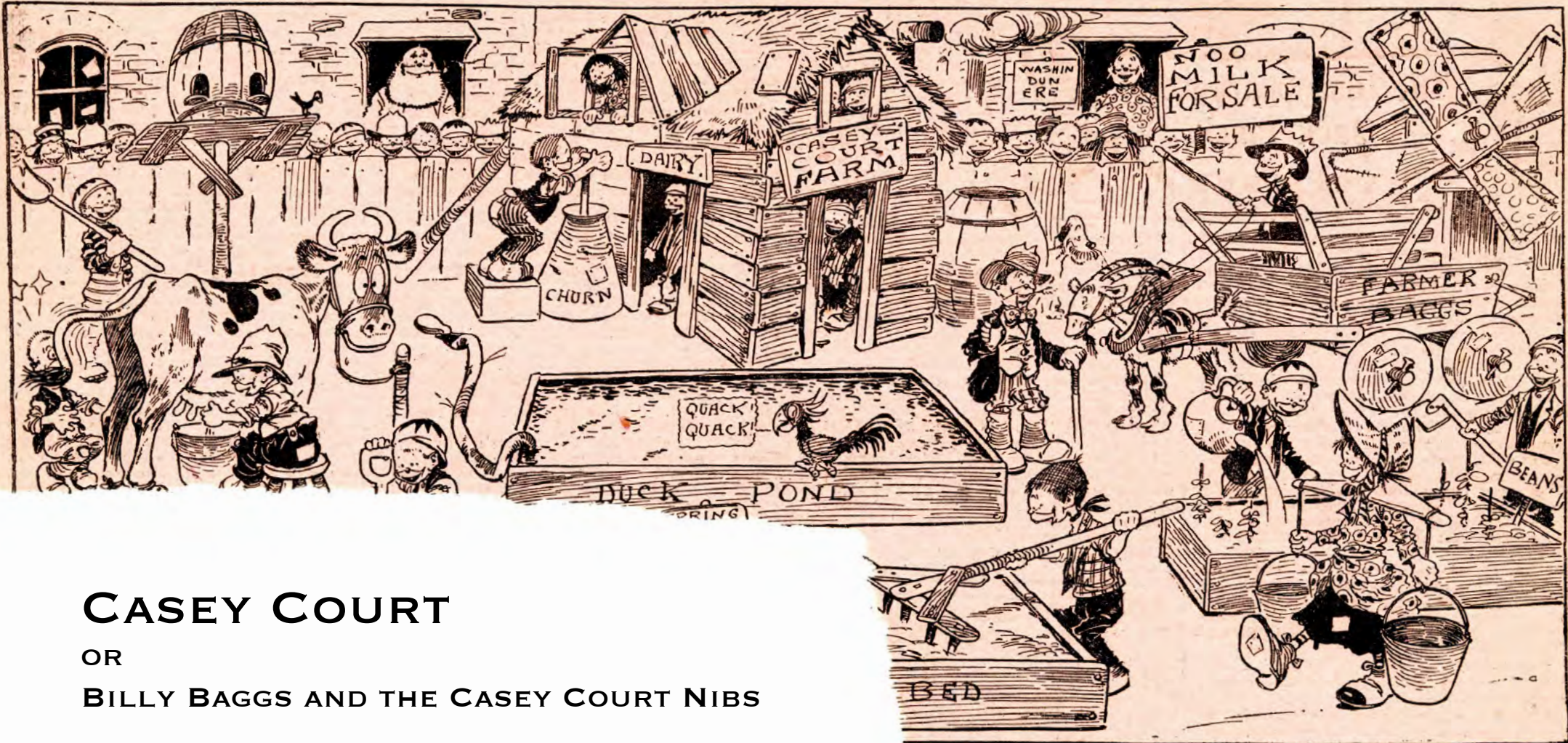


THE CASEY COURT NIBS ARE GETTING BACK TO THE LAND.



CASEY COURT

OR

BILLY BAGGS AND THE CASEY COURT NIBS

produce is to be obtained at the lowest market prices, and Billy hopes to make a
a cow.

EXCERPTS FROM THE KEVIN CARPENTER COLLECTION



IMPRESSUM:

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Other volumes showcasing the Kevin Carpenter Collection:

WEARY WILLIE AND TIRED TIM.

PERFECTING THE MOLD FOR KNOCKABOUT TRAMPS

Trelleborg, 2025:

ISBN: 978-91-981603-9-0 (print)

ISBN: 978-91-990299-2-4 (pdf)

**BITS AND PIECES. MISCELLANEOUS COMIC STRIPS FROM
ILLUSTRATED CHIPS AND PUCK 1906 / 1907.**

Trelleborg, 2025:

ISBN: 978-91-981603-9-0 (print)

ISBN: 978-91-990299-2-4 (pdf)

As individual work in the periodicals of the Amalgamated Press was not signed, authorship is not always attributable. Research suggests that most works in this volume were likely drawn by Julius Stafford Baker (1869-1961). We do not know whether he wrote the texts or if somebody else provided these.

The images have not been edited apart from careful adjustments of contrasts in case of particularly weak print. For the most part, they are scanned from cheap paper more than 115 years old that was not intended for archiving and it shows.

Images are reproduced in original size if not indicated otherwise.

The main texts in this volume are based on Kevin Carpenter's "wonderfully vulgar" (2013), and have been carefully adapted and expanded by the editor to fit the purpose of this volume.

All images are from the Kevin Carpenter Collection,
apart from the following:

20 February 1904, 21 January 1905, 12 September 1914.

These are held by the Library (BIS) of Oldenburg University.

28 February 1914 and 20 November 1915 are held by Peter Gray:
<https://petergraycartoonsandcomics.blogspot.com>

30 October 1915 held by Lew Stringer: <https://lewstringer.blogspot.com>

The issue from 1932 was obtained from somewhere on the internet, our apologies for not being able to name the provider of the scan.

CASEY COURT
OR
BILLY BAGGS AND THE CASEY COURT NIBS

EXCERPTS FROM THE KEVIN CARPENTER COLLECTION

THE KEVIN CARPENTER COLLECTION

While the library of Carl von Ossietzky-University in Oldenburg, Germany, holds a special collection of around 5000 early British comics, that collection is not catalogued nor digitised extensively, far from it. Throughout his years as a teacher at the university, Kevin Carpenter has promoted research into this special collection, and while insisting that he did not collect comics, he has collected his own catalogue of early British comics to be able to show how these work, how stories were told in text-adventures as well as in caricatures and comics, how themes re-appeared and changed when re-told.

