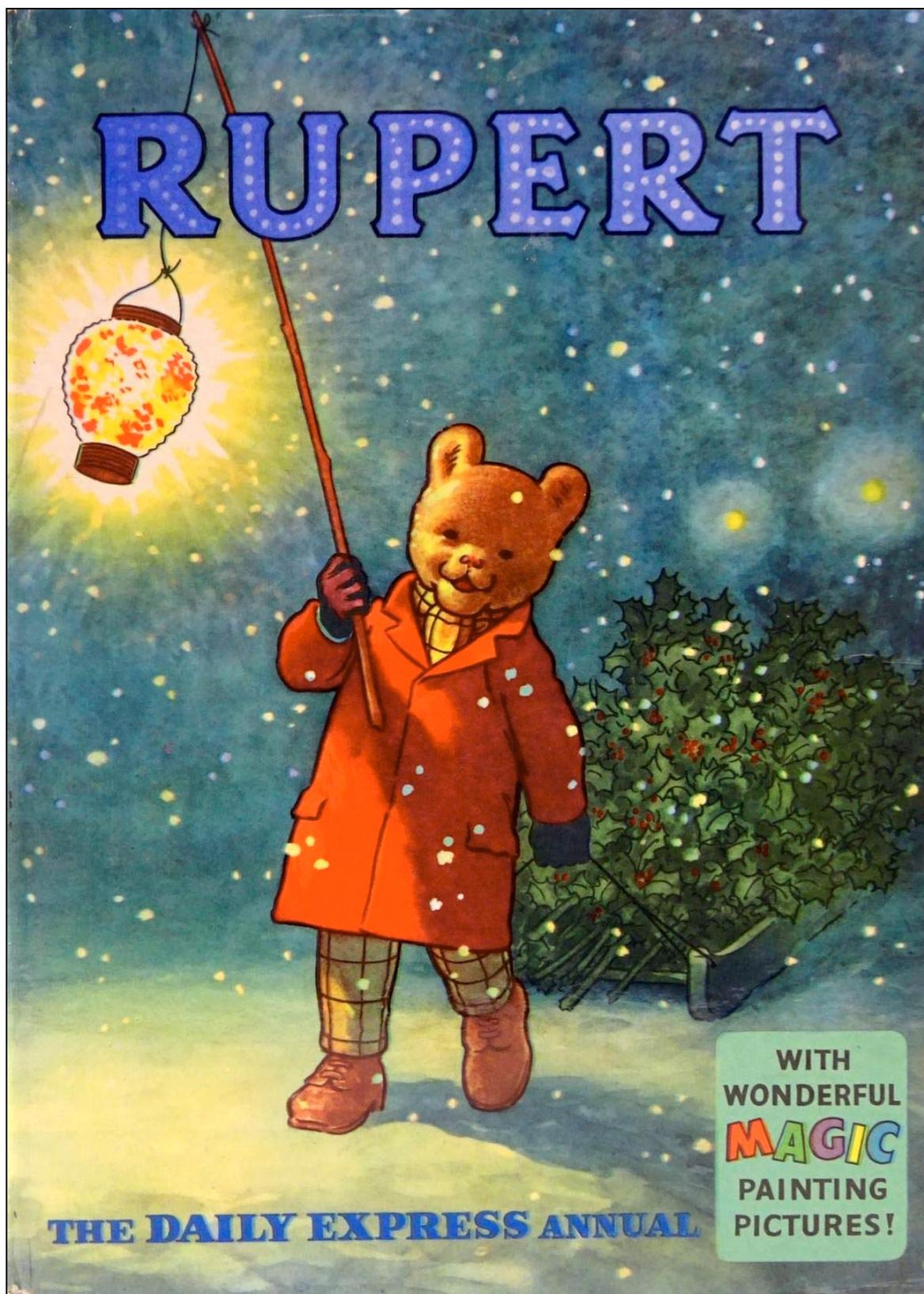


THE DUST JACKET

The Magazine of the London Old Boys' Book Club



RUPERT BEAR'S CENTENARY

Roger Coombes celebrates a very special birthday

He is 8 years older than Mickey Mouse
 He is 6 years older than Winnie the Pooh
 He is 40 years older than Paddington

Rupert Bear came into our world in the pages of the *Daily Express* on 8 November 1920. This November he reached the landmark age of 100 years in print; a century of newspapers, books, toys, games, clothes, television adventures and stage shows, not to mention clubs and societies dedicated to appreciation of his role in British culture. How did this come about?

Rupert was 'born' out of a circulation battle between several of Britain's popular newspapers, part of which was fought in the 'children's features'. The *Daily Mail* had the first success with Teddy Tail in 1915, followed by the *Daily Mirror* with Pip and Squeak in 1919 (who were joined by Wilfred a year later) and the *Daily News* with The Adventures of the Noah Family (later known as Japhet and Happy) also in 1919.

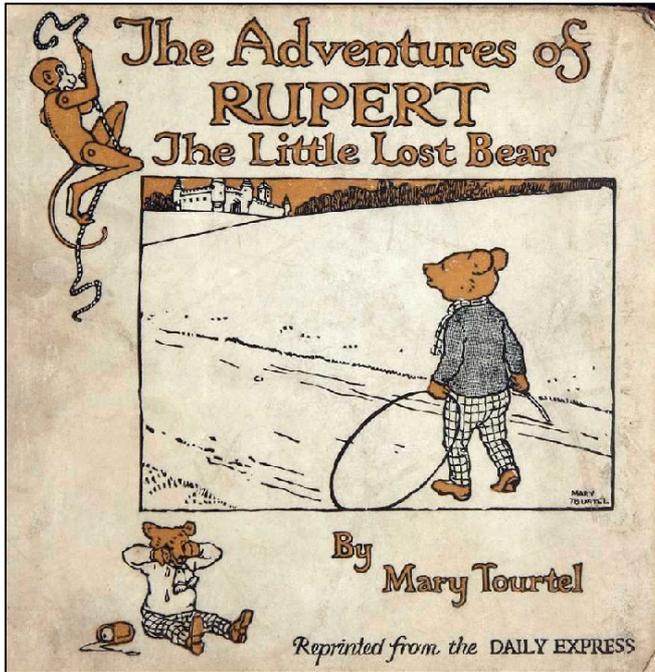
The then owner of the *Daily Express*, Canadian Max Aitken (later to be ennobled as Lord Beaverbrook), seeing the popularity of

these stories with children (no one was quite sure what to call them—drawings? cartoons? strips?) instructed the editor, R D Blumenfeld, to launch a character to compete with those of the *Express's* rivals. Blumenfeld delegated the task to a sub-editor, Herbert Tourtel, who enlisted the assistance of his wife Mary. She was an artist and book illustrator with an ability to draw anthropomorphic characters. Her previous work included the 1919 series In Bobtail Land for the *Sunday Express* and When Animals Work for the *Daily Express*.

Rupert was 'born', fully formed, with little fanfare in a single panel with a short narrative in rhyming couplets, entitled 'Little Lost Bear'. His appearance was established in this first image and has remained much the same, with subtle evolutionary changes, over the passage of time, most notably when the drawing baton (should that be pen and brush?) was passed from one artist to another.

The basic pattern was there in 1920—plain sweater, checked scarf, checked trousers and





sturdy shoes. On the occasions when Mary Tourtel's Rupert appeared in colour his sweater was blue and his scarf and trousers were white. Today's readers (and they can be aged nine or ninety) are more familiar with red sweater and yellow scarf and trousers, which became standard when Alfred Bestall took over responsibility for Rupert in 1935.

How old is Rupert? People have been debating this for a long time. I see him as being around eight years old; but some regard him as younger, others a bit older. On the occasions when Nutwood's school features in stories it is clearly a single-class primary school with one teacher.

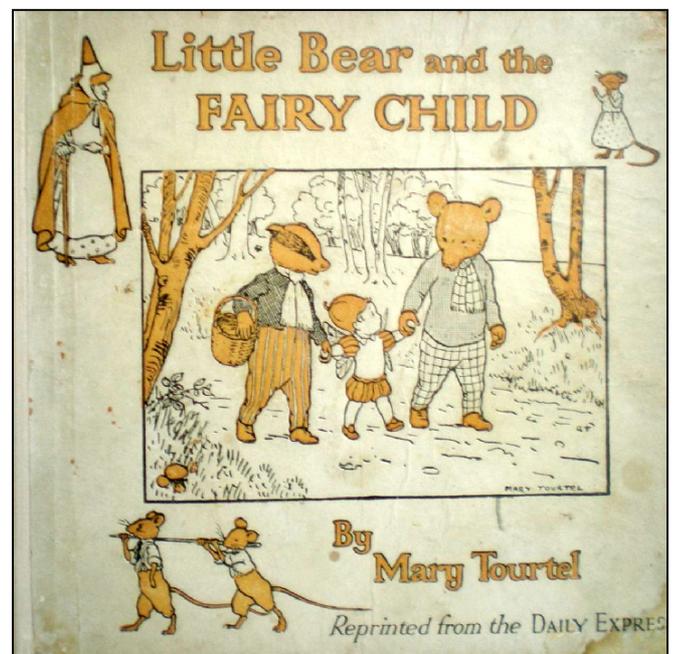
In the early days, the format of the daily episodes was by no means consistent—sometimes it was a single panel, sometimes two or more, while on some days Rupert was missing altogether, his absence being explained by his being 'on holiday'. These measures were necessary when Mary was unable to meet her deadline.

In 1936, between Bestall's fifth and sixth stories, there was a decidedly unusual story using photographed puppets instead of drawings, probably because he too needed time to get ahead of publication deadlines. This 'experiment' was never repeated because the complaints received showed how unpopular it

was with the paper's child readers.

