Dear Collector,

Firstly, despite the fact it is now April, I do hope you had a pleasant Christmas and New Year. The past few months have brought good fortune both generally and for your collecting.

Space limitations suited to other features which should therefore the space would be better used for other features which should generate wider interest. I feel subscribers which suggests the general interest in the feature is low. I feel the past six months have been rather hectic at the phil-comics HQ. I mentioned a stock of nearly 10,000 comics in the last newsletter which, unsurprisingly, was getting a little out of hand, even with a room devoted to them in the new flat. Many of you with internet access will have seen the mammoth listings we ran on eBay, from mid October right up to Christmas week. We had a break in January, recommenced in February and are set to continue at our current rate all year. Many of the auctions have been Beano and Dandy items and I have discussed notable results in a Market Report on the back page. Congratulations to Jonathan Juleff who claimed his hat-trick and won the 1964 Christmas Beano comic. Euan Kerr, BeanoMax editor, picked the triumphant line: "Perhaps I should have left the lid on the honey pot."

It is with regret that I have not included a caption competition with this issue. To date, captions have been received from less than 10% of subscribers which suggests the general interest in the feature is low. I feel therefore the space would be better suited to other features which should generate wider interest.

The Dandy comic turned 70 in December and, in July this year, The Beano comic follows suit! In celebration, an exhibition of original Beano and Dandy comic artwork will be on display at The Cartoon Museum in London this Summer.

Amongst others, Desperate Dan, Dennis the Menace, The Bash Street Kids, Minnie the Minx, Lord Snooty, Beryl the Peril, Black Bob, Jonah and Les Pretend will appear.

The exhibition begins on the big day itself, 30th July, and runs through until 2nd November. We visited a similar exhibition at the museum in 2006 and it was enjoyable to see early examples of the original comic art. The exhibition will be held at The Cartoon Museum, 35 Little Russell Street, London, WCIA 2HH. To find out more details you can contact the museum on 0207 580 8155 or visit their website at www.cartoonmuseum.org.

My thanks go to recent subscriber Paolo Francis of Croydon, who kindly sent a comic strip of his own hand about the rivalry at a live auction — the auctioned item being the #1 Dandy comic. Space limitations mean the whole strip cannot be reproduced here so I have included just one frame, above.

The strip reminded me of the days when Hamer Auctions (Martin and Janet Hamer) ran live auctions in Worksop, Notts. Of most interest to myself were those auctions held in the early 00s prior to their retirement in 2004. All the auctions I attended were excellent, but these latter sales were held in the renovated waiting room of Worksop Railway Station and included the Denis Gifford collection.

I am a great advocate of eBay and buying online from the comfort of your own home, but you cannot, in my opinion at least, beat the excitement of buying in person at auction. If you thought there was a lot of auction psychology involved in online auctions, live auctions take it to a new dimension!

Handling the books and, in my case, smelling them too, the pre-sale banter, working out where best to sit (or stand – usually at the back to keep a watchful eye on what’s going on!), checking out the likely competition, working out maximum bids (and trying to stick to them!) and post-sale reflection (hopefully without fisty-cuffs) all add up to an exciting, adrenaline-fueled day!

Arguably my most memorable moment at a live Hamer Auction was in October 2000, at Worksop Station, when complete collections of Beano and Dandy annuals were offered. At Lot 291 was "The Dandy Monster Comic 1939 No 1 Inscr As Fine an example as you could wish to see Est. £3,000". On entering the auction room, Martin Hamer, fully aware of my desire for Fine annuals, rushed over, offered a firm handshake and ushered me to a glass topped cabinet. On opening it he took out Lot 291, turned the book over and exclaimed...
"Look at that back board!" The back board in question (pictured on page 4) was (it still is) gleaming white and spotless!

This auction was held before my friendship with my arch nemesis, David Jones, had fully blossomed, but it transpired several months later in email correspondence that he too was present at the auction and had received the same "back board" treatment! Fortunately for me, the rivalry that Martin was (understandably) hankering for was not tested on that particular day as I was delighted, and astonished, when nobody else bid and the hammer came crashing down (I say crashing - it felt like an eternity at the time!) at my reserve price bid of £2,500.