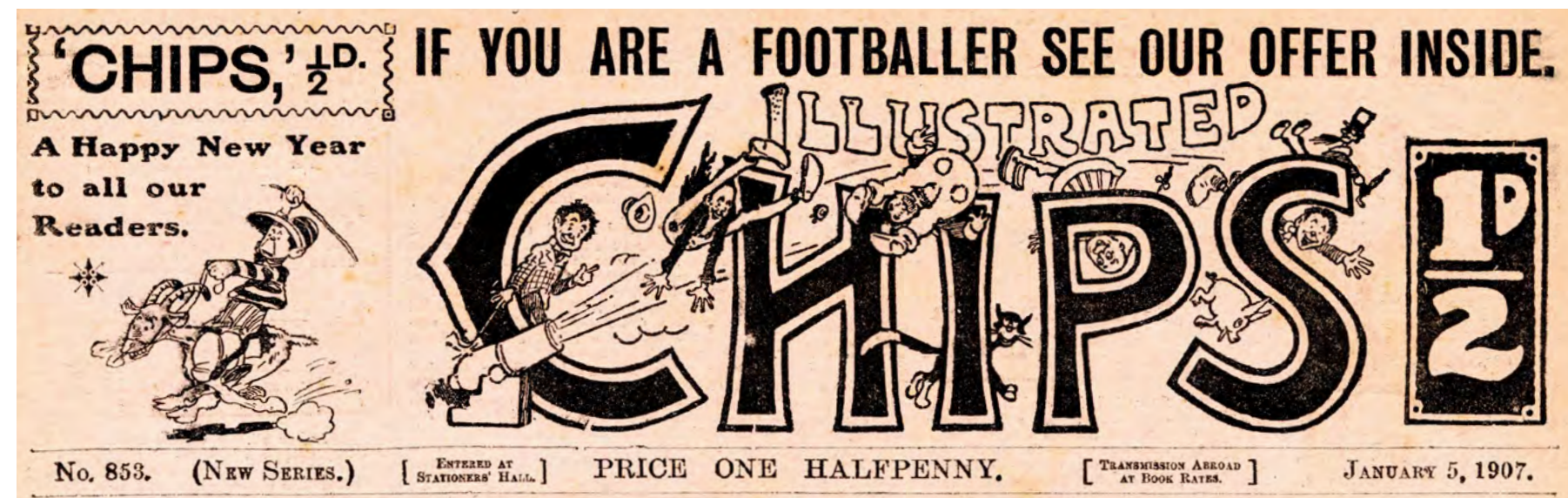
While working with Kevin Carpenter’s collection, its width and strengths have become clear: The material allows us to look not only into the bandwidth of productions at the time, understand the development and establishment of a dedicated section in publishing and its titles, figures, styles, and genres. Also, influences on and interdependencies between individual publications become visible and allow to understand better in what way individual social issues, cultural changes, and historic events and incidents were taken up in what ways in the comic papers then. It invites to discover forgotten contributions to the history of comics as well as the narrative culture of its time – good and bad.

Not only because I am most grateful for receiving Kevin Carpenter’s collection, but also because of the doors it opens for research and contemplation, I want to share it with interested readers and researchers by publishing selections from it. This way, more than just single representative examples become easily accessible and allow to understand the narrative strategies, routines, but also the extend of experimentation and development in these comics. And, not at least, they allow us to see better similarities and differences in other comics’ developments.

Jakob Dittmar, 2025

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AMALGAMATED PRESS AND ILLUSTRATED CHIPS

Illustrated Chips was published by Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe), who founded the Amalgamated Press in 1901 to contain his diverse publications. While he later established the Daily Mail and Daily Mirror, he started with smaller publications across different fields, earning most from entertainment periodicals.

In 1890, after having analysed the market, he hastily assembled a paper called Comic Cuts. Its huge success marked the beginning of the comics paper-boom in Britain. The new paper cost a halfpenny each, and competition for these ha'pennies was fierce. Without revealing its exact weekly sales, the editor of Comic Cuts soon boasted that its circulation equalled the combined sale of all its competitors (Comic Cuts, 15 November 1890), a few months later assessing its average issue readership as “two or three million people” (Comic Cuts, 7 March 1891), and scornfully adding early the following year that most of the forty or fifty imitations had “died a lingering death” (Comic Cuts, 6 February 1892).

To squash the remaining competition, Harmsworth speedily brought out a companion to his first comic, calling it Illustrated Chips (1890). Both of these comic journals initially pinched material from abroad, although they very soon relied almost exclusively on material provided by British artists. Short comic strips and full-page comics appeared on the pages of these periodicals together with single-picture cartoons, while each volume consisted of four pages text-stories and four pages comics.

Casey Court and similar slapsticky material, also referred to as “Knockabout”, was printed in black on tinted paper, green, blue, pink or yellow in contrast to the brightly-coloured nursery comics. These comics printed in black were cheaper than the coloured publications and were known as “black comics” even though they are dominated by their papers’ colour. The term “yellow press” for cheap newspapers in general originates from these tinted papers, the strategy was definitely not restricted to cheap entertainment periodicals with their combination of serialised texts, caricatures, and comics.

Following price standardization at the Amalgamated Press in the autumn of 1922, they cost a penny (1d) apiece, a price that seemed to have fallen within the discretionary pocket money of lower-middle-class and working-class youngsters, particularly boys. These “black comics” included the old stalwarts Funny Wonder, Chips, Comic Cuts and Merry and Bright along with the newcomers Joker and Larks and many more.

In its heyday in the 1930s, Chips alone reputedly sold a million copies per week. Nor were these comics only available in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. Many “overseas editions” were distributed through agents in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, the shipped-out versions generally consisting of one or more comics folded or stapled inside one another.

CASEY COURT

Casey Court was created in 1902 by Julius Stafford Baker. After he stopped drawing it in the 1920s, it was continued by different artists until 1953, amongst others Walter Bell, M.C. Veitch, H. O'Neill, Louis Briault, and Allan Morley, and Charlie Pease (which was Albert T. Pease).