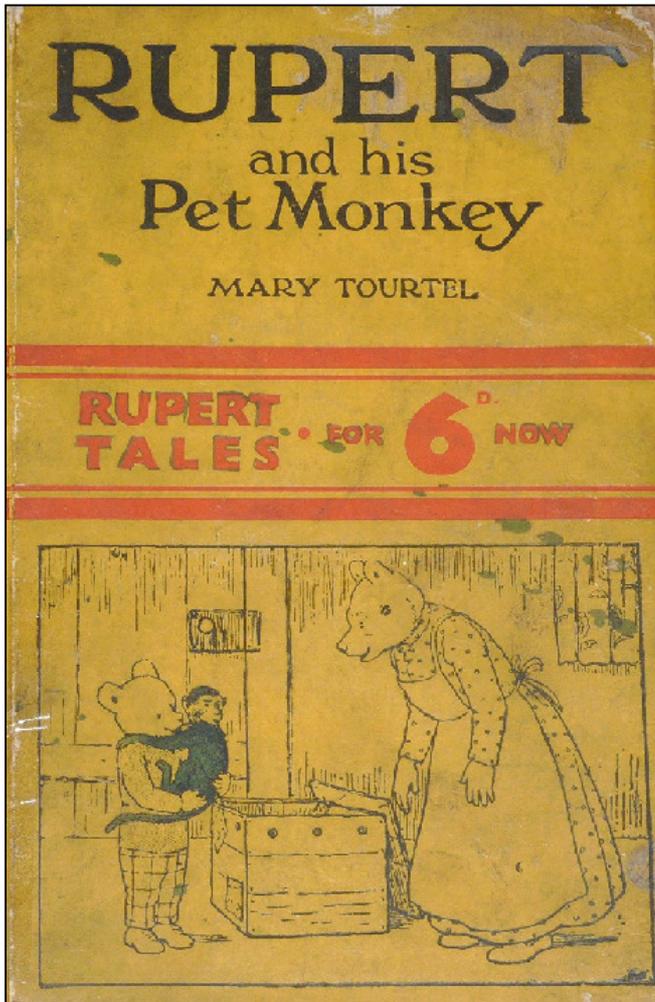
Mary Tourtel's plots and imagery were influenced by fairy stories and nursery rhymes, particularly those of Hans Christian Andersen and the Grimm Brothers, evident in the inclusion of enchanted castles, wizards, sorcerers, magicians, dragons, goblins, fairies, knights and princesses. Anthropomorphic 'animals' such as the Bear family and Rupert's friends like Bill Badger coexisted in a supernatural world alongside humans, a world in which there were parallel time zones. In this world, medieval castles and knights could coexist with an apparent 20th-century village with motorised transport and other post-Industrial Revolution technology.

As an artist, Mary Tourtel had a very academic background, which underscored her meticulous accuracy in representing medieval architecture and armour, for example. Today's critics, however, argue that this academic meticulousness limited her scope for composition, making her drawings restricted (within an already restricted format) and monotonous.



Notwithstanding that, Rupert was popular and quickly found a niche alongside the children's characters in the rival newspapers. Reprints and adapted stories, some in colour, were published by Thomas Nelson and Sampson Low in the 1920s. These were cheap

enough to be readily available and acceptable choices for children's birthday and Christmas presents. The series of yellow hardbacked 'Little Bear' books, which sold for a shilling (and for sixpence in the 1930s) in Woolworths, were especially popular.



From 1930 Rupert also had a place in the *Daily Express Children's Annual* and in 1932 his success was reflected in the creation of the Daily Express Rupert League to rival the *Daily Mirror's* Wilfredian League of Gugnuncs (the club for Pip, Squeak and Wilfred). Children's clubs were all the rage—other examples being those established for Teddy Tail, the Ovaltineys and *Children's Hour*.

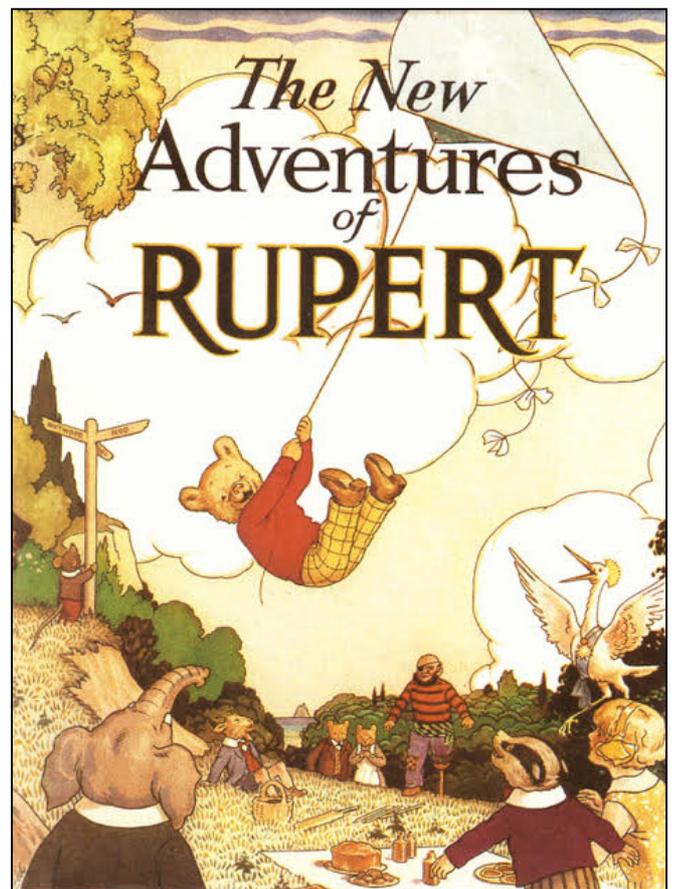
By the mid-1930s, Mary Tourtel had been widowed and her health was failing, particularly her eyesight. The Children's Page editor at the *Express*, Stanley Marshall ('Uncle Bill'), was very aware that Rupert was a valuable asset to the paper and accordingly looked

for a successor. By a stroke of good fortune or perception he found Alfred Bestall, a well-established book illustrator and contributor to *Punch*, *Tatler*, *The Passing Show* and other prestigious periodicals.

It came as a surprise to Alfred (AEB) on his appointment in 1935 to learn that he would be responsible for writing the stories as well as illustrating them. He was also asked by Uncle Bill to steer away from Mary Tourtel's 'magical' content because it was considered that she had over-indulged in fairies and the like and in her last few years her stories had become somewhat too dark for their young readers.

Alfred accepted this challenge and hit his stride quickly. Uncle Bill had already decided to make two frames per day the permanent format and to replace the rhyming couplets with Alfred's prose. The couplets were soon to reappear, however, in the new *Rupert Annuals* first published by the *Express* in 1936.

These annuals became a standard feature in Christmas stockings and have been published every year since then, even during the paper-



rationed years of the Second World War, because Lord Beaverbrook deemed that Rupert's daily appearance in the newspaper (he only missed a few when war news pushed him out) and his annuals were vital to children's morale. Ask anyone today who is old enough to remember the air raids of WWII and they will invariably say a *Rupert Annual* was among the items kept in the air raid shelters. This year's *Rupert Annual*, by the way, is No 85.

Entrusting the Rupert character to Alfred ensured his continuation. He did not slavishly attempt to copy Mary's style, but his early stories showed some of her elements, such as Rupert's somewhat 'stocky' build (although he had slimmed down significantly in Mary's care). Within a year he had made Rupert 'his own'.

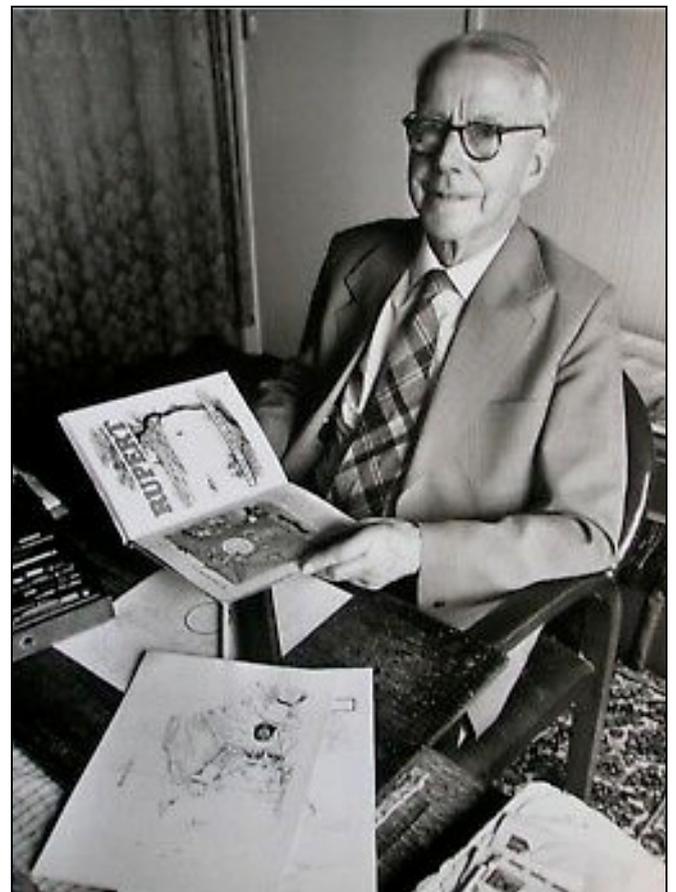
Rupert's character altered perceptibly as well. Under Mary he had become rather petulant and wimpish (sometimes crying in adversity) and she had endowed him with few facial expressions. Alfred, on the other hand, extended Rupert's range of facial emotions and his movements became more fluid. Art and fashion critics have likened Alfred's illustrative technique to a cinematic style, with different frames showing the action from different angles, as a film director would.