Do any subscribers have fond memories of a live auction or indeed a Hamer Auction? Perhaps you too had the "back board" treatment?!

I hope you enjoy this newsletter.

Best wishes,

Phil Shrimpton

**Fan Clubs by Phil Shrimpton**

I mentioned the Desperate Dan Pie-Eaters’ Club in the last newsletter and decided to put my enquiry to DC Thomson, who were probably in the best position to respond. They informed me that the Desperate Dan Pie-Eaters’ Club, having begun in June 1978, ended in the mid 1990s with about 350,000 members. The Dennis the Menace Fan Club began in June 1976 and ended in 1998 with approximately 1.3 million members!

I was a member of the Dennis the Menace Fan Club (I think I joined twice, in fact!) but wasn’t a member of the Pie-Eaters’ club, although am quite partial to a steak and kidney at the local chippy! Anyway, shortly after publishing issue 4, I did in fact join the club. Well, I cheated a little and purchased a former member’s club goodies through eBay. The Pie-Eaters’ club offered a wallet containing two badges, a set of stickers, secrets of Desperate Dan’s muscle building exercises and several Pie-Eater’s passwords, including “Howdy, what time is it? Cowpie Time!”

The Dennis the Menace Fan Club offered a very similar member pack, with wallet, a Dennis the Menace badge, furry Gnasher badge and a variety of passwords. "Members should greet each other with “D.I.N.G.” (Dennis is never good) and “D.O.N.G.” (Dennis owns naughty Gnasher).” Secretly supplied by Gnasher and only to be used by Fang Club Members were Gnashwords (Gnosh! = Dinner’s ready; Gnashty! = Dinner’s horrible; Gnight-Gnight = Sleep well etc).

Despite the DTM Fan Club ending in 1998, the Gnasher badge has not been forgotten. The Kaiser Chiefs (an indie band from Leeds, UK) used the Gnasher badge on the cover of a limited edition 7” single called “The Angry Mob”, pictured right, released in August 2007, with artwork by the Beano artist Nigel Parkinson.
Hi Phil,

I wanted to say a big thanks for newsletter issue #4. I really felt this was a strong issue. It was broader than before, particularly holding more Dandy interest.

Can I please say that as well as admiring your dedication to making this a success - it is clearly evident in the effort you put in - I also recognise and admire your balance of opinion, rectitude and responsibility in producing the final version. In the latest issue I was particularly impressed with your treatment of the Dandy Xtreme. A brave inclusion but an absolute must and I loved your respectful treatment of it.

Kind regards as always,

Paul Spice, Australia

Editor Thanks for your kind words, Paul. It has always been my intention to give a broad array of articles and balanced opinion of the comics and of course welcome subscribers thoughts in the form of Letters to the Editor or indeed features or articles.

Hi Phil

In around 1970 (I recall Cor!! Comic had just been launched), there was a small shop near me in New Road, Portsmouth, run by an old man, which I used to frequent as a 6 or 7 year old. He used to sell small, rolled-up bundles of old (even then!) comics for 1d (one old penny) a time. Nothing else but old comics. I’d choose five and he’d carefully tie them together with a piece of string. I vividly recall looking at Beano and Dandy comics numbered in their 300s and 400s and thinking how very long those comics had already been running. The earliest issue number I remember seeing was something like Beano or Dandy #65, but complete runs were present of Wizard, Hotspur, Rover, etc. It was the numbering and related dates which always caught my eye first. My most vivid memory is of the musty smell of the place; that unique smell which inevitably emanates from old comics.

The old man must have been way ahead of his time because I never knew anyone else who believed there was any value in keeping and re-selling these gems. I hope he lived long enough to see that his interest back then would realise itself in this electronic, computerised age. If anyone ever knew the shop I’d love to hear about it!

All the best,

Peter Gates, Portsmouth

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**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

**Editor** Thanks Peter, a most interesting account to which I’m sure many a subscriber can relate to. If anyone knew the shop please get in touch...