We have to smile at the cunning and ingenuity of these bad boys, grin at the wildness of their escapades, and nod in approval at their strong sense of friendship and solidarity against an inimical adult world. The Casey Court Kids were a gang of poor, skinny, East End children in patched clothes and worn-out boots who enthusiastically embarked on outrageous but ultimately futile plans to earn a heap of money, or create some extravaganza in reaction to current events - always under the leadership of one Billy Baggs (originally Billy Bangs). They succeed in building quite advanced contraptions for diverse purposes, even though these will most probably collapse or lead into trouble with the authorities in the end. Individual creativity and group solidarity were firm values, as was cheerfulness in all circumstances. From early on, a parrot, a goat, and the dog Smiler appear in more or less all installments of Casey Court. While the parrot comments on things to signal certain aspects of the set-up to readers, the other animals enliven and fill the scene where the children would not have fitted in as easily or casually. They are typical animal sidekicks, already in 1904.

Casey Court was a single half-page panel, busy and cluttered, published on the back page of the comic Illustrated Chips, and evoking strong reader affection for many years. It is the starting point for all British comic series about wild children who create entertainments from whatever they can get their hands on. The comic magazine Puck soon integrates figures from Casey Court into other comics to cross-advertise and promote sales, while

Casey Court remains delivered in one image that details a situation while accompanying text tells of the before and after to that moment. Every week offers a new situation that is not continuing from previous events. Obviously, the Casey Court panels are no comics in today's understanding of the word, they are one-panel jokes or humouristic drawings, simply.

The style of figures, environments, and jokes changed over time, but would refer to developments in the real worlds. Like most other funny papers, perhaps in response to increasingly heavy war casualties from early 1915 on, these and most of the other comic characters retreated from active involvement in the war so as to pursue their previous antics in scenarios set in the colonies or the East End of London. Soldiers were known to be readers of comics, bundles of comics and other magazines being shipped out free by the Post Office to "the boys in the trenches" (Pluck, 11 September 1915). In this context, the unusual design and position taken in the installment for 30 October 1915 remains especially noteworthy as it warns against over-zealous or even hysteric reactions against Britain's favourite enemy at the time.

Attribution of comic strips produced during the 1914–18 war to their artists is trickier than usual, as "duplicators" replaced some of the men away on active war-service. While no names of artists or writers are stated in the pages of Illustrated Chips and its sister-publications, most work presented in this volume was most likely drawn by Julius Stafford Baker (1869-1961), it is assumed that themes were set by the editors, of they even provided the finished text, is unknown. From some time in the 1920s on, Casey Court was drawn by different artists. And at some point in the 1930s, the familiar background of the rundown courtyard Casey Court is given up for a more indistinct, even suburban location.

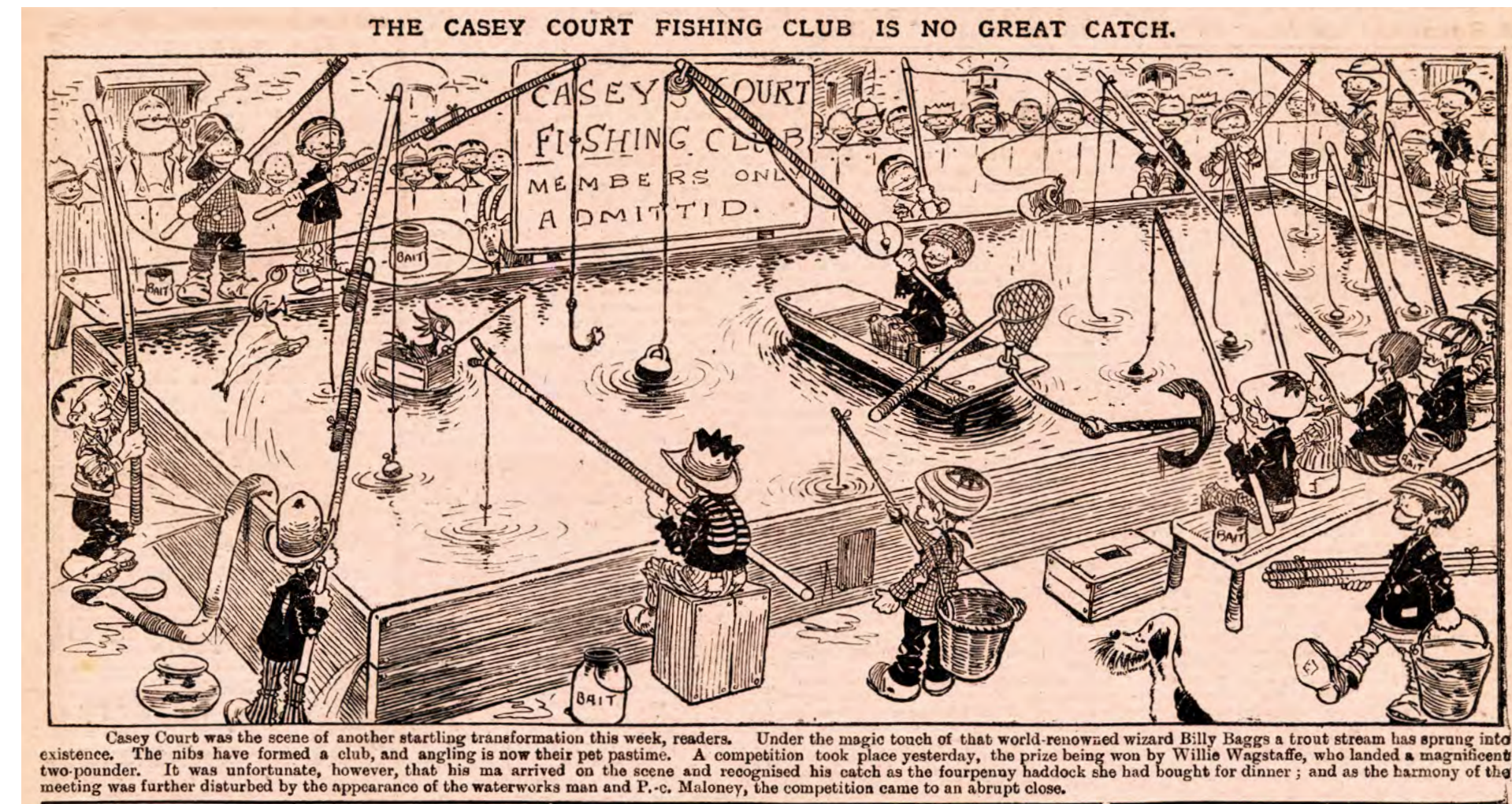


The latest attack down Casey Court way is the astronomic craze. The nibs have rigged up a full-blown observatory, as you will observe above, and Billy Baggs, who is the Court astronomer, gives lessons on the solar system each evening (weather permitting). Needless to say, the kids are improving their minds greatly under such able tuition, and no one can say of them, or of any of CHIPS' readers, that they are frittering their time away. No! (We will tell you more next week, and give you a real surprise.)