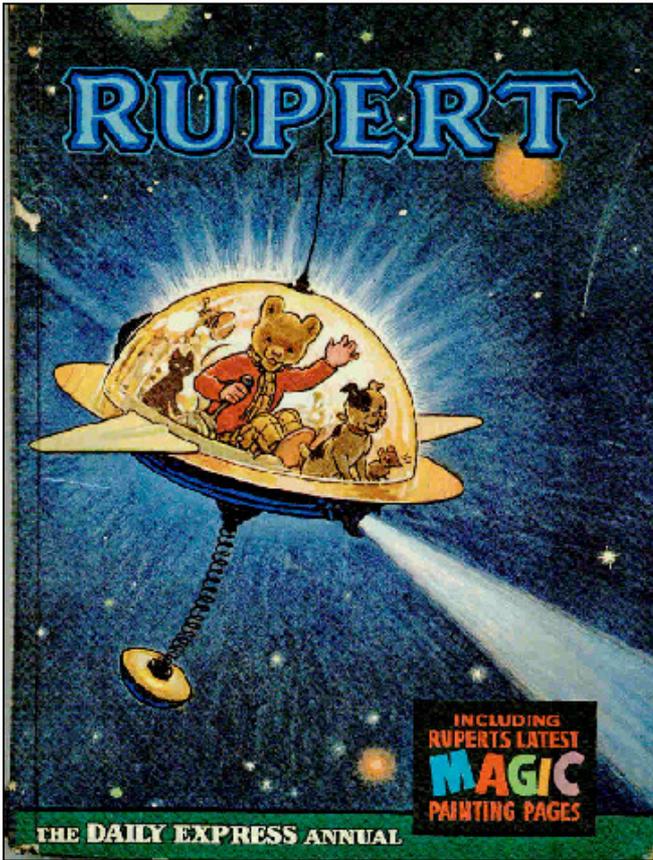
As mentioned above, Alfred had been asked to remove Mary's Gothic influences and use of magic. He succeeded with the former, but in the arena of children's literature could not totally dispense with the latter, although his 'magic' was never 'real' but merely illusory. The company of 'chums' and semi-regular characters increased as Alfred created new ones and Nutwood became a more identifiable location as the starting point for Rupert's adventures. When I started writing this article, John Harrold, who was Alfred's successor from 1979 to 2002, was working on a definitive map of Nutwood, attempting to place the residents' homes within the village and its surrounding countryside—a task which Alfred had shunned. This map was to have been part of the centenary celebrations for The

Followers of Rupert. Sadly, Covid-19 has caused much of this to be postponed.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the *Express* licensed various publishers to reprint Rupert stories, some of which were reformatted, abridged and coloured, and from 1930 to 1934 the *Daily Express Children's Annual* included a previously published Mary Tourtel Rupert story. However, 1936 marked a new direction with the first *Rupert Annual*, entitled *The New Adventures of Rupert*, published by the *Express* and containing five of Alfred Bestall's early stories, which had appeared in the newspaper in 1935-36. This was the first of the annuals, which have continued to be published to the present. I have recently reviewed the latest—No 85—for The Followers of Rupert's *Nutwood Newsletter*. During that time the title has varied but it is continually known as the *Rupert Annual*.

There have been many other publications, some from the *Express* and some published by other companies, too numerous to include here. Arguably, the peak of Rupert's popular-





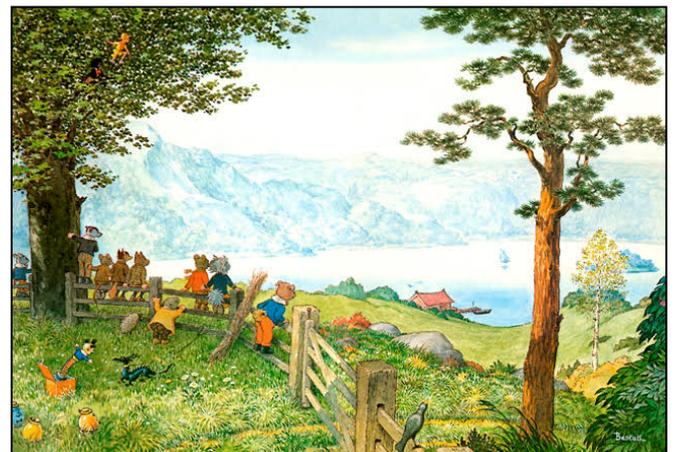
ity was in the 1950s and 1960s, yet here he is still going in 2020. It had been necessary for the *Express* to switch to soft covers between 1943 and 1949, yet they managed to introduce full colour as a much-appreciated compensation. Hard covers returned in 1950. Since 2003, they have consisted of reprinted stories, with a few new tales being written and drawn specifically for the annuals by Stuart Trotter from 2008. These have never been in the *Express*, which since 2002 has followed a policy of only reprinting old stories, some of which have been quite heavily cut.

By the 1960s, Alfred Bestall was finding his workload too heavy so other artists—Enid Ash, Alex Cubie, Lucy Matthews and Jenny Kisler—were drafted in to help, often producing the backgrounds and figure work, while Alfred completed the heads. Alfred officially retired in 1965 after 30 years producing almost 300 stories, although he continued to contribute artwork for the annuals until 1973. The endpapers for that year were, in my opinion, amongst his best, showing that he had lost none of his imagination and skills.

Alex Cubie emerged as his immediate successor although not for long as he too was approaching retirement as an *Express* ‘in-house’ artist. The ‘team’ had been joined by John Harrold in 1976 and he eventually became the official Rupert artist, working to scripts provided at first by James Henderson and then by Ian Robinson. It was the Harrold/Robinson partnership which was to take Rupert through the 1980s and 1990s and into the 21st century.

Although John was expected initially to draw in Alfred’s style, he was soon allowed to stamp his own vision on Rupert’s world, whilst retaining and possibly extending Alfred’s sense of humour, executed through his superb draughtsmanship. Although John and Ian inherited AEB’s full cast of characters they introduced a few new ones such as Otto-line and the Sage of Um. For the annuals, Harrold experimented with page design, adding asymmetrical shapes and introducing L-shaped story title pages. Devotees of Rupert had, in the early 1980s, formed their own fan club—The Followers of Rupert—membership of which was predominantly adult, though their children were encouraged to participate. You would find no greater admirers of Alfred Bestall than these Followers, yet within a short space of time John Harrold was held in equally high esteem.

I have not ventured far into Rupert merchandising—toys, calendars, diaries china figures and videos (speaking of which, remembering the popular TV series and its catchy song, I have to emphasise here and now he is



NOT Rupert *the* Bear!) because to do so would exceed the limits of space set by Vic the editor. If he were to commission a follow-up article I would have to include Brintje Beer (the Dutch version), Paul McCartney and the Frog Chorus, and Terry Jones' Channel 4 documentary which triggered my personal 'Rupert Renaissance'. How about it Vic? [*Get writing, Roger!—Ed*]

From the 1980s, marketing of the Rupert brand was directed at adults as much as at children, including adult-sized scarves, ties, waistcoats and sweaters (own up, Gyles Brandreth!) and, to my mind more significantly, jigsaws, greetings cards and posters of some of the superb aforementioned annual covers and endpapers painted by Alfred and John. A particular favourite with Followers and fans in general is John's cover for the 50th annual in 1985. I invite you to study it in order to understand why.

Can you identify John's tribute to Alfred?



A bit of a wobble happened in Rupert's publishing world in 2002 and for a while it seemed that the future of our ursine chum was in doubt. New ownership, management restructuring, profit and loss spreadsheets—call it what you will—at the *Express* resulted in the parting of the ways for the creative team behind Rupert and their employers. This did not lead to Rupert disappearing altogether from the pages of the newspaper but, as mentioned already, there have been no new stories for the last eighteen years. What we have seen during those years have been reprints from the

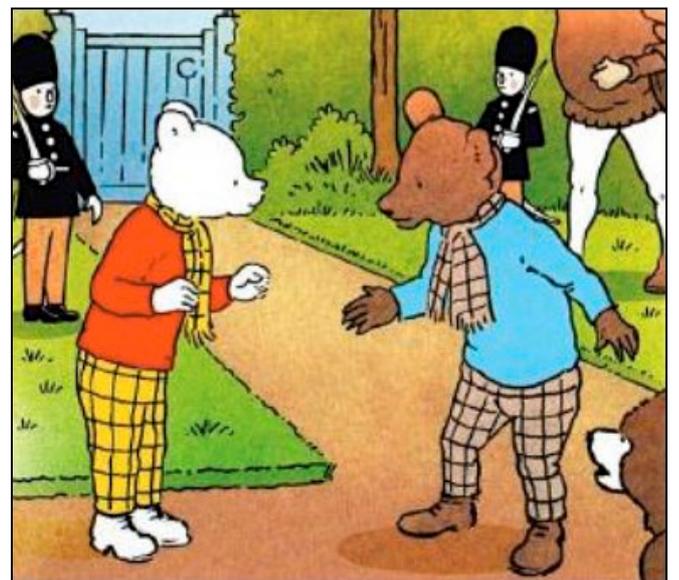
'back catalogue' of 1935-2002, which is an impressive archive.

The production of the *Rupert Annual* is no longer done in-house by the *Express* but has been licensed firstly to Pedigree Books and then to Egmont. It is Egmont who commission Stuart to write and illustrate the covers and one new story per year, the rest of the contents being reprints of stories, puzzles and other activities taken from previous annuals, predominantly the work of AEB and John Harrold.

Stuart continues the established world of Nutwood in what I call 'Bestallesque' style. His story in this year's annual celebrates 100 years of Rupert by bringing the 1920 Rupert forward to the present to team up with the 2020 Rupert. This is a masterful achievement blending the very distinct style of Mary Tourtel with the 'Bestallesque'. Sadly, Stuart's stories do not appear in the *Daily Express*.

Covid-19 restrictions prevented The Followers of Rupert from holding their traditional gathering at the end of August, at which there would have been special celebrations, but there are signs of general awareness of this significant anniversary in nostalgia-type publications such as *Best of British* and *Evergreen*, as well as a new issue of Rupert postage stamps by Royal Mail and the minting of Rupert 50p coins by the Royal Mint.

Happy anniversary Rupert! .



THE ADVENTURES OF RUPERT BEAR

Jan Manthey looks back on the 1970s television puppet show

Children of a certain age will remember receiving a *Rupert Annual* every Christmas, and indeed, the yearly chronicle of the bear's adventures is still produced. Children of the 1970s, though, will probably also have fond memories of the long-running ITV television puppet show *The Adventures of Rupert Bear* (1970-74).

The show was conceived, produced and di-

rected by my aunt, Mary Turner. The puppets were carefully modelled on the original drawings and brought to life many of the characters from the books, as well as introducing new ones—such as the sprite called Willy Wisp. The show was very popular, running to an incredible 152 episodes, all filmed in a disused church in Bermondsey.