As mentioned in my first Editorial, my own collecting essentially began in two shops in Birmingham City Centre called Reader’s World. My favourite of the two was in a now-dismantled subway in Smallbrook Queensway, near the Chinese Quarter. It had a particularly musty aroma to it which I can still smell today! Those were the days...

Hi Phil,

... I recently built a Korky the Cat whirligig for the garden and thought it might give you a laugh.

It has a split propeller and the blades are formed by his legs so when the wind blows his little legs go round like bill-o (or Billy Whizz even)...note the fishing rod and the fish - hence the reason for his mad dash away from the gamey!

Best wishes,

Gary Seal, Shropshire

**Editor** Many thanks for sharing that with us, Gary. Having sifted through a few 1970s’ Dandy comics it didn’t take long to find an appropriate strip of the type that you no doubt had in mind when making the whirligig...

Hi Phil,

Around 1985 when I was 11 and off school, for whatever reason, I saw a BBC 2 (I think) daytime programme about The Beano, its history and its current production. It interviewed Euan Kerr and actually showed the making of The Beano issue No. 2020 and particularly the Dennis The Menace strip. The presenter of the programme was characterised as the man who features throughout the strip (get your copy out and you will see what I mean). It is easy to date because of the issue number— it was 1981. Obviously it was a great show to watch and I recorded it, but some years later I foolishly recorded over it.

Did you see it and do you have a copy? Maybe a fellow subscriber has a copy? The BBC certainly should.

Regards,

Phil Porter, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne

**Editor** I put your note to Euan Kerr who replied as follows:

Hi Phil

I do indeed remember the programme and the strip. In fact, having just rooted through my drawers (ahem!), I’ve come up with a slightly crumpled copy of the issue autographed by the TV team. It’s from #2020, April 4th 1981. The recording was made when Harry Crandom was still at the helm. The signatures are rather unclear but the director’s name was Peter, the presenter Alan and the researchers Alice and Hayley. If I remember correctly, the programme was for Middle English for BBC Schools. I’d guess that any showing in 1985 was a repeat. It’s been shown a few times since.

Hope this is of some help.

Euan

**Editor** My thanks go to Euan for helping out. Phil replied to Euan’s reply: “That’s great, Phil. Next question: how do we get to see it again? I will leave that one with you.”

So, any ideas out there, collectors?

Whilst on the subject of comics in the press, I was recently interviewed by a BBC Radio 4 journalist for a show called The Reunion, which reunites a group of people intimately involved in a moment of modern history. In this instance the Beano and Dandy comics of DC Thomson were discussed.

The show was broadcast on Sunday, 20th April and the main interviewees were Morris Heggie, former Dandy Editor, artists Bill Ritchie and Jim Petrie, and writers Walter Fearn and Dave Torrie, with clip/quotes from myself and several others. If you missed it, I hope to discuss the show in an article in issue 6.

Watch this space!
Those subscribers who are fortunate enough to own a copy, or have even just handled one, will appreciate that those youngsters discovering a Dandy Monster Comic in their stocking on December 25th, 1938, were very lucky youngsters indeed. This first, milestone annual had a chunky look and heavy feel with attractive cover and spine artwork making it seem very good value for half a crown. Inside were 128 pages crammed full of comic capers and text stories from the characters that readers had grown to love since The Dandy comic began a little over a year earlier.

The cover of the first Dandy Monster Comic was a feast for the eye, with Korky the Cat standing gleefully to one side as he introduces many of his fellow Dandy characters. Inside, Desperate Dan and Korky the Cat were seen in four adventures each, whilst Keyhole Kate, Smarty Grandpa, Freddy the Fearless Fly and Hungry Horace all had three.

DC Thomson were past masters at compiling enticing annuals. During the 1920s and 1930s the publishers accompanied the weekly Rover, Wizard, Skipper, Hotspur and Adventure story papers with annuals at Christmas.

The Dandy Monster Comic was a clear success as the following year, along with the very first Beano Book, the second Monster Comic was produced. The Dandy Monster Comic title lasted until 1953 where it changed to The Dandy Book.