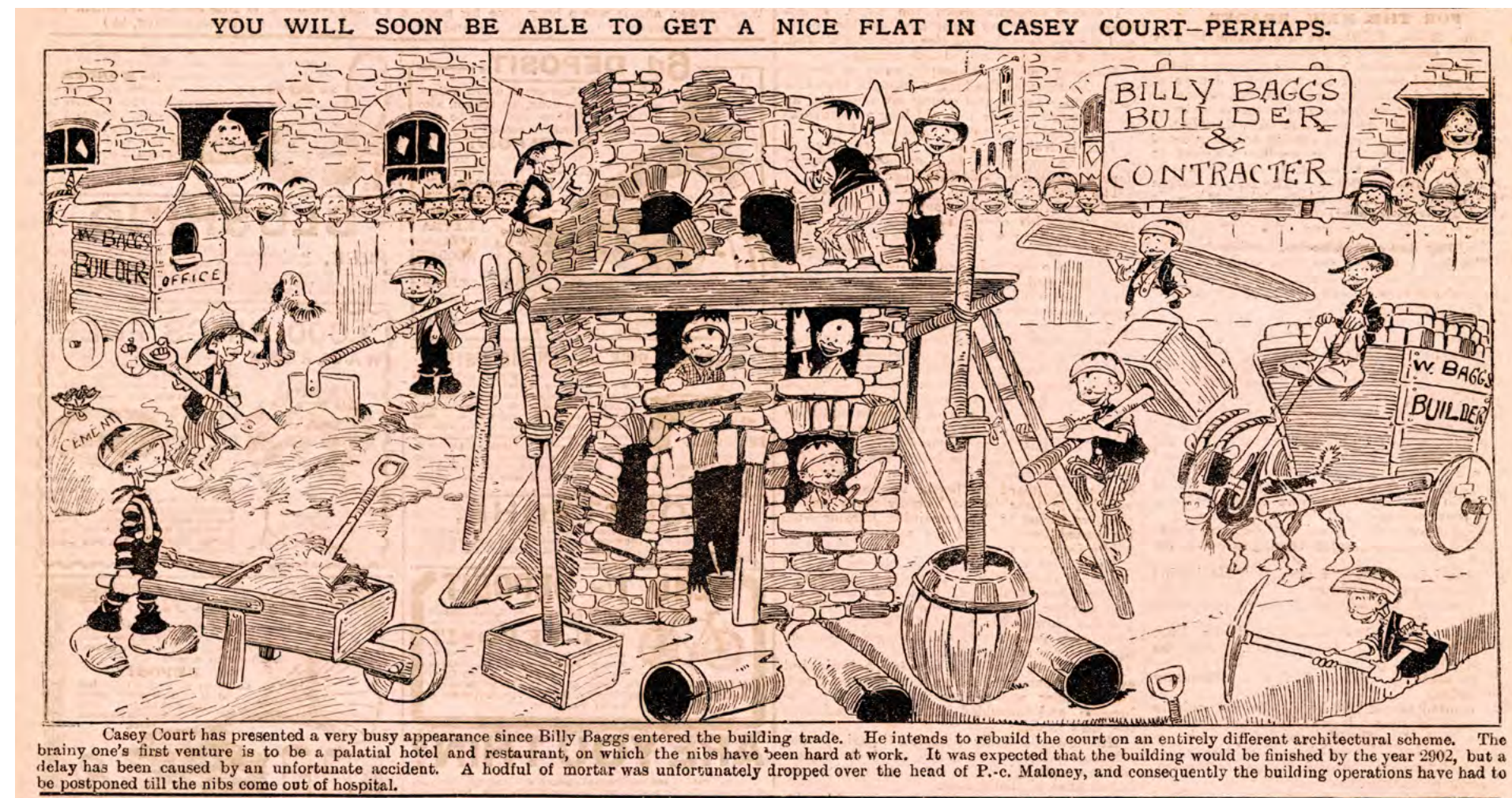
Illustrated Chips, 20 February 1904



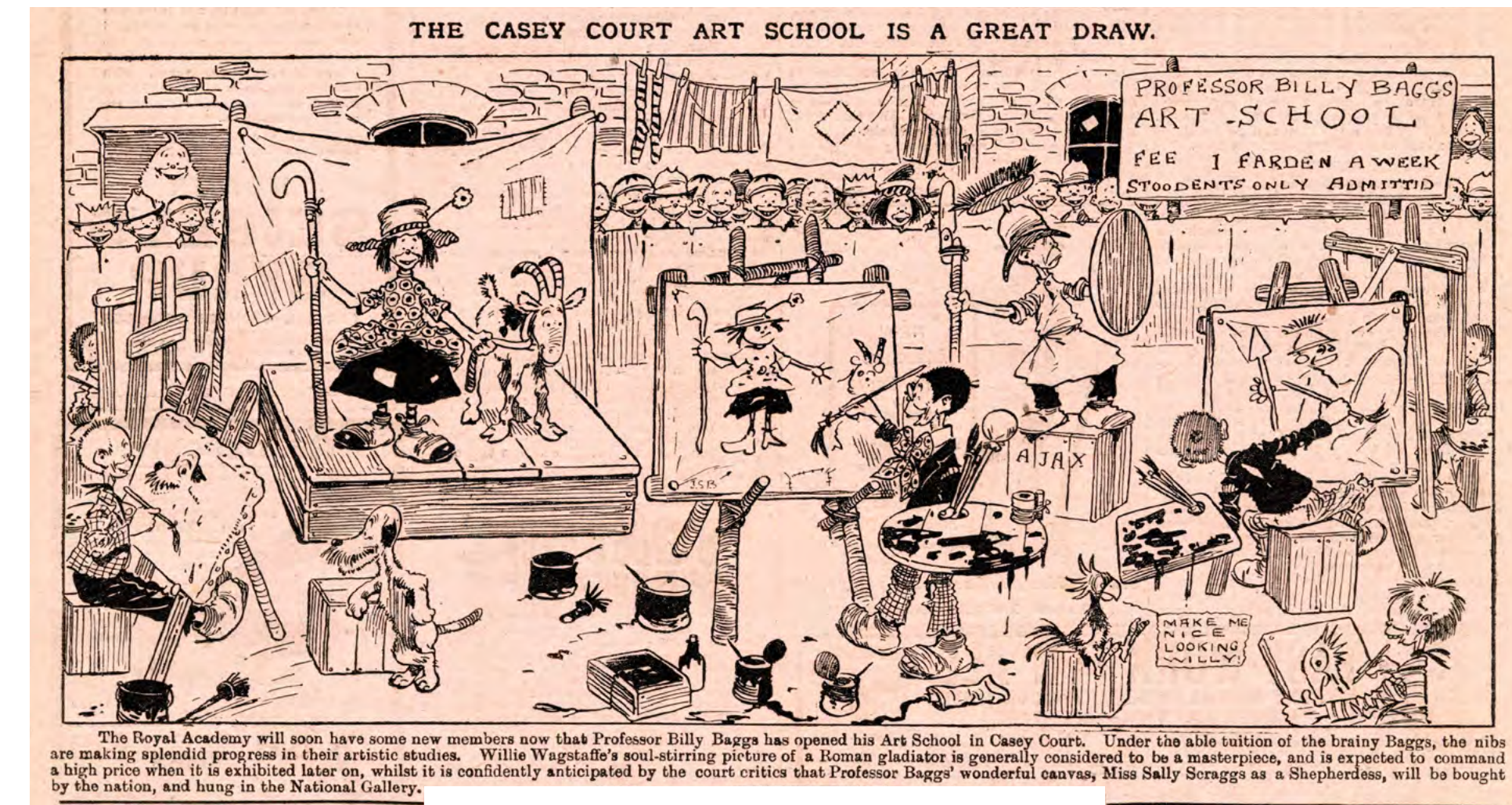