There were so many memorable elements



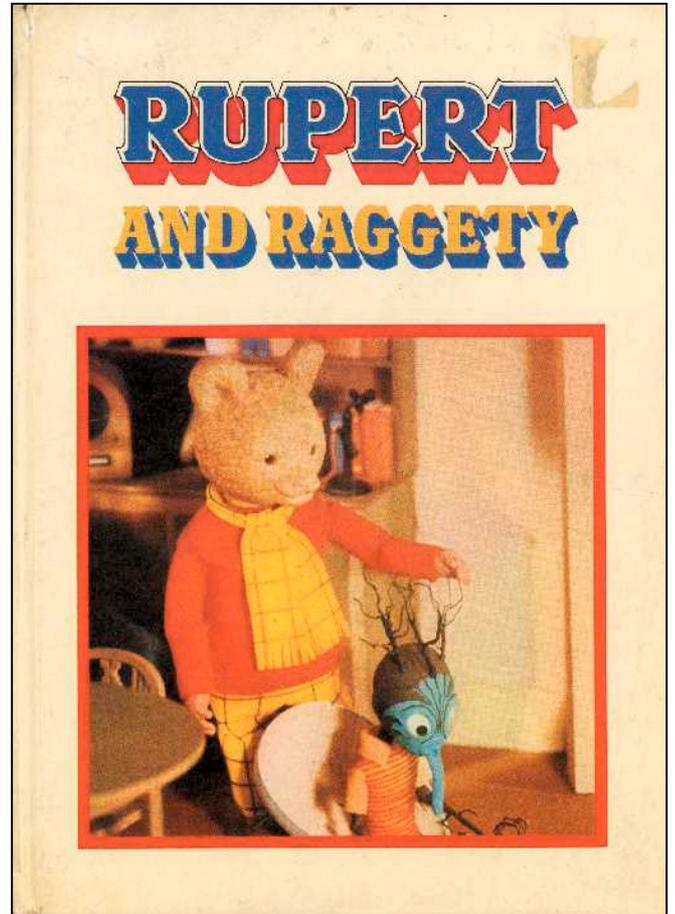


to the show. We all remember the great theme tune, sung by Jackie Lee (for years I misheard the line ‘join in all of his games’ as ‘Oliver’s games’ and always wondered who the Oliver character was) and having nightmares about the frightening raspy-voiced stick-boy Raggety.

There were also many merchandise spin-offs from the show, including some books that had photos from the series—one is pictured here—although there is little information about them. They appear to have been published by the *Daily Express*, who owned the rights. There were also View-Master reels, plastic figures filled with bubble bath, and the foam rubber bendy toy version.

The show was repeated on television for many years, but disappeared in the 1980s, mainly due to various copyright issues and it was long thought that various episodes had been lost. Thankfully, all these issues have been resolved and, partly thanks to the fact that Mary had kept hold of some of the original 16mm films in her greenhouse, all 152 episodes are now available to watch again on DVD.

Mary went on to produce many more puppet series, including *Here Comes Mumfie*, *Cloppa Castle* and *The Munch Bunch*, but it is *The Adventures of Rupert Bear* which is the most fondly remembered of all.



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BOB FERRIS'S BEAR? RUPERT AND THE LIKELY LADS

Vic Pratt recalls furry fiascos in a splendid sit-com

Rupert's been Britain's favourite bear for a century now. As Jackie Lee so famously sang, *everybody knows his name* (even if some people, Ms Lee included, insist on that erroneous 'the' in between 'Rupert' and 'Bear'). As befits a bear of his stature, he's referenced in all kinds of popular culture, in music, films and television. In fact, he plays a recurrent part in the lives of Bob Ferris and Terry Collier, the characters at the centre of Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais' classic 1960s sit-com, *The Likely Lads*.

An inspired, wittily written extension of the 'kitchen sink' style of social-realist cinema so strikingly exemplified by gritty British dramas like *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960) and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1962), *The Likely Lads* was a ground-breaking comedy show in many respects—one of which was the fact that two working-class factory hands from the North of England were the protagonists. Superbly performed by Rodney Bewes as podgy, socially-aspirant Bob, and James Bolam as lithe ne'er-do-well Terry, the mundanity of everyday life was central to the show's success. 'What's nice about *The Likely Lads*', wrote Victoria Ironside in the *Daily Mail* in 1967, 'is the dour drabness of the humour. Comedy situations...



involve hanging around for birds who don't turn up, bad beer, being conned, greasy sausages, hangovers. Sheer desperate gloom is always funny, because unfortunately we have all experienced it.'

She was absolutely right, but it was also about more, besides: its depiction of an unbreakable bond of friendship, forged between Bob and Terry in their formative years (so potently plausible that it enabled the writers to concoct an even better sequel series, *Whatever Happened to the Likely Lads?*, in the 1970s); and also about the bitter-sweet sensation of nostalgia for times, people and places past. Even in its earliest days, *The Likely Lads* was all about looking back on yesterday: somehow safer and cosier than today. And that's where everybody's favourite wistfully-recalled childhood bear companion, Rupert, comes in.

Just two weeks after the first series began, in 1964, the lads were talking about him in a specially recorded mini-episode for *Christmas Night with the Stars*, introduced by Jack 'Evening All' Warner. Having been out for work Christmas drinks, Bob and Terry are at Terry's house chatting about hangovers.

Terry: 'It's all in the Christmas tradition, getting plastered. There's one Christmas in every bloke's life when he first reaches out for fizzy tablet instead of a *Rupert Annual*.'

Bob: 'I remember Rupert. The little bear.'

Terry: 'You should remember him. You look like him.'

Bob's retort that Terry looks like Algy Pug leads them to reminisce wistfully about Rupert's Nutwood friends.

Terry: 'I remember now... and there was an elephant, too. Aye, that's right: Edward. Edward the Elephant.'

Bob: 'Yeah... no, it wasn't. Edward Trunk, that was it.'

Terry: ‘No, no, it was Edward the Elephant.’

Bob: ‘It was Edward Trunk.’

Terry: ‘Look man, I *know* it was Edward the Elephant. I used to have an annual every year until I was twelve.’

Bob: ‘I had ’em till I was fifteen.’

After Terry loses ten shillings—having made a bet that he’d got Edward’s name right—Terry gets his *Rupert Annuals* out of the attic and the pair forget to go out as the evening degenerates into a gambling session.

Bob: ‘Right then. For ten shillings, who was in “Rupert and the Umbrella Man”?’

Terry: ‘Well... there was Rupert.’

Bob: ‘Correct.’

Terry: ‘And... er... Tiger Lily, the Chinese bit...’

Bob: ‘Wrong.’

Terry: ‘Well, hang on...’

Bob [counts down]: ‘Ten... nine... eight...’

Terry: ‘Oh, shut up a minute...’

Bob [quietly]: ‘Seven... six... five... four... three... two...’

Terry: ‘Bingo the Pup?’



Bob: ‘Time’s up. It was Bill Badger, Podgy Pig, Rupert’s dad and [decisively] Edward Trunk. Seven pounds, you owe me.’

Bob’s unbeatable when it comes to Rupert: a staunch devotee of the bear. And though his fondness for Rupert pays off here, by the time he’s getting married and moving his stuff into his new house with fiancée Thelma, in a 1973 episode of *Whatever Happened to the Likely Lads?*, it’s become a hindrance.

Thelma: ‘Do you want visitors to see all these things? Do you want our friends to see that our new shelf units are covered in *Rupert Annuals*? And *The Bumper Adventure Book for Boys*? And where are we going to put *Nudes of 1959*? The guest room?’



Bob’s stuff ends up dumped into the local rubbish tip. But Thelma doesn’t manage to get him to give up his bald (‘we used to play hairdressers’) one-eared, one-armed (‘we were interrogating him’) teddy bear, Henry. And another fully intact teddy called Norman also makes regular appearances throughout the second series. Which all goes to show—you can take the boy from the bear, but you can’t take the bear from the boy. Or something like that, anyway.

So while Bob’s teddy was temporarily at risk, and Thelma made him throw out his annuals, Rupert himself has never been under threat. A hundred years have passed, but we still don’t need to ask whatever happened to him. Because we know. Like all magic bears he’s alive and well and forever young.

‘TALK LIKE A PIRATE’: THE BUCCANEERING CAREER OF ROBERT NEWTON

Norman Wright sets sail in search of a seafaring scene-stealer

The decision to give Robert Newton the plum role of Long John Silver in the Disney film *Treasure Island* (1950) was an inspired piece of casting that had a profound influence on the remaining seven years of Newton's screen career. His performance not only stole the picture but also became the Hollywood ideal of how a pirate should act and talk.

The production was Disney's first all live-action feature and, in order to utilise frozen UK box-office receipts, the filming took place in the UK using a predominantly British cast. Its success resulted in three further Disney costume adventures being produced in the UK in quick succession: *The Story of Robin Hood and his Merrie Men* (1952), *The Sword and the Rose* (1953) and *Rob Roy the Highland Rogue* (1953).

We think of Newton as the star of *Treasure Island* and it comes as something of a surprise to realise that top billing actually went to thirteen-year-old American child actor Bobby Driscoll for his role as Jim Hawkins. Driscoll had been in films since 1943 and was seen as a rising star. More importantly, the Disney organisation saw him as a box office draw for the all-important American market. Driscoll's

scenes were all filmed early on during the production as he was only in the UK on a three-month work permit.

Despite receiving only second billing, it is Newton who infuses life into the film. Francis De Wolff as Black Dog and Finlay Currie as Billy Bones get the movie off to an exciting start but Denis O'Dea and Walter Fitzgerald's lacklustre performances as Dr Livesey and Squire Trelawney let the film down badly. It is only when Long John Silver makes his appearance that the film picks up pace and the action proper doesn't begin until the Hispaniola reaches Treasure Island.

Despite the often-made claim that Newton's interpretation of Long John Silver was over the top, a viewing of *Treasure Island* shows that his performance was actually rather restrained. Disney made the film as a family-friendly vehicle with the book's more violent episodes removed. The last thing Disney wanted was young audience members scared out of their wits by a frightening pirate. Throughout the first half of the film Newton's delivery remains very controlled as his character attempts to prevent attention being drawn to the pirate plot to steal the ship and the treasure. It is only after Jim Hawkins and the loyal members of the crew discover the one-legged seaman's duplicity that Silver's anger mounts and his manner becomes more forceful. The best-remembered line in the book, 'Them that die'll be the lucky ones', is savoured by Newton and I was quite surprised that the Disney script editor allowed it to remain.

