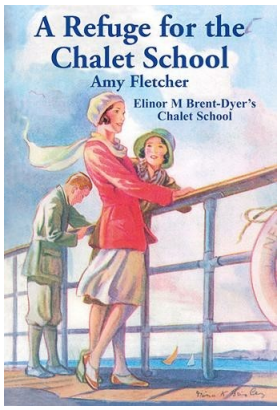
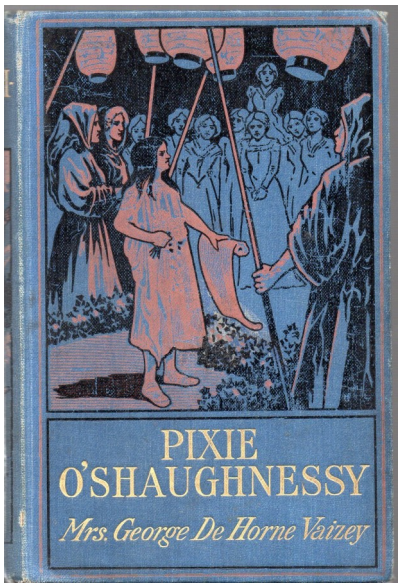
to *Star Trek*, 'to boldly go' instead of 'to go boldly'. I know that language changes over time, but I have to confess that I mostly prefer the sound of a split infinitive …"

Lockdown Reading

Joy Bagster "At the beginning of the first lockdown in February 2020 (which was when it began in Ireland) I thought I'd start reading through my entire 59 Chalet book collection but then I decided 'no, that would take too long and the lockdown will be over long before I get through them all'. Little did I think then that it would continue for another 15 months. However I started reading my 16 fill-ins and this was very enjoyable as I'd only read most of them once or twice. I especially enjoyed *A Refuge for the Chalet School,* it filled in so many gaps in *Exile*. Dublin City Libraries ran a very good scheme during the lockdown where we could phone our local library and suggest a book or books that we would like to read. A day or two later our choice would be delivered to our door by a volunteer. We could only suggest books by a certain author and not an actual book by name although in many cases the book you wanted arrived. The volunteer collected the books you had read and delivered the new batch. This system worked very well but now that the libraries are open again it's nice to be able to go and browse and make our own selection."





Pixie O'Shaughnessy and the Chalet School

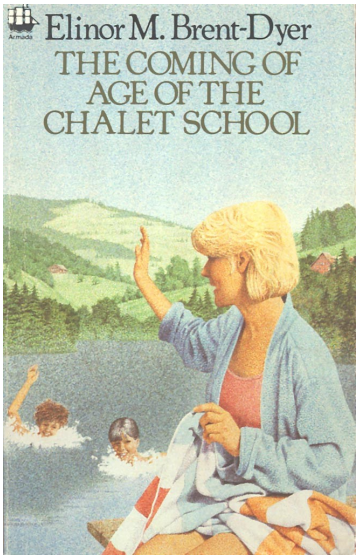
Rachel Lindley "I recently read this delightful book, first published in 1902. The story features both a sheets and pillowcase Christmas party and Pixie completing a circumnavigation of the schoolroom without touching the floor... (thankfully with no need to call a nice doctor or face Matey's wrath). Maybe these are both common games or dares from the period but it just made me wonder if EBD might have read the book and been inspired by Pixie?"

A Memory of My Mother

Glenys Wood "Mum was visiting my house and it's so easy just to pick up something that's lying around and read it, isn't it? Mum started reading the FOCS

again. It would also begin to lend credence to the idea that there was indeed favouritism. So Bride couldn't be appointed straightaway. But whom to sacrifice? The group of friends EBD had gathered around Bride was one of the strongest sets of girls she had created. Making any one of them disappear for whatever reason would upset both the dynamic of the books and probably some fans. So the obvious answer was effectively to invent a sacrificial lamb, someone who had not been established as a character and who could be dispensed with easily once the necessary time had elapsed. Hence poor Loveday.

The case of Elinor Pennell is rather different. She appears regularly in the books from *Peggy* onwards. Sometimes these are very casual and passing references, but she is definitely established as a member of the school. She becomes a particular friend of Sybil and of Blossom Willoughby. Her character is established early on as someone who is thoughtful, conscientious, good at games, and self-controlled, particularly in *Wrong*. She follows the conventional path to the Headgirlship, becoming a full prefect in *Genius*, two terms before she becomes Head Girl (and therefore presumably a subprefect in *Mary-Lou*, although she is not mentioned there). She is awarded the accolade of suggesting the idea for the Sale which is adopted, and in *Problem* she is Joan Baker's dormitory prefect, which gets her quite a lot of airtime in parts of that book.