Illustrated Chips, 21 January 1905



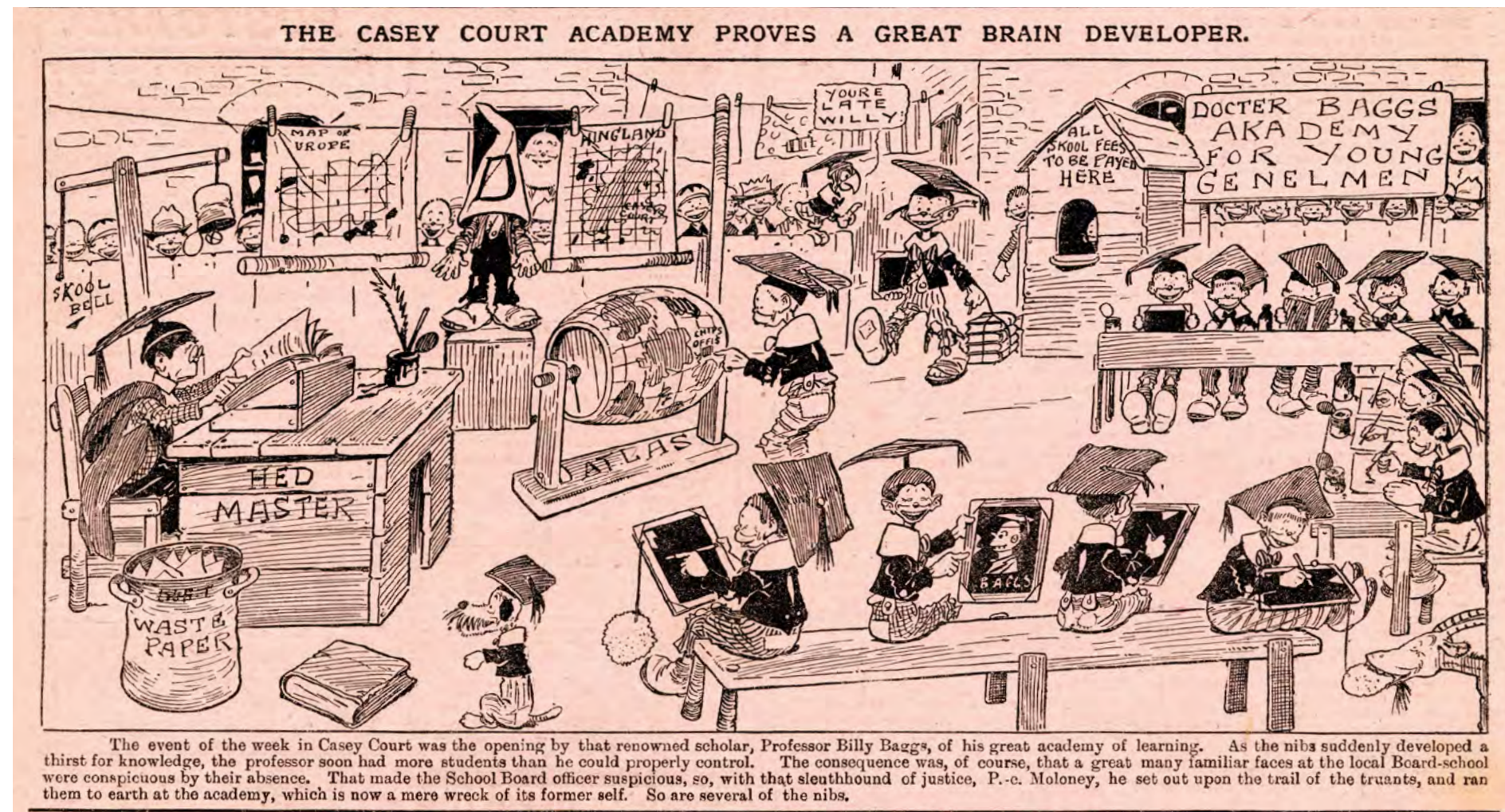
Illustrated Chips, 16 February 1907