The chunky feel of the first issue issue (the pages were made of cardboard!) lasted until the second issue where-after, for the years 1941, 1942 and 1943 at least, the format became slightly taller and thinner, albeit maintaining a page count of 128. In 1944 the book became thinner still and has remained at that thickness to this day.

The pictorial spine of the first annual was very attractive and a similar design was adopted for the 1940 and 1941 editions, but this format was dropped for the 1942 annual, being substituted for a simple design, as seen below. Although this design is rather appealing in its own right, it is not as attractive as the pictorial designs.

As you will see from the surrounding images, the covers of the Dandy Monster Comic annuals were a single image involving many of the Dandy characters. Personal favourites of mine are the 1944 and 1945 annuals, the latter of which was reproduced on the cover of the 1974 Christmas Observer Magazine, containing an article on British comics with captions from Denis Gifford.

Unlike the Black Bob annuals featured in issue 4, where the back covers are useful in identifying the years, the uniqueness of The Dandy Monster Comic front covers renders the back covers null in this respect (unless, of course, an annual lacks its front cover!). Despite this, the rear covers are rather attractive, featuring a single character such as Diver Dick and Hungry Horace, so worth picturing here.

The annuals are in order from top to bottom, left to right, starting with 1939 and ending with 1949.

Next issue - Beano Books 1940-49!
Applying fifteen years of experienced knowledge as collectors, dealers and auctioneers to the British comic market, we are pleased to offer a new collection valuation service. The valuation service applies to vintage British comics, annuals and related material.

Use our valuation service to keep up to date with the value of your collection/investment and/or to insure your collection for an appropriate value.

Requirements
We require a list of the items in your collection along with their grade/condition, leaving a space for us to assign a value. We can provide a template, by email, for you to complete the list of items along with their grades. You can find our Grading Guide on the Auction Services page. For higher value items it would be useful to supply us with digital images.

For significant collections within the South East of England, we may be able to travel to you to value your collection in person, for an additional fee.

We are happy to discuss your requirements with you prior to carrying out a valuation.

Fees
We charge £10 per hour and can take payment by cheque, Postal Order or PayPal.

Auction Results Archive
In issue 4 we made a brief mention to our forthcoming auction results feature and are pleased to announce that the archive is now fully up and running.

Currently, there are 5,000 auction results from our 2003-2008 sales, covering a broad spectrum of British comics from the 1920’s to the present day.

Of these, some 1,600 are Beano comics, 185 Beano Books, 650 Dandy comics, 115 Dandy Books and 100+ Beano and Dandy Summer Specials. These results cover the years 1937 up to the 1990s so feel free to browse the archive for it forms a very useful resource for the collector.

Please visit the Auction Results page of our website to browse the archive.

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Valuation Service
complete the list of items along with their grades. You can find our Grading Guide on the Auction Services page. For higher value items it would be useful to supply us with digital images.

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Korky Calendar 1946 by Phil Shrimpton
Approximately three years ago I saw a rather unusual item on eBay, one that I had certainly never seen or heard of before. So unusual I thought it to be that I questioned its authenticity and wondered if it was an “amateur” job, although the artwork admittedly looked of a high quality—almost too official to be so. The seller had found it amongst a box of tatty 1940s Dandy Monster Comic annuals and Magic Beano Books. Despite being unable to verify its authenticity I decided it was worth the risk and placed a bid. To my delight I won the attractive little item; a Korky calendar for the year 1946, which admittedly narrowed the search for its source down somewhat.

Had it come from the 1945 Dandy Monster Comic annual? Perhaps a weekly Dandy comic or from one of DC Thomson’s other comics? Well, it wasn’t long before I was able to verify that the item was indeed original when, several weeks later, I saw a New Year Dandy comic advertised on eBay and asked the seller if there was any reference to the Korky calendar. A prompt reply arrived with a picture of the back cover, and there it was! It was Dandy comic #309, dated 5th Jan 1946.