For all Long John's villainy, Newton's interpretation of the role gave audiences a character they found difficult to dislike. His scenes with Bobby Driscoll display a warm rapport that comes over well on film. As the final



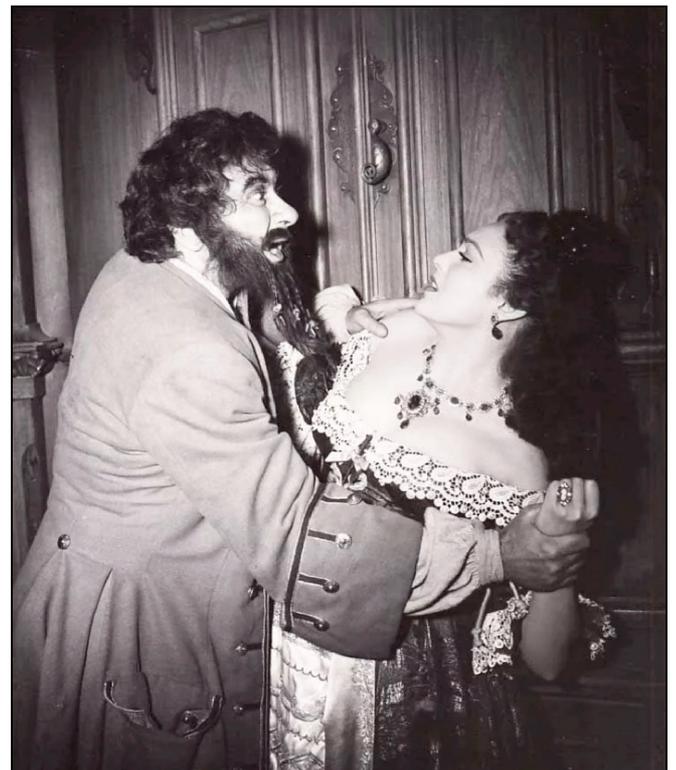


credits are about to roll and we see Silver sailing off in a small boat I imagine every young viewer was pleased that the old rascal had managed, with the connivance of Jim

Hawkins, to escape justice. Robert Newton probably thought that he too had said goodbye to the one-legged pirate but if that was the case he had another think coming.

The 1950s were awash with pirate films, all trying to cash in on the success of *The Black Swan* (1942) and *The Spanish Main* (1945). In 1952 RKO, makers of *The Spanish Main*, tried to emulate its success with another pirate romp. Their choice of vehicle was *Blackbeard the Pirate* (1952) and looking for a suitable actor to play the utterly villainous central character they decided upon Robert Newton. If Newton's performance as Silver had been restrained the very opposite was the case in his portrayal of Edward Teach, better known as Blackbeard. The character is without a single redeeming feature. He kills out of hand, shows no loyalty to his crew and thinks only of personal gain. His 'scene-chewing' delivery hogs the film, almost overwhelming the performance of the heroine, played by feisty Linda Darnell, and totally annihilating that of the insipid hero, played by an underwhelming Keith Andes.

The production was cheaply made, relying on much footage borrowed from *The Spanish*



Main. Unusually for a swashbuckler of this period, *Blackbeard the Pirate* is an overtly violent film. The death of Blackbeard, buried up to his neck in sand and left to drown as the tide comes in, is graphically filmed leaving little to the imagination—making it highly unsuitable for young viewers who were used to swashbuckling villains being dispatched with a quick sword thrust. I'm sure the film sank at the box office. Although Blackbeard was well and truly dead, producer Joseph Kaufmann thought that Long John Silver was a character worth resurrecting. All he needed to do was persuade Newton to reprise his role as the one-legged pirate.

Long John Silver (1954), produced by the aptly named Treasure Island Pictures, was made on location in New South Wales and filmed in CinemaScope. Newton received top billing as Silver with co-star Connie Gilchrist as Purity Pinker, the proprietor of the Cask and Anchor, the tavern where Long John and his crew carouse when not at sea. Newton and Gilchrist have good screen chemistry. She is continually conniving to persuade Long John to marry her; he spends his time avoiding tying the knot, while at the same time keeping her sweet so that he can enjoy the resources her inn has to offer. Jim Hawkins is played by twelve-year-old Kit Taylor in his first screen appearance. For a novice actor his perform-

ance is first-rate and at times he almost carries the picture. Prominent amongst Silver's crew is 'Patch', played by Grant Taylor, father of Kit Taylor.

The plot centres around Silver's rescue of Jim Hawkins and the governor's daughter from a pirate named Mendoza before he and his crew, together with young Hawkins, return to Treasure Island in search of more treasure. The hiding place of this second hoard is revealed on a medallion in the possession of Jim Hawkins. Once back on the island, the treasure hunters encounter Israel Hands—presumed killed in *Treasure Island*. It seems Hands was not killed by Hawkins in their earlier confrontation but only blinded, and the deranged pirate has been living on the island ever since with the one overwhelming desire to kill the boy who destroyed his sight. Hands is played by an unrecognisable Rod Taylor, who is genuinely scary as the blind pirate with almost superhuman hearing that he uses to track down his human prey.

Unfortunately *Long John Silver* failed to live up to its potential. Robert Newton is visibly not in the best of health and his performance, while aurally compelling, is visually quite static and this lack of action on his part can't be fully compensated for by other members of the cast. The scenes with Israel Hands are well staged and Kit Taylor and Connie Gilchrist both give strong performances in their scenes. The film's main failings are the rambling storyline and the lacklustre pirate



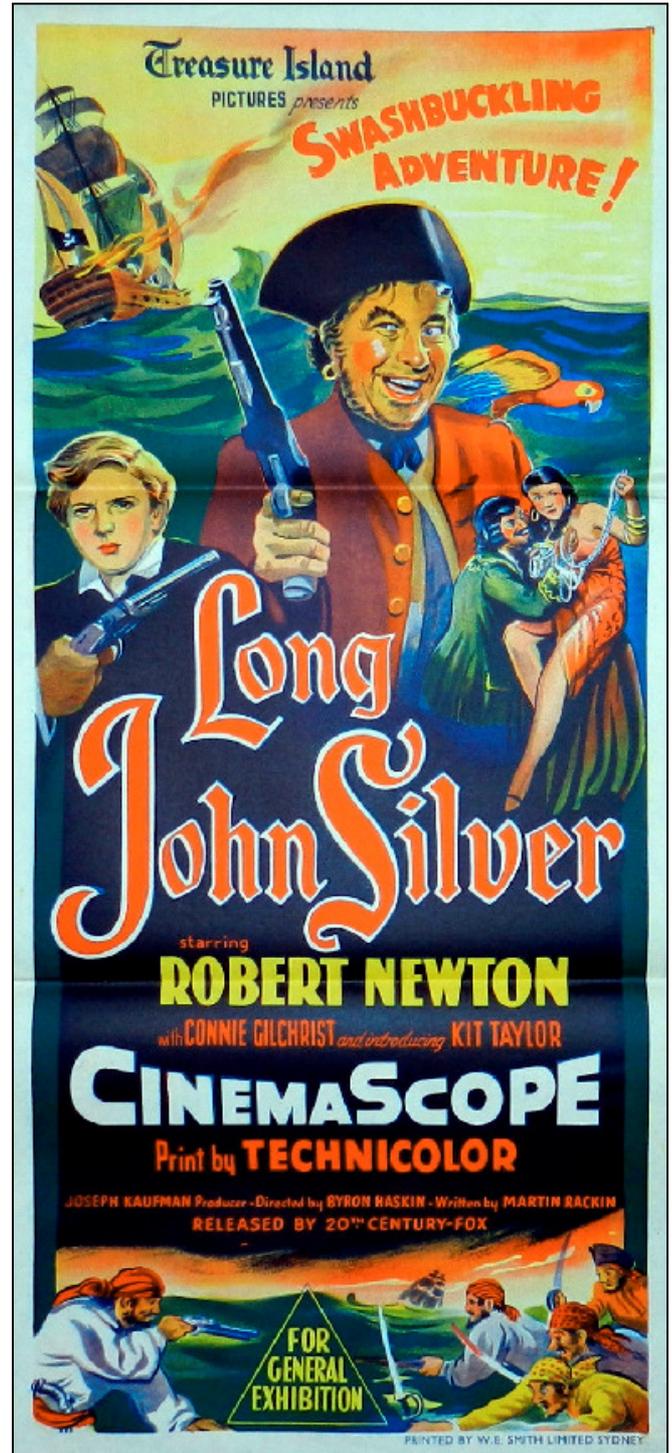
crew. Despite these shortcomings, it was decided to produce a 26-episode colour TV series, *The Adventures of Long John Silver*, back to back with the feature film, with the cast of the film reprising their roles for the TV episodes.

As a boy, watching the series during the late 1950s, I found little to attract me in *The Adventures of Long John Silver*. It had a rousing theme tune and a good opening sequence of Newton, as Long John, reciting Stevenson's poem from the beginning of *Treasure Island* but, compared with the ITC swashbucklers, it was lifeless. Sword fights were few and far between and a great deal of time was devoted to the banter between Silver and Purity Pinker, set in the static setting of the Cask and Anchor.

Fourteen episodes are available on DVD and, viewing them now, one wonders at what audience the producers were aiming. With little action and hardly any sequences set on the high seas it has few qualities to appeal to a young audience. Newton was obviously having health problems during the production and, to the detriment of the rest of the cast, he appears to ad-lib many of his lines. The series is carried by Connie Gilchrist and Kit Taylor, both of whom give good performances in what must have been difficult circumstances.

Despite its shortcomings, the series has at least one excellent episode entitled 'Sword of Vengeance' that differs markedly from all the other segments. It doesn't feature Kit Taylor or Connie Gilchrist and Silver and his crew have little to do in the episode. What it does have is a guest appearance by an actor named Owen Weingott. Weingott was an expert swordsman who dominates the action with a skilled performance that featured much swordplay, including a well-staged and lengthy final duel. The entire feel of the episode is very different from the rest of the series and one could only wish that as much action had been incorporated into other episodes.

Robert Newton died in 1956 at the young



age of fifty. During a long and distinguished career he gave many fine performances including Brodie in *Hatter's Castle* (1942), Dr Arnold in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1951) and his electrifying Bill Sykes in *Oliver Twist* (1948), but to those of us raised on adventure films and TV swashbucklers during the 1950s he will always be Long John Silver with his staring eyes and his rasping delivery of those immortal words: 'Ahh, Jim Lad!'