Illustrated Chips, 23 February 1907



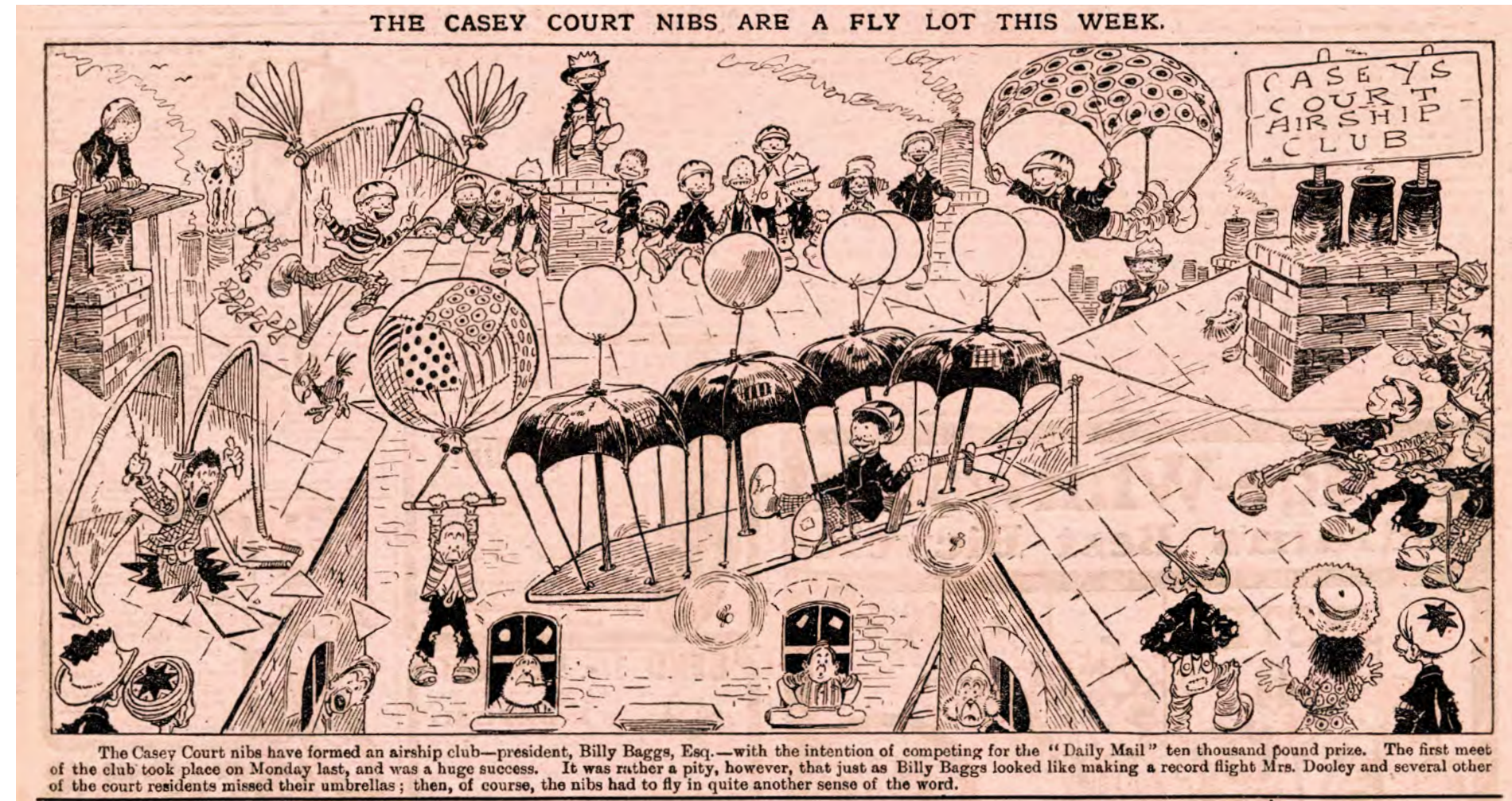
Illustrated Chips, 2 March 1907 (cut-out at lower edge)