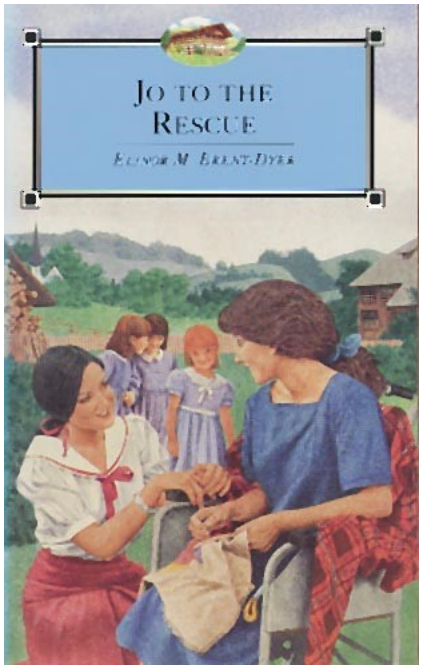


Elinor gets to serve her full year. She was one of the cohort which was squeezed between Bride's set on the one hand, and Mary-Lou's on the other. The crowd is rather amorphous; they may have suffered from the opening of Welsen, and certainly notice that they have lost many of their best games players (*Coming of Age*). In the books from that school year, apart from various members of Mary-Lou's gang, the prefects who are mentioned are Elinor, Madge Watson, Bess Appleton, Lala Winterton, Blossom, Sybil, Leila Morris, Nan Herbert, and Amy Dunne. They are all established characters, but none of them

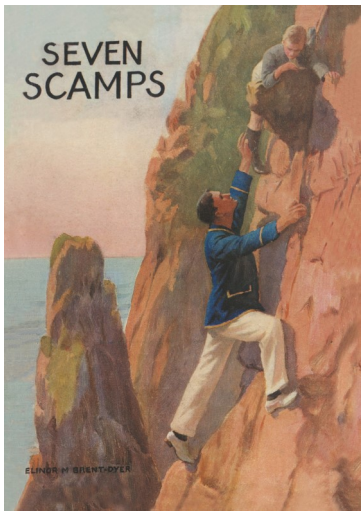
the provenance of each of these vastly different individuals, and especially the story of Phoebe around whom the book is centred. (Without giving plot spoilers, she is the one to be rescued by Jo.)

For a long time, I knew that Jo and some friends had been on holiday in Yorkshire one summer, since Jo alludes to this in later titles, but had not realised that an entire book had been written about this merry episode. As a teenager I had the two-in-one Collins paperback of *Lavender* and *Gay*, followed by a gap until *Three Go* and *Island*, then nothing until *Mary-Lou* - how surprising to discover that the school was back in the Alps! My collection has filled out over the years, but it was only relatively recently that I realised that *Jo to the Rescue* would contain the account of the fabled Yorkshire holiday.

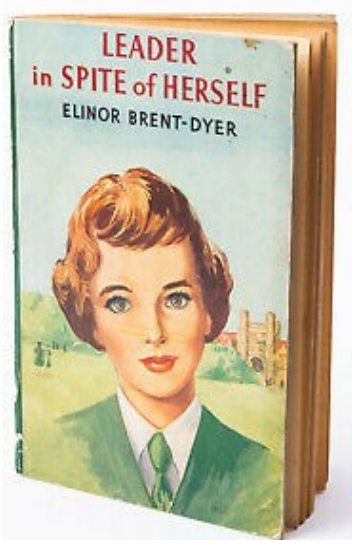
Expecting nothing more than a jolly tale of Jo and family, imagine my delight upon learning that Marie, Frieda and Simone were all present, with a bevy of children in tow. As several readers have noted in recent magazines, there is something lovely about the non-school-related books and plotlines, and I felt that I was really on holiday with them. Seeing the friends take care of one another and their children was lovely, since often the domestic side of things is taken care of in a relatively behind-the-scenes manner by the relevant faithful factotum, and the book also gave a new window into the relationship between Jo and Jack which is not a particularly deeply explored theme in the series. And what could be nicer than endless days picnicking on the moors and eating cake in the orchard afterwards? I was thrilled to find *Joey and Co. in Tirol* in the fantastic Barter Books store in Alnwick a few years ago, so I think I'll re-read that soon too for another Maynard holiday experience.



While we can't travel (much), why not give yourself a treat from the Library, and go on holiday to Yorkshire with Joey and the rest of her Quartette this summer from the comfort of your favourite chair.



Now the real test can be applied! How do the evangelicals stand up in comparison to a series such as La Rochelle or, dare I attempt a comparison, the Chalet School? It is, perhaps, surprising that despite being so short in length and having to develop characters within around 100 pages, the evangelicals manage to hold up rather well against some of these titles too! *Seven Scamps* for example, for me the weakest of the La Rochelle series, is definitely beaten by *Nesta* and *Leader* and it is a close call with *Beechy*!



For the Chalet School we have a chance to look at shorter titles… *Rosalie* and *Mystery* for both of these, I would put them slightly behind each of the evangelicals in my list of favourites. With a full length Chalet book the battle to be a stronger title is getting harder. Can any of the evangelical books top *Exile* – possibly EBD at her best? – clearly not. But we could look at *Redheads* or *Wins the Trick* and the evangelicals are certainly holding their own if not creeping ahead!

So, are the evangelicals my favourite books by Brent-Dyer? Almost certainly not, but equally they are not far from the bottom of the pile! Had they been expanded into full length titles I can see *Nesta* as being a seriously good book and *Leader* has possibilities too!

A final word on *Nesta*. This has everything in it that makes EBD a strong author. The characters are 'real'. The plot-line is believable – and I really enjoyed the misunderstood 'villainess' being a staff member. We get a detailed description of a school trip, a sports match AND a play all within 100 pages! If this had been expanded, I can see it sitting happily alongside one of my favourite non-chalet titles…*The Feud in the Fifth Remove*, a book which incidentally, I have always seen as an evangelical in all but name!