THE SOUND OF BUNTER

Alan Pratt tunes in to some ‘audio-only’ episodes of BBC’s *Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School*

For me, the best thing, by far, about the BBC television series *Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School* (1952-61) was Gerald Campion. His portrayal of ‘The Fat Owl’ was so definitive that, even now, when reading a Greyfriars story, it is Campion’s voice that I hear squeaking along the Remove passage. The other schoolboy performers tended to merge into the background, merely reciting their allocated lines (and laughing on cue), and it is unlikely that young viewers at the time would have cared, or even noticed, if the roles of Wharton, Cherry, et al., were handed to other actors.

The shows were cheaply made with the most basic sets and it is quite possible to listen to them as if they were, in fact, radio broadcasts without losing anything in the process—except, of course, the wonderful facial expressions of the excellent Campion.



The four ‘audio-only’ episodes discussed below, which are referenced on the Friardale website and available on YouTube, were discarded by the BBC but preserved by a fan. As they were transmitted, he recorded them using a domestic tape recorder. Produced by Clive Parkhurst, and from the sixth series, they date from the 1960-61 period. Creator Charles Hamilton was in poor health at this time and scripts were not always readily available—hence the fact that some of the material here would appear to be the work of other writers and not all from the Great Man himself!

Bunter Knows How (aka *Loder’s Telegram*)

Transmitted 13 August 1960

A good one this! Bunter, hiding behind a tree, overhears bullying prefect Loder and a local publican—rascally Joey Banks—hatching a plot to keep school captain Wingate out of a vital cricket match. Like the fabled boy who cried wolf, Bunter’s problem is how to get someone to believe him. The storyline may be a familiar one to Hamilton fans but it is certainly none the worse for that.

Bunter’s Bicycle

Transmitted 27 August 1960

The runt of the litter as far as this collection of



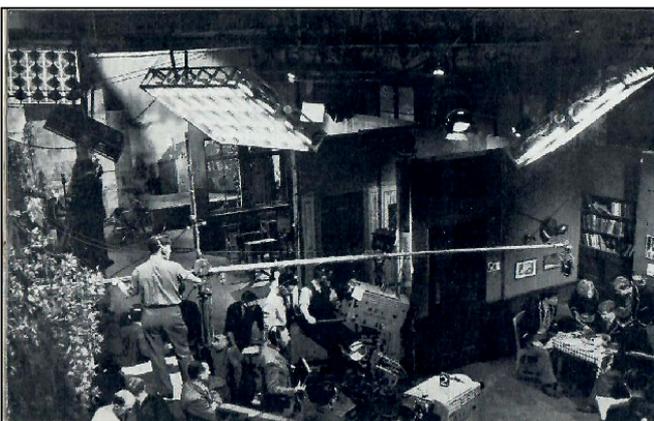


episodes is concerned. Bunter orders a posh new bicycle from the cycle shop in Courtfield only to find that his pater refuses to pay for it. There are many reasons for my believing that this is a substitute story: Bunter doesn't know how to ride it initially, yet there have been scores of stories in which he rides bicycles; he takes an evening job to pay for it and dutifully puts aside the fifteen shillings he makes for the cycle shop, et cetera. The final means of settlement for the price of the bicycle is more typical of something from a *Knockout* comic strip than the imagination of the Great Man!

Toffee Hunter Bunter

Transmitted 10 September 1960

Bunter, trying to retrieve some toffee from his form master's study, is blamed for the loss of an article on the odes of Horace which Mr



Quelch has written for the *Classical Review*. The real villain of the piece is shifty Removite Harold Skinner, but there are plenty of typically Hamiltonian misunderstandings before he is called to account. The scene in which Mr Quelch—played by Jack Melford—asks Bunter what he has done with his 'article' and Bunter—thinking that he is referring to toffee—says he has eaten it, is genuinely laugh out loud funny. Campion and Melford make an excellent double act.

Bunter's Party

Transmitted 24 September 1960

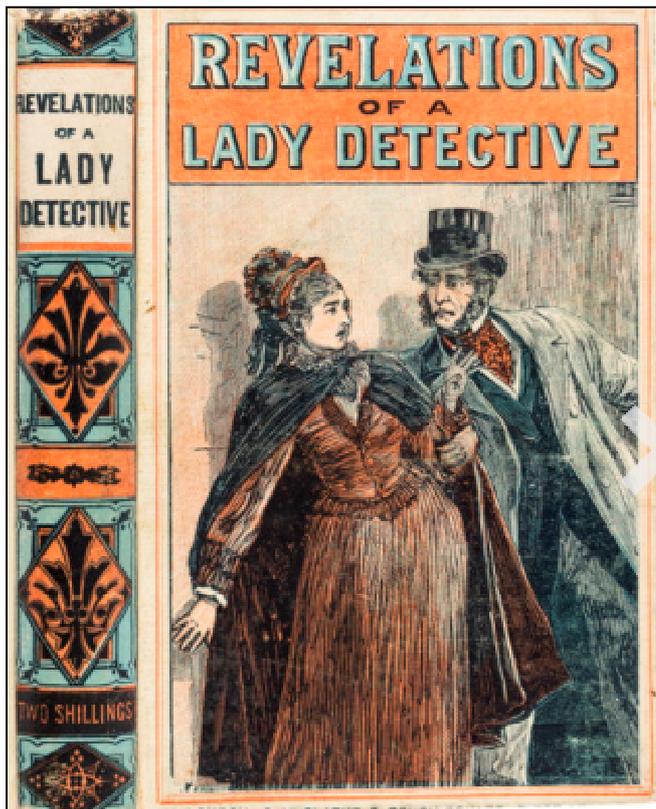
There's a change of locale for this one. Bunter invites the Famous Five to Tankerton Hall for a half term holiday, courtesy of his Uncle Carter. What they don't know is that it isn't a freebie: the Hall is actually a hotel and they are going to be presented with substantial bills. A sub-plot involves a family fortune lost in the ruins of the haunted wing and the efforts of a knavish servant to scare the school-boys away and search for the money himself. Definite shades of *Scooby Doo* here!



DETECTIVES IN PETTICOATS

Corinna Reicher celebrates a plethora of pioneering female crime-busters

There is a long list of female detectives in crime fiction who have become household names. Yet, even as a life-long crime fiction aficionada, I had never heard of their Victorian and Edwardian sisters in crime until recently. Trailblazers Mrs Glad-den, Mrs Paschal, Loveday Brooke, Dorcas Dene, Lois Cayley, Mollie Delamere, Hagar Stanley, Hilda Wade, Dora Myrl, Bella Thorn, Lady Molly Robinson-Kirk, and Judith Lee gave criminals a run for their money long before private detective Miss Maud Silver solved her first case or Miss Jane Marple arrived in St Mary Mead.



Early detective fiction offered female characters who could exist as professionals in their own right. They carved out their own career paths without standing in the shadows of any illustrious male relatives. In fact, the first female detectives in British fiction, Mrs Glad-den and Mrs Paschal, whose pursuits were first published in 1864 (there is some dispute

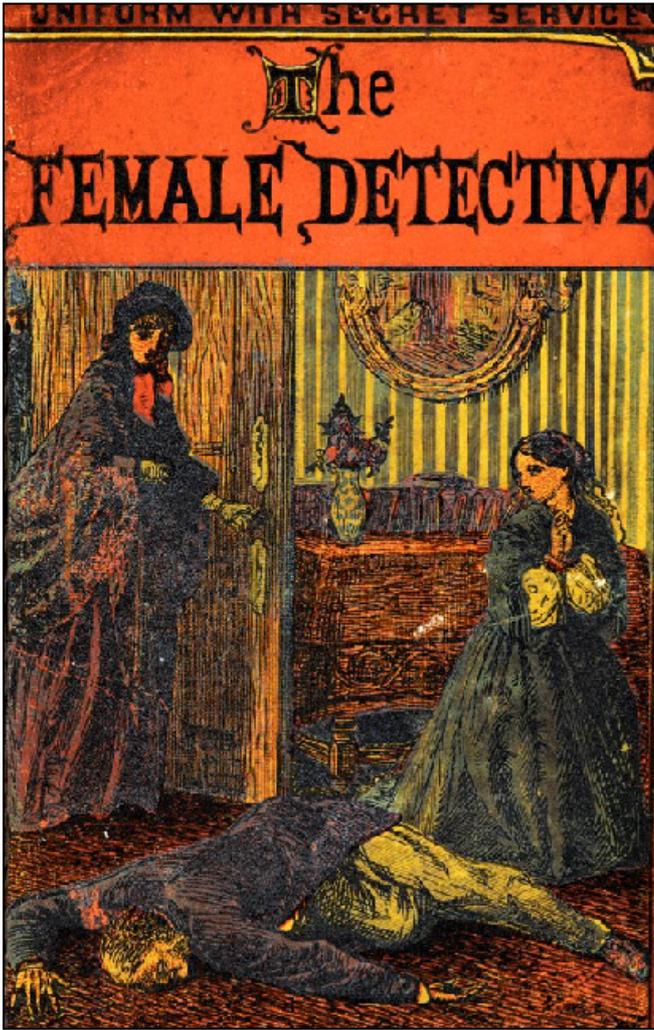
as to who arrived first; and the dates cannot be definitively pinned down), were nearing retirement age by the time Sherlock Holmes first entered the scene.

What I find intriguing about these very early examples of female detectives is that their existence was entirely rooted in fantasy. There were no role models off the page. Yes, as early as the 1860s, Mrs Paschal works as a detective in a special unit for women attached to the Metropolitan Police; yet the first female police officers in London would in fact not be appointed until 1919 (although some roles, such as matrons for female prisoners existed before the turn of the century, and women took on many traditionally male roles during the First World War).

As fictional characters, lady detectives were able to forge careers in crime investigation that would not have been open to them in reality for decades to come. While this might have awarded the characters some relative freedom, and enabled them to experience some breath-taking adventures, catching burglars, kidnappers, or even murderers, they still largely had to operate within the confines of a restrictive society and meet conventional expectations about female behaviour.

It is, therefore, particularly noteworthy that the first two fictional female detectives, Andrew Forrester's creation Mrs (or Miss) Glad-den, sometimes referred to simply as 'G', and William Stephens Hayward's character Mrs Paschal, whose pursuits are recounted in *Revelations of a Lady Detective*, defy many of these expectations. It may be no surprise that Mrs Glad-den's accounts deliberately lack detail about her personal life. The character's anonymity enables her to pursue her work autonomously at her own leisure. As the heroine puts it herself in the introduction to *The Female Detective*:

'Who am I? It can matter little who I am. It



may be that I took to the trade because I had no other means of making a living; or it may be that for the work of detection I had a longing which I would not overcome. It may be that I am a widow working for my children—or I may be an unmarried woman, whose only care is herself.'