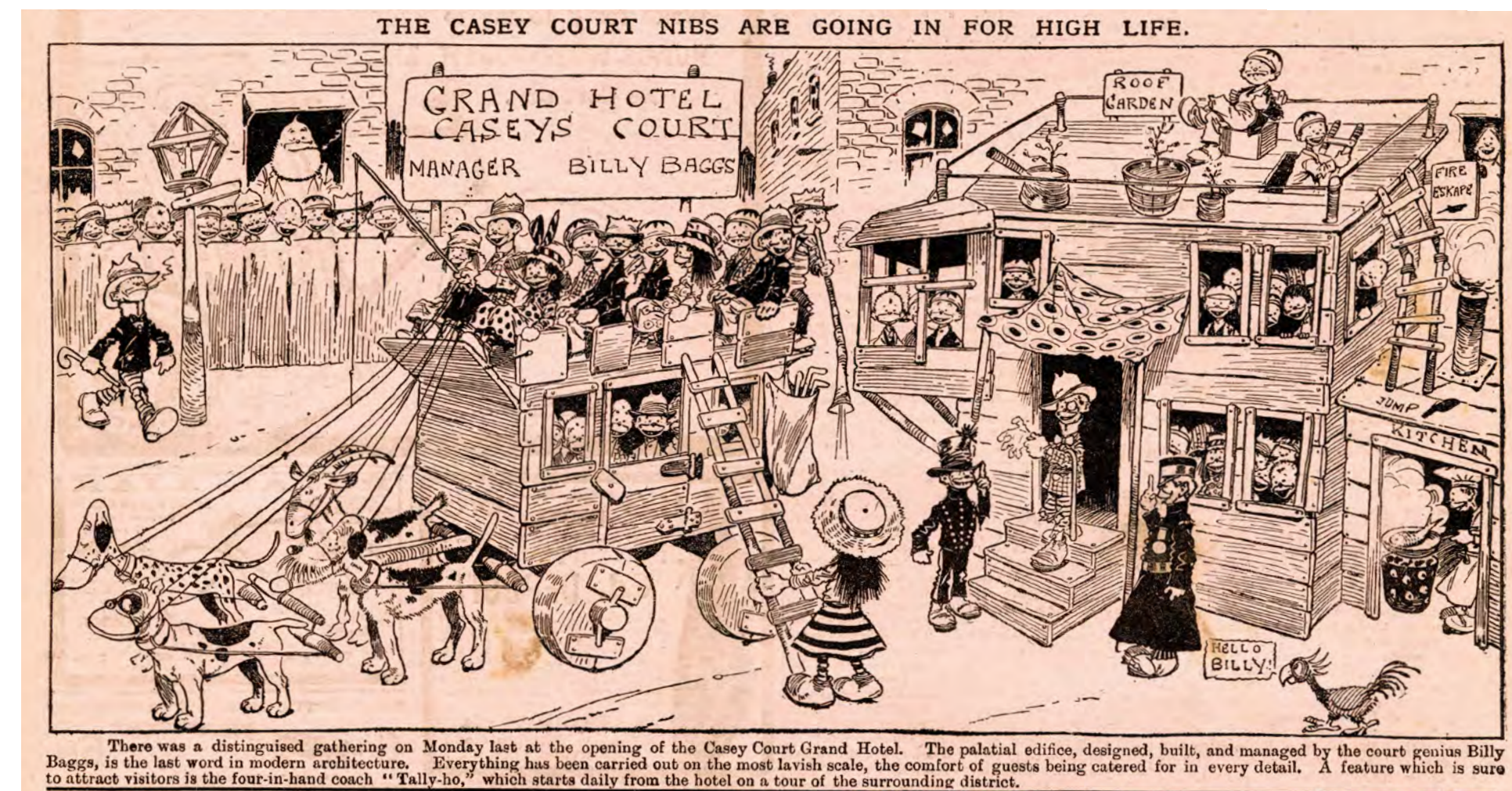
Illustrated Chips, 9 March 1907



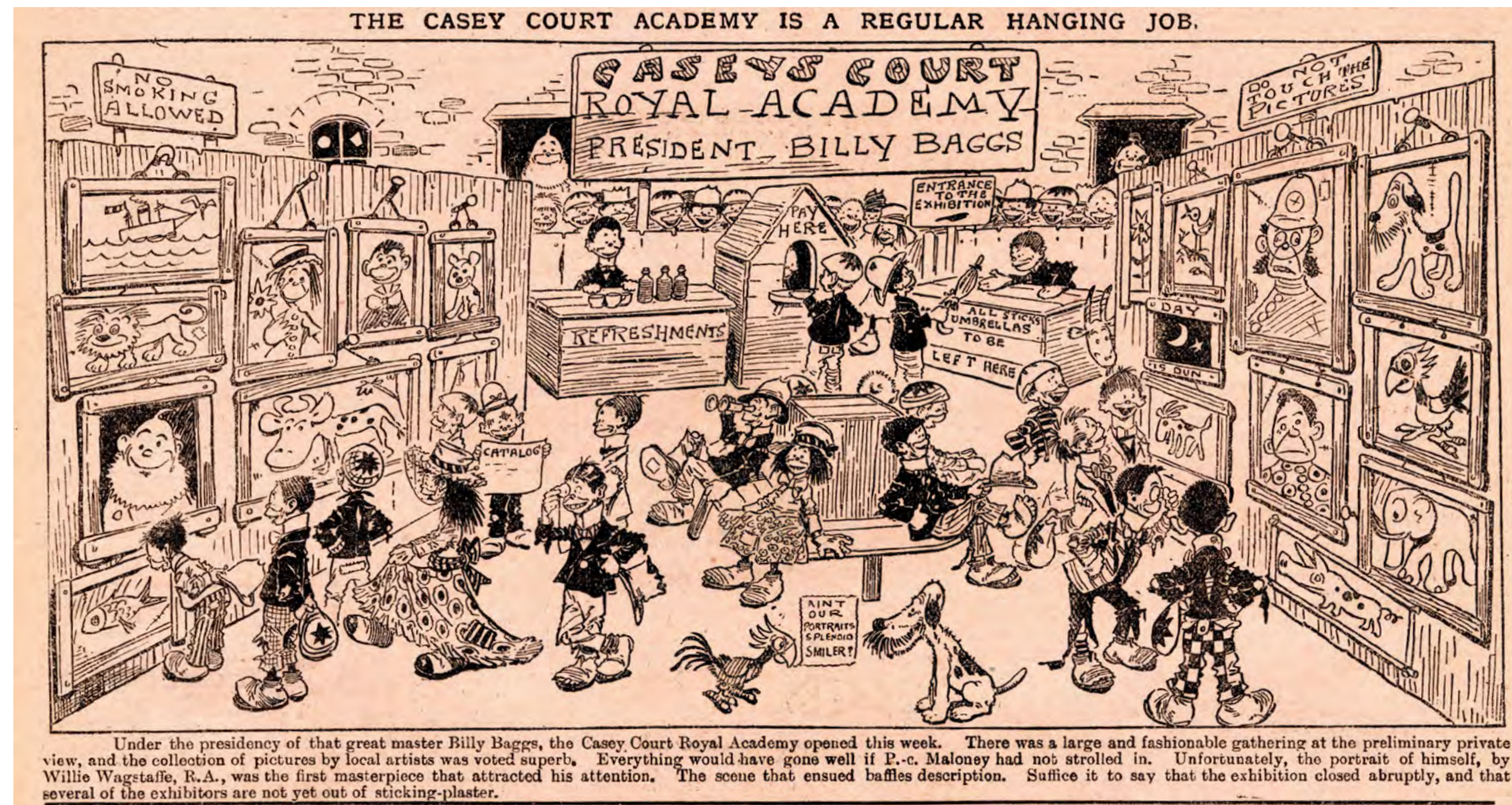
Illustrated Chips, 6 April 1907