Inside the comic is a nice little advert on how to make the Korky calendar and it seems that the original owner chose to deface his/her comic and cut out the back page. We have never seen another example and are confident in going so far as saying it is probably the only surviving original example of the calendar in its made up format. Unless you know differently, of course!
Now regarded almost solely as a comic of knockabout humour, it must not be forgotten that, during the first thirty five or so years of its life, The Beano also offered readers a wealth of first class adventure strips, some of which have become classics of the genre. In this feature I will be looking at the comic’s earliest adventure strips and then concentrating on two of its most iconic strips that appeared within its pages during its formative years.

The Beano got its adventure strip roster off to a safe start with “Morgyn The Mighty, The Strongest man in the World”, drawn by George Anderson on pages four and five of the inaugural issue. Morgyn was a tried and tested character having appeared in text form in the pages of Rover since 1928. Anderson’s drawing was acceptable, constrained by the formalistic approach demanded by almost every British comic of the time that dictated action always had to be viewed ‘straight on’, allowing the artist little flexibility to draw his frames from more interesting perspectives. The page format of six similar-sized panels, each with an accompanying text block, was another factor that did little to enhance the dynamics of the adventures.

The other adventure strips that appeared in Beano No. 1 were “Cracker Jack”, a cowboy story drawn by the prolific Jack Glass and “Wild Boy of the Wood”, drawn by Richard Baynes. This trio formed the blueprint for most of the adventure strip output that would be published in future issues of the comic: westerns, the ‘boy alone’ and ‘strongman’ adventures. DC Thomson had a penchant for strongman strips and Morgyn was the first of several to feature in The Beano.

In a short article it is not possible to consider that Watkins hit all the many adventure strips that featured over the decades, so we must quickly pass by Jack Glass’ “The Prince on the Flying Horse” and James Walker’s well-drawn “The Tiger Trail of Kandabar” and move on to 1941 to look briefly at the very first adventure strip to be drawn by the great Dudley D. Watkins.

Watkins had drawn spot illustrations for “The Adventures of Tom Thumb” (pictured here) since The Beano’s first issue but, in the summer of 1941, he began drawing Tom Thumb’s adventures in picture strip form (Watkins was to draw Tom Thumb again twenty years later when the nursery comic Bimbo used the character on its front cover). Once DC Thomson realised that Watkins was as accomplished at adventure strips as he was with the ‘funnies’, they quickly began to tap this new resource for The Beano and, in September 1942, he produced a western called “Lone Wolf”. Far more interesting than “Tom Thumb”, it was a taster of the splendid adventure strips that were to flow from his busy pen in the ensuing few years. “Lone Wolf” ran for only 12 episodes but, the week after its final instalment, Watkins began a new adventure that was destined to become one of the comic’s most enduring adventure strips.

While “Big Eggo” was performing skating tricks on the icy cover of The Beano No. 200, on page four a group of characters were in hotter water paddling a makeshift raft across a stretch of the South Seas after their ship had struck a reef during a fierce storm. The five castaways of “The Shipwrecked Circus” were Strongman Sampson, Trixie the acrobat, Gloopy the clown, Horace the educated chimp and a young boy called Danny. Watkins’ finely wrought opening illustration, spread across the full width of the page, depicts the five with their few scant belongings and makeshift paddles, pulling towards a palm-strewed island. Soon the castaways are ashore and, after a hearty meal of coconuts and bananas, row back to the ship in true Crusoe fashion in order to salvage whatever they could from the stricken vessel.

Once settled on the island the castaways build a bamboo home and construct a number of other ‘mod-cons’. Later they discover a hoard of pirate treasure hidden in a cave. In issue 207 a waterspout throws part of their former ship onto dry land and they convert it into a new home. The following week they construct a swimming pool in the lagoon – complete with an anti-shark net. A few weeks later a shadow is cast over the island after Danny rescues a one-legged mariner from the sea. ‘Peg-leg’ proves to be a villain who steals the pirate treasure and attempts to kill Gloopy and Sampson before his plans are thwarted and he is sent packing, leaving the castaways to once again enjoy their tropical home. “The Shipwrecked Circus” had literate scripts and Watkins’ atmospheric artwork gives the adventures a great sense of gusto.

After 13 episodes Watkins relinquished the artwork to Jack Prout, best remembered for his depiction of Black Bob, the Dandy Wonder Dog, who continued drawing the strip until December, 1943.