While we may never get a full picture of who 'G' is as a person, we do get a lot of technical details about her detective work. It is precisely the focus on her job, rather than her personal life, that I appreciate about these early detective stories, re-issued as part of the British Library Crime Classics series. G just gets on with the job and solving the case is her only focus. Largely unaided by technology or sophisticated forensic techniques, G nevertheless approaches her work methodically. She observes and uses methods of deduction (!), employs different interviewing techniques, studies crime scenes and effectively works

undercover by posing as a dressmaker—an early master, or rather mistress, of disguise too! What the stories in *The Female Detective* may lack in terms of flamboyant memorable characters, they make up for in detail about the processes and procedures utilised to solve a case and in Mrs Gladden's entertaining commentary.

Mrs Paschal, contemporary of Mrs Gladden, equally doesn't offer much information about herself. A middle-aged lady, she makes it clear from the outset that 'it is hardly necessary to refer to the circumstances which led me to embark on a career at once strange, exciting, and mysterious, but I may say that my husband died suddenly, leaving me badly off. An offer was made through a peculiar channel. I accepted it without hesitation, and became one of the much-dreaded, but little-known people called Female Detectives.' We do, however, learn a lot about her character through her voice, as she narrates her pursuits. In her own words a woman with a 'vigorous and subtle brain' who is not intimidated by her male superiors, she doesn't shy away from dangerous situations or violence. Like Mrs Gladden, she utilises the practice of infiltrating the household of a suspect by posing as a domestic worker, which enables her to blend into the background and shadow potentially dangerous criminals.

It is a shame that, after such a promising start, readers had to wait for quite some time until the next generation of female sleuths would emerge around the turn of the century, when there finally was a flurry of activity amongst the lady detectives.

The formidable Loveday Brooke was created by C L Pirkis: Catherine Louise Pirkis, and therefore one of the first, if not *the* first female author to create a professional female detective. Before the Brooke stories were collected into book form, they appeared in *The Ludgate Monthly* between February and July 1893. Commentators remark that Loveday Brooke broke with many conventions. She is a single woman who 'some five or six years

previously, by a jerk of Fortune's wheel, had been thrown upon the world penniless and all but friendless. Marketable accomplishments she had found she had none, so she had forthwith defied convention, and had chosen for herself a career that had cut her off sharply from her former associates and her position in society.' Thirty years after the anonymised accounts of her predecessor Mrs Gladden, the profession of detective was still not considered a respectable occupation for a woman, which is hardly surprising since women were expected to spend their days in an entirely domestic setting. Loveday Brooke works for a

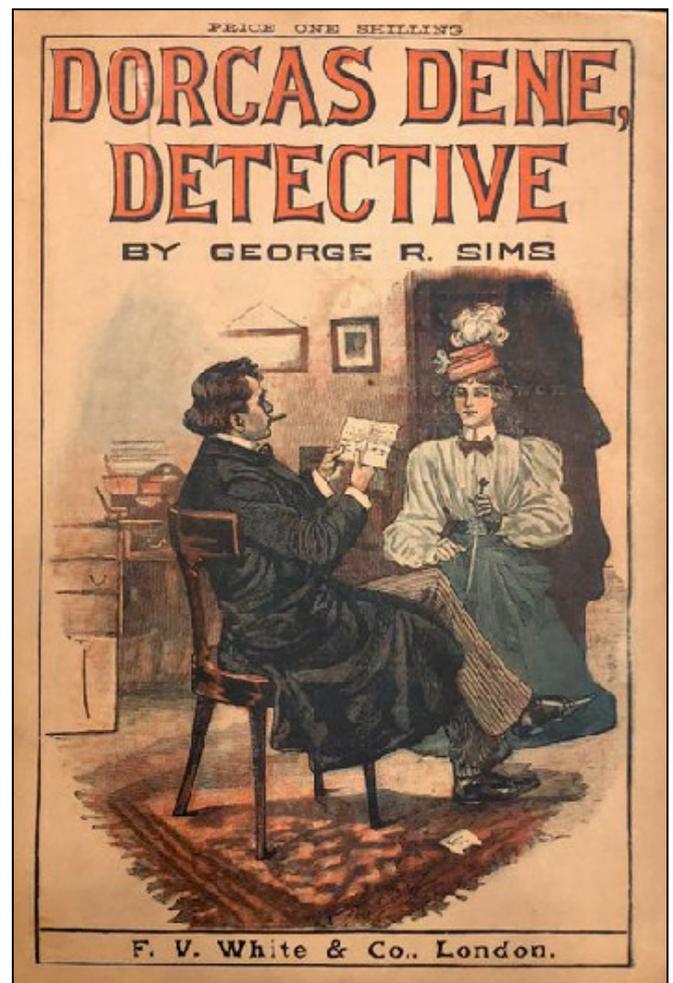


detective agency where she reports to her boss Ebenezer Dyer. Her appearance is described as nondescript; she is assertive, a professional investigator who is met with respect. She analyses the cases she works on in a logical manner but follows her intuition when necessary. She is well-versed in the tricks of the trade, uses a magnifying glass, invisible ink and ciphers and compares samples of handwriting by copying them on to tracing paper. Following in her predecessor's footsteps, she uses disguises; but expands her range of portrayals to include servant, dressmaker, secretary, interior decorator or lady lodger. She is entirely self-reliant and not afraid to have verbal sparring matches with her boss. With Loveday Brooke, C L Pirakis not only created a remarkable character and popular detective

stories; she finally paved the way for many more lady detectives to arrive on the scene.

The reasons why these extraordinary ladies turned their minds toward the uglier aspects of life, to catch petty criminals, kidnapers, burglars or ruthless killers, were varied. Like their predecessors Mrs Paschal and Loveday Brooke, some acted out of economic necessity; others struggled in their chosen careers or, like Grant Allen's character Lois Cayley, who first appeared in the *Strand Magazine* in 1898, were simply looking for adventure.

Another favourite of mine, Dorcas Dene, by George R Sims (first appearing in *Dorcas Dene, Detective: Her Life and Adventures*, 1897), is a former actress forced to find gainful employment when her husband Paul, a promising artist, loses his eyesight. Dorcas learns how to be a detective on the job in the employ of a detective agency owned by a former police officer, but quickly becomes her own boss by taking over the firm on her

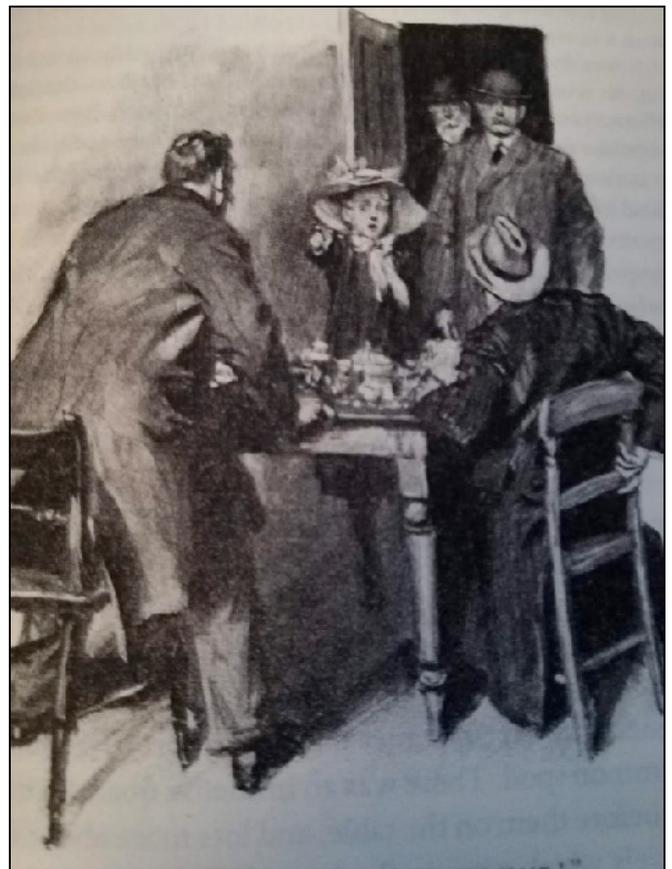
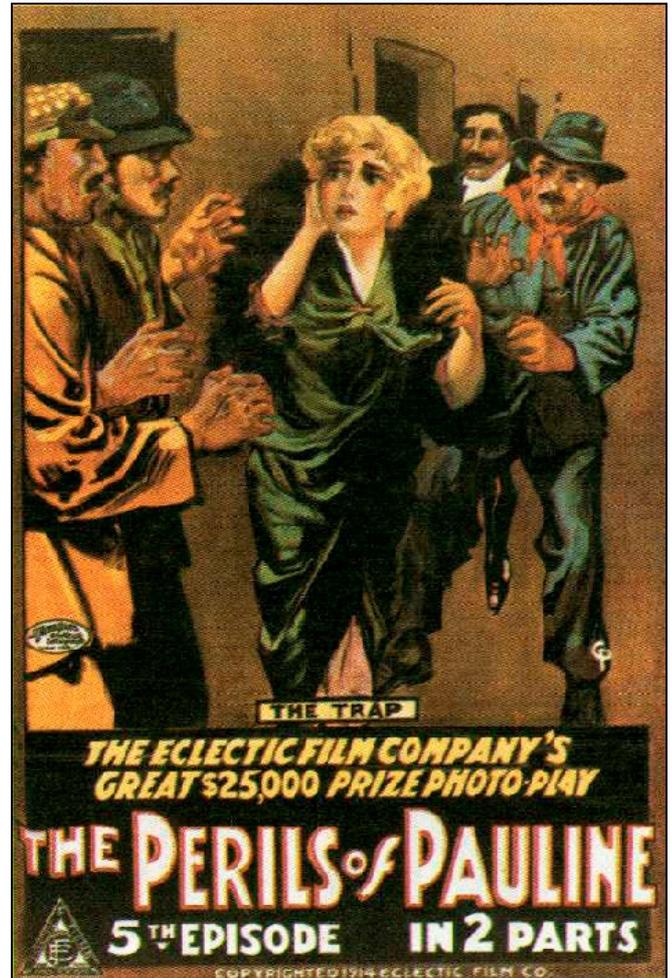


mentor's retirement. Dorcas Dene is often compared to Sherlock Holmes. Dorcas has her own Watson, personified in her sidekick and narrator Mr Sexton. Just like Holmes, she follows clues such as footprints, and uses her powers of disguise and deduction. Always employing her professional skills, she solves a series of cases which are enjoyable to read and well-plotted.

