

**A Book Review of "UP TO THE HALL" by Mario Marco**

Before reading this well crafted and amusing book, its readers, particularly if they spent time as schoolboys at Blaisdon Hall, are well advised to consider carefully the rider: "All characters in this publication are fictitious and any resemblance to real people, alive or dead, is purely coincidental." All other readers, expecting perhaps Dotheboys Hall revisited, will be disappointed: this is jolly japes, suggestion of naughty books, chapel chuckles and well observed cameos of Priests and Brothers willingly teaching the unwilling. It's in two Parts - Old School. New School.

The author, Mario Marco, has created in his first Chapter, a plausible group of pre-pubescent boys called Poggo, Duster, Ferrey, Charlie, Clennan; he has set them opposite equally believable teachers such as Fathers John Steveney, Head, Stenton, Deputy Head, George Stilton, Northey and Minter, along with Brothers Oldfield, Carrot and Arun Flint. The interplay of his characters in chapel, class, playground, playing fields, dormitories etc., carries the reader along with them through, what is the life of a boy's school, where halfway through and quite unexpectedly, a group of girls and nuns move in. The expected conclusion of what boys and girls do in the bike sheds comes in the Chapter Twenty Two finale; the activity is not as the reader would generally suppose.

The curiosity of the boys is teased continually. Hints of hanky-panky with two women in the village prompt the boys to consider whatever happened to Father Mantras? Was he transferred on the Missions? Was there a child? Did he get married? Will the compulsory letters written to absent parents circumvent the vetting system and be posted in the village post-box by the conniving boys? How long will it be that this priest take to say Mass - that priest to distribute communion? How will the boys make out with the girls?

Blaisdon Hall it isn't. But is it? It's got to be! Wait. Just remember the caveat: "All characters in this publication are fictitious." Father John Steveney (Gillheeny?) Never! Father George Stilton (Hilton?) Of course not! Brother Tim Oldfield (Caulfield?) Not at all! Brother Arun Flint (Brother Alan Garman) Never! Bearing all that in mind, Up to the Hall is a most enjoyable book. An ideal Xmas Gift. 151 pages hardback @ - £8.00.pp



**Tony Brady 5/12/2009**