The second “Shipwrecked Circus” series began in the The Beano Xmas Comic for 1946 and ran throughout the fortightly issues of 1947. Watkins was signing his work during this period and his artistic skill was at its peak. The panels of that Christmas
episode are crammed with detail as Sampson rescued their giant-sized Christmas pudding from a marauding swordfish. As in so many of the Thomson ‘strongman’ adventure strips, the local fauna is decimated out of hand. When the scriptwriter wanted to add a touch of drama to his plot he inevitably had his hero encounter and destroyed some large wild creature. At the time the strips were appearing, there was less concern over the slaughter of wildlife but from a modern perspective it is, of course, totally unacceptable and for some readers of today would take much the gloss off the episodes.

“The Shipwrecked Circus” returned to the pages of The Beano in 1951, 1955 and 1957. For these later series the artwork was provided by Paddy Brennan. Brennan proved an ideal artist to take on some of the adventure strip chores relinquished by Watkins, when the latter was required to increase his output of humorous strips for The Topper and The Beezer. Brennan’s work has a great strength and a sense of movement that carries the reader breathlessly along.

In 1958 The Beano reprinted some of the earliest adventures of the castaways - including their very first appearance - as reduced-size strips, with their original text blocks trimmed to the bare minimum, allowing Watkins’ artwork to tell the story almost unaided.

Although “The Shipwrecked Circus” was extremely popular, arguably the greatest Beano adventure strip began on 1 January 1944, when young Jimmy Watson set off for school, climbed a tree to save a cat and tore his trousers. The seat of his torn trousers was patched with a piece of fabric cut from a magic carpet. “Jimmy and His Magic Patch” had all the ingredients for the perfect adventure strip. With the premise that, when wearing the trousers with the patch (which was all the time!), adventure began in issue 222 and, during the course of the first series, Jimmy found himself in a wide variety of settings: everywhere from Ancient Egypt to Saxon England, along the way encountering Dick Turpin, Francis Drake, King Alfred, Bonnie Prince Charlie and many other famous figures both real and legendary. His final first series adventure found him in Merry England helping Robin Hood. The latter was to prove the most visited of Jimmy’s famous characters: over the decades Robin Hood was assisted by Jimmy on more than half a dozen occasions – not counting reprints!

Jimmy Watson was a robust, determined and resourceful character, not easily fazed. He faced pirates, monsters and great fires with equal equanimity, always finding something handy in his well-filled pockets to get himself, and often some important character from history, out of difficulties. How different many historical events would have turned out if Jimmy had not been on hand to help. It was he who warned King James of the Gunpowder Plot; who helped Boadicea to defeat the Romans and who provided the Greeks inside the Wooden Horse with cough sweets in order that they would not be heard by the Trojans.

Dudley Watkins drew the first three ‘Magic Patch’ strips. There were series of Dudley Watkins reprints published in The Beano during 1955, 1956 and 1957, during the course of which nearly half of the original strips were reprinted. New Paddy Brennan strips, drawn in a more comic style, began in the summer of 1959 and ran until December of that year when the young adventurer took his leave from the pages of The Beano (although he did pop up in the annuals for 1960, 1961 and 1963). Of all the The Beano adventure strips it is perhaps “Jimmy and His Magic Patch” that is most fondly remembered by readers.

**Editor** My thanks go to Norman for contributing this article. Watch this space in future newsletters for more articles from Norman.
As mentioned in the Editorial, we have been auctioning a multitude of items over the last six months and many of those auctions have been Beano and Dandy items. Where better to discuss the results than in the pages of this very newsletter!

Auction market trends are dictated by several key factors, including the grade of an item, its level of supply, the time of year the sale is held and the number of collectors bidding at any one time. This all adds up to a certain element of mystery and surprise which, to us at phil-comics, contributes considerably to the excitement of an auction!

One could argue that most of these factors contributed to our very successful sale of a VG+ example of the 1943 Christmas Beano comic - the rarity fetched a healthy £290! Few collectors can resist a punt at a rare, high grade Christmas comic in the weeks preceding the big event. An equally admirable £190 was achieved for the Dandy counterpart.