As the genre of crime fiction itself evolved, its characters were drawn in more detail and became more colourful and adventurous. Newer heroines were granted other attributes not necessarily considered seemly for ladies, such as physical fitness. For instance, Dora Myrl, a modern young woman with a medical degree from Cambridge turned detective, chases a thief on a bicycle in the story 'How He Cut His Stick' by M McDonnell Bodkin.

Echoing film serials of the silent era, such as *The Perils of Pauline*, Richard Marsh's heroine Judith Lee goes after hardened criminals and fiercely fights off direct and physical threats to her life (she learns judo and becomes a martial arts expert). Unlike some of her colleagues, she doesn't pursue a career as detective out of economic necessity. It is a sideline that she is initially drawn into as a young girl when she becomes the victim of and witness to a bizarre crime that leaves her traumatised. Due to her ability to lip-read, she 'overhears' a conversation between two criminals and assists the police in locating the scene of an imminent crime. Judith Lee's highly successful adventures were first published in the *Strand Magazine* in 1911 and later collected in two volumes (some stories were published after Marsh's death).

If you'd like to read a collection of stories featuring some of these formidable ladies, and more, I recommend *The Penguin Book of Victorian Women in Crime: Forgotten Cops and Private Eyes from the Time of Sherlock Holmes*, edited by Michael Sims. This volume also includes a great introduction to the genre by the editor, as well as suggestions for further reading.



A HAPPY CHRISTMAS—WITH THE 1967 VALIANT ANNUAL

Len Cooper recalls a Yuletide comic-strip treat

Like many of my fellow hobbyists, as a child I looked forward to receiving an annual or two on Christmas Day. Envious though I am of the youngsters of today—who have the world’s knowledge, films and music at their fingertips, every minute of every day—there was something special about the comics of yesteryear, where the only ‘technology’ involved was in the stories themselves.

As I have frequently remarked to my friends in the London Old Boys’ Book Club, I can barely remember what has happened over the past week. But certain comic characters and storylines from the 1960s are etched into my 63-year-old brain—never to be erased!

I loved the humour of *The Beano*, *The Dandy*, *The Topper*, *Smash*, *Sparky* and *Buster*—the final one in that list was a real favourite for many years—but, for a bit more ‘action’, I would have to say that *Valiant* was one that never disappointed.

Wikipedia informs me that the 712 issues of *Valiant* ran from April 1962 to October 1976. Though it went through a number of name changes and mergers, it always returned to its simpler one-word name. The subject of this article is the 1967 *Valiant Annual* (published in late 1966). There were two comic strips therein which I can recall with almost photographic clarity.



The first featured Captain Hurricane (Hercules Hurricane to give him his full name—ex-Navy man, turned Royal Marine). The opening frames show our hero striding purposefully through the army camp to meet his pint-size batman Maggot Malone. They step into a ring formed of fellow marines. The sergeant tells them that he wants a good, clean contest—and may the best man win. ‘That’ll be me!’ they both state, grimly. Fortunately for our heroes, Mr Quelch is not there to correct them on their use of the accusative—rather than nominative—case for the personal pronoun.

Then, amid a tense hush, the final of the barracks’ tiddley-winks championship begins! The sausage-like appendages of the captain are no match for the delicate fingers of the diminutive batman, who romps home to a 54-8 victory and proceeds to rub it in—at every opportunity—much to the chagrin of our hero.



Just as Hurricane raises a broom to give his batman an almighty swipe—in response to the latter's gloating—the CO walks in and is impressed by the captain doing a 'spot of sweeping' for his fellow marine!

He proceeds to outline a plan to drop the pair behind enemy lines, to help solve the deadlock at St Carmet in Northern France. We learn that 'retreating enemy forces had fortified the town and were preventing the allies from progressing'.

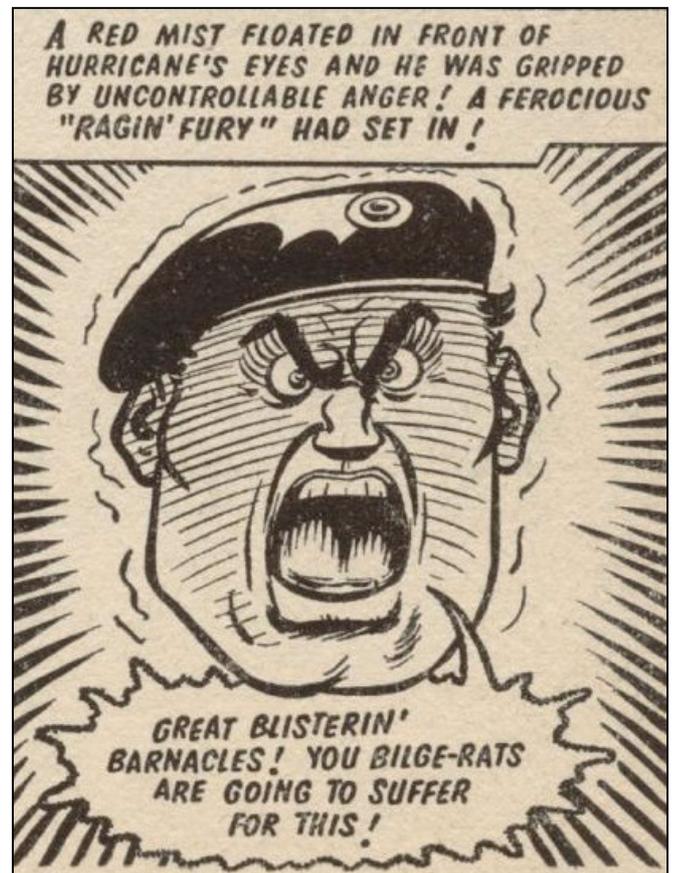
Hurricane lands at the selected spot—but Maggot lands in a nearby pond and his lack of accuracy is ridiculed by his leader. The batman jerks up his sub-machine gun with an accompanying 'Cop 'old o' that, you ugly perisher!', and a fierce burst of gunfire rips through the branch of a nearby tree, which lands on the head of an approaching 'sneaky squarehead'. The captain thanks his batman for saving his bacon—but there are more enemy soldiers behind and Maggot pitches forward with a groan, as he is hit!

Hurricane is furious and a red mist floats in front of his eyes, as a 'ragin' fury' takes hold: 'Great blisterin' barnacles! You bilge-rats are going to suffer for this!' Basil Fawlty would have been proud! He storms forward and begins to make mincemeat of the enemy soldiers. Unfortunately, he is so inflamed that he gets careless and is knocked unconscious by the butt of a rifle.

Hurricane awakens, tied up and facing General Heinrich von Stormbrasser—who makes the fatal mistake of insulting our hero, igniting a second ragin' fury. He breaks free of his bonds and, having disposed of his captors, sprints from the house and comes across his batman—with his arm in a sling. The General receives a swift left uppercut from Maggot's good arm, leaving our heroes to plan their next move.

Hurricane leads them into a house, which turns out to be an ammo store containing a huge pile of land mines. Taking the mines upstairs and using a wooden barrel top, he launches them out of the various windows, as

if playing tiddley-winks! The enemy is kept busy—in no state to oppose the allies, who arrive shortly to find the place in ruins. 'That's right chums—it was my Cap'n! He's been playing tiddley-winks!' says Maggot. 'Poor bloke! He's wounded and the shock's affected his brain!' responds an allied soldier. Captain Hurricane's spectacular encounter has restored his confidence and he's ready for a rematch. Sadly, the arm which suffered the injury was the one Maggot uses for tiddley-winks, he tells his master with a cheeky grin, so the rematch will have to wait. 'Bah!' says our hero—revenge plan foiled!



The second story I'd like to tell you about—'Kelly's Eye'—contains no humour whatsoever and appealed to me because it tells of the discovery of the Eye of Zoltec: a diamond which makes its wearer invincible!

It begins with Tim Kelly arriving in South America to claim the valuable Los Solos Mines, left to him by an uncle who has met an

untimely end. The men who have been running the mines in his absence are not as friendly as they appear and send Tim to the interior—and they do not expect him to return. Bloating, bullying Police Chief Pedro Garcia arrests Tim as soon as he steps off the plane, and sells him into slavery, to work in the mines—a four-day trek away, through thick jungle.

When an old man can walk no further, he is callously thrown into the river—food for the piranhas! Tim dives in and, ignoring gunshots from the guards, swims towards the old man. Fortunately, a stray bullet dislodges a huge anaconda from an overhanging branch and so the pursuing piranhas change direction to feed on the snake.

Tim rescues the old man. The latter, fading fast, offers our hero the chance of everlasting life if he can carry him to the great Temple of Zoltec. It's a perilous journey to the top, but Tim gets hold of a Spaniard's helmet and a gold spear, which he uses to fight off spiders and giant bats.

Reaching the great stone face of Zoltec,



mounted above the crater of a volcano, Tim climbs through the eye, from which a ray of light shines. To his dismay, it is not daylight—but light from a strange object mounted on a stone pillar: the Eye of Zoltec. He tries to wrench it from its base, oblivious to rumblings from without. Then, with a mighty roar, the temple explodes.

Awakening, he realises the Eye of Zoltec has saved his life. Thus, feeling strangely invigorated, it's a quick trip upriver to a trading post, where he acquires a boat to take him to his late uncle's mines. Senor Sanchez cannot believe it when Kelly appears. He throws a knife at our hero, which ricochets off to fall harmlessly to the ground... as does cowardly Sanchez, afterwards! He confesses all.

Tim radios the authorities, who arrest the treacherous partners and Garcia. The story ends with Tim looking lovingly at the Eye of Zoltec: 'Aided by the power of your invincibility, I vow to fight injustice and evil wherever they are to be found.' What a guy.

Ah, happy days!

THE DUST JACKET

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