As Beano and Dandy comics/annuals so often went hand in hand, when we are contacted by an original owner who has a collection of comics/annuals to sell, we are invariably offered both Beano and Dandy items together. When making an offer, we will often state that, as a general rule, Dandy items are worth approximately two thirds of the value of Beano items. The two results above illustrate this point very well.

We were pleased to acquire the genuinely rare first Dandy Christmas comic (#4, dated December 1937) in VG condition, and sold it privately for the princely sum of £434. We know of approximately five examples so it comes as no surprise that the comic commanded a premium price.

A subset of collectors will only seek high grade items, often aiming for a minimum grade of Fine. However, there is no shortage of enthusiasts who are quite happy with lower grade items, whether that be to fill a gap or for general reading. Several Fair examples of 1950’s Christmas comics were bought, by various different bidders, for between £15 and £20 each.

Other notable Christmas comic results included a 1940 Beano (Fair) at £127, 1946 Beano (VG) reaching £70, Beano 1965 (G/VG) at £21, 1954 and 1964 Dandy (both VG/VG+) at £23 each and 1961 Dandy (VG) at £19.

Landmark Beano comics containing the first appearance of key characters always attract wide interest – examples of the first Bash Street Kids (1954) and Roger the Dodger (1953) were both jousted to over £50, Walter the Softy (1953) mustered £18 and Gnasher (1968) chomped his way to £26. Other special issue Beano comics include the last Biffo Bear and first Dennis the Menace covers, from 1974, which were battled to £19 and £29 respectively. Not forgetting Dandy comics, the first Corporal Clott (1960) achieved £27 and Winker-Watson (1961) wangled his way to £28.

In 2003, when our trading began to take off, we primarily sold annuals. In the years since we have tended to specialise more in comics, but the annuals are still key to our auction sales in keeping a wide variety of collectors keen. In October we sold a VG/VG+ example of the 1942 Dandy Monster Comic, privately, for £750. The buyer had already had a copy for several years in lower grade, so was delighted with this significantly better example.

Magic-Beano Books in very high grade rarely surface but, over the last few years, we have seen a relatively steady flow of late 1940s examples in lowish grade coming onto the eBay market. With high grade books often fetching many hundreds of pounds, there is no shortage of collectors trying to scoop an affordable copy, with no intention of ever trying to upgrade. Consequently, there was plenty of interest in a small selection we offered that fitted this criteria: 1946 (Fair): £147, 1949 (Good-): £77 and 1950 (Fair/Good): £103. Later annuals are always of interest and £103 and £69 were achieved, respectively, for VG/Fine 1954 and 1960 Beano Books.

In our experience, Summer Specials are not as widely collected as the annuals and weekly comics. The fact they are large to store and were often originally folded/worn due to their large size has no doubt puts some collectors off. All issues pre-1966 are scarce whereas the first, joint Beano-Dandy publication, and the first separate issues of 1964, are rare. Several keen collectors are prepared to pay premium prices for elusive items; the 1963 Dandy-Beano Summer Special recently made £112 despite the fact that the covers were detached and half the rear cover was missing! An impressive £171 was achieved for a VG 1964 Dandy and £182 for a G/VG 1964 Beano Summer Special, pictured on the front cover.

The buyer of the Dandy Summer Special was one of three or four very avid Dandy comic collectors on our books who, coincidentally, are all trying to complete their collections of Dandy comics from around 1958 to 1970. We listed a small run of scarce Dandy comics from late 1960 and the prices soared to an average of £20 each when usually comics of this period exchange hands for around a fiver.

We have recently branched out into original artwork and have sold two pages of Winker Watson art, from the late 1960s, for £150 each. We will shortly be offering an original David Law Corporal Clott piece from 1970 so please keep an eye on our auctions/website sales.

As seen in our advert on page 5, we have recently published our entire auction results, from 2003 to the present day, on our website. Feel free to browse nearly 5,000 auction results to monitor the value of items in your collection and, if wishing to sell an item or indeed collection, gather an idea of what you might expect to achieve if selling through phil-comics auctions.