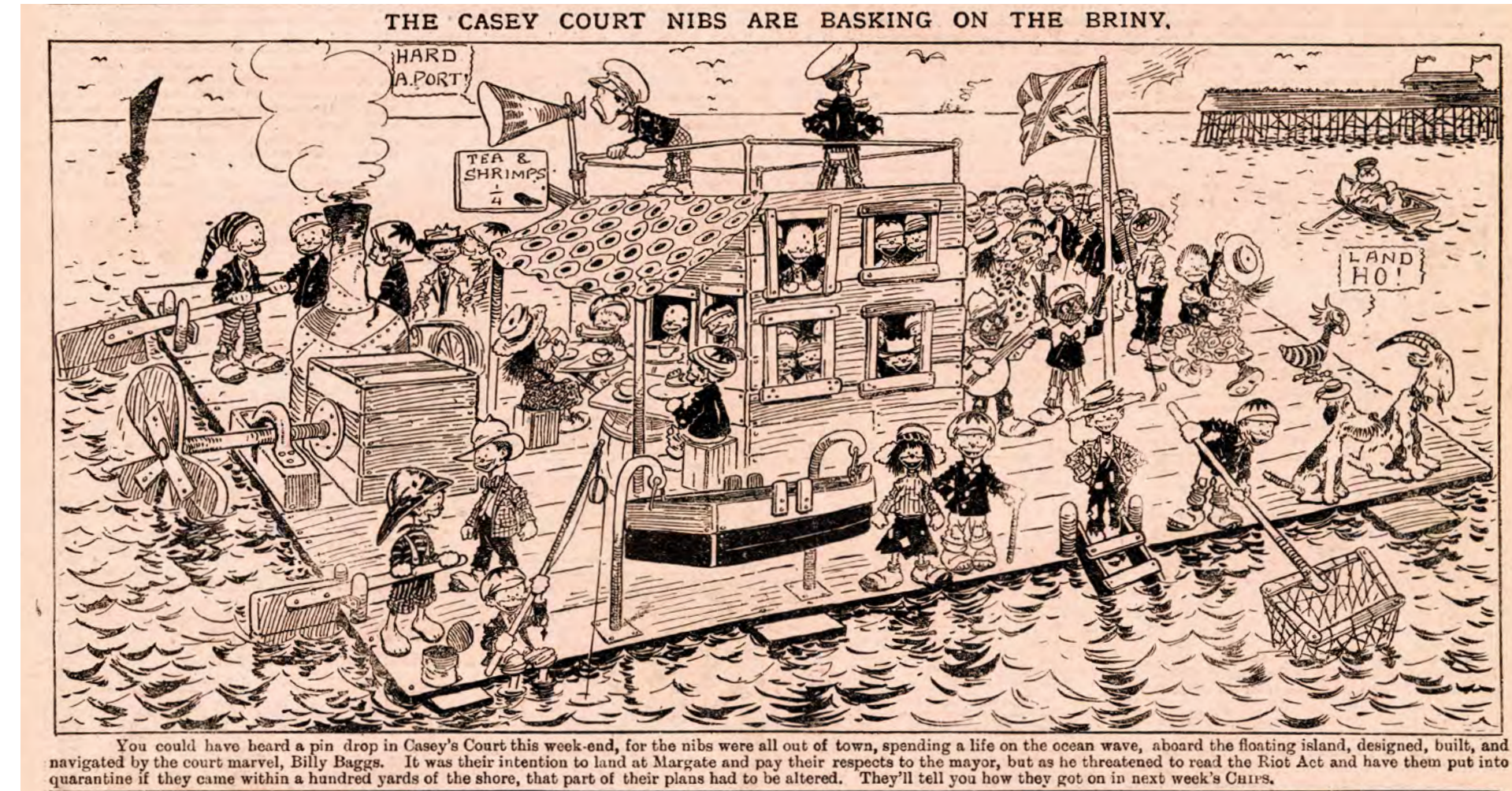
Illustrated Chips, 13 April 1907



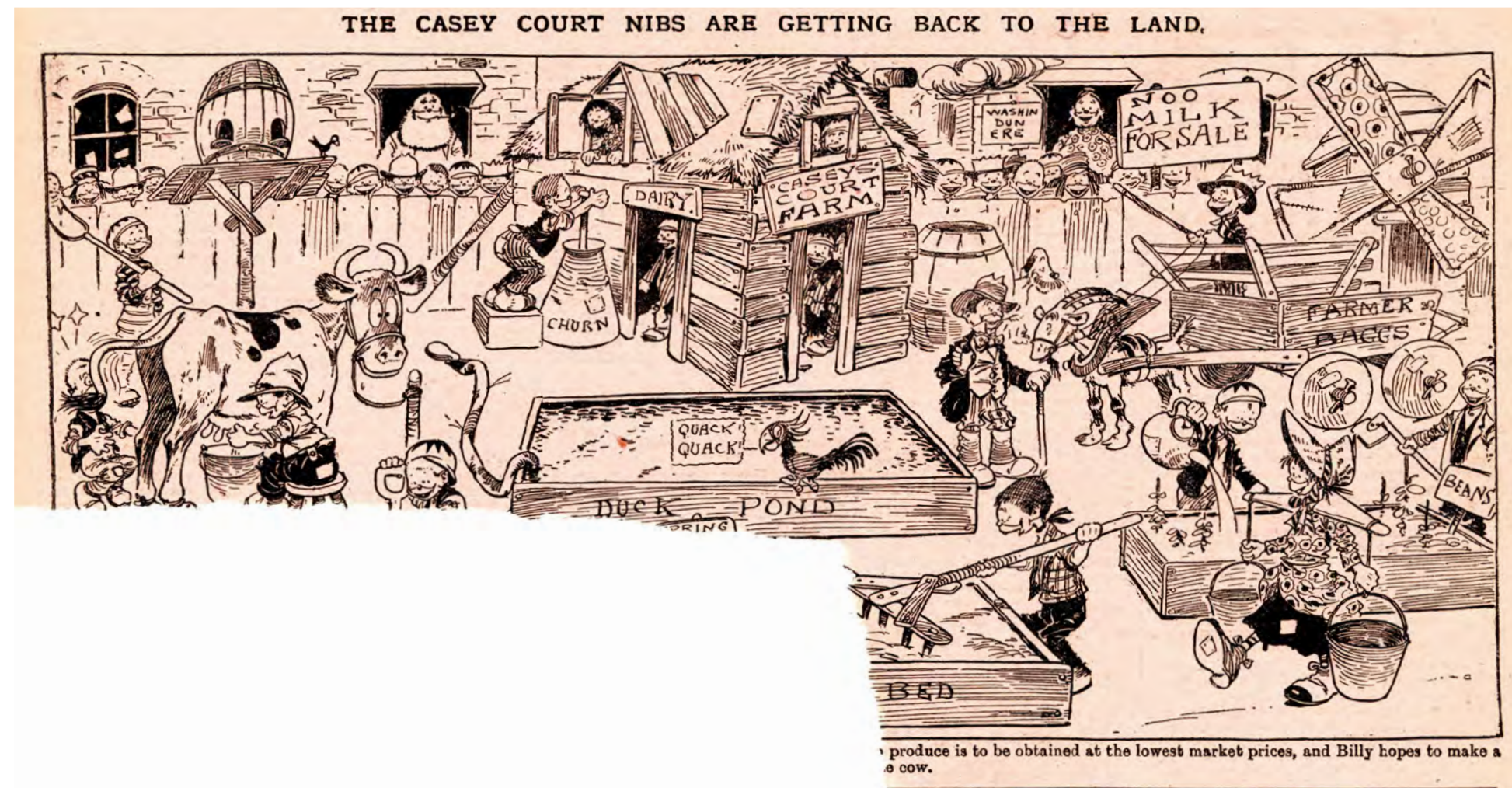
Illustrated Chips, 20 April 1907



Illustrated Chips, 27 April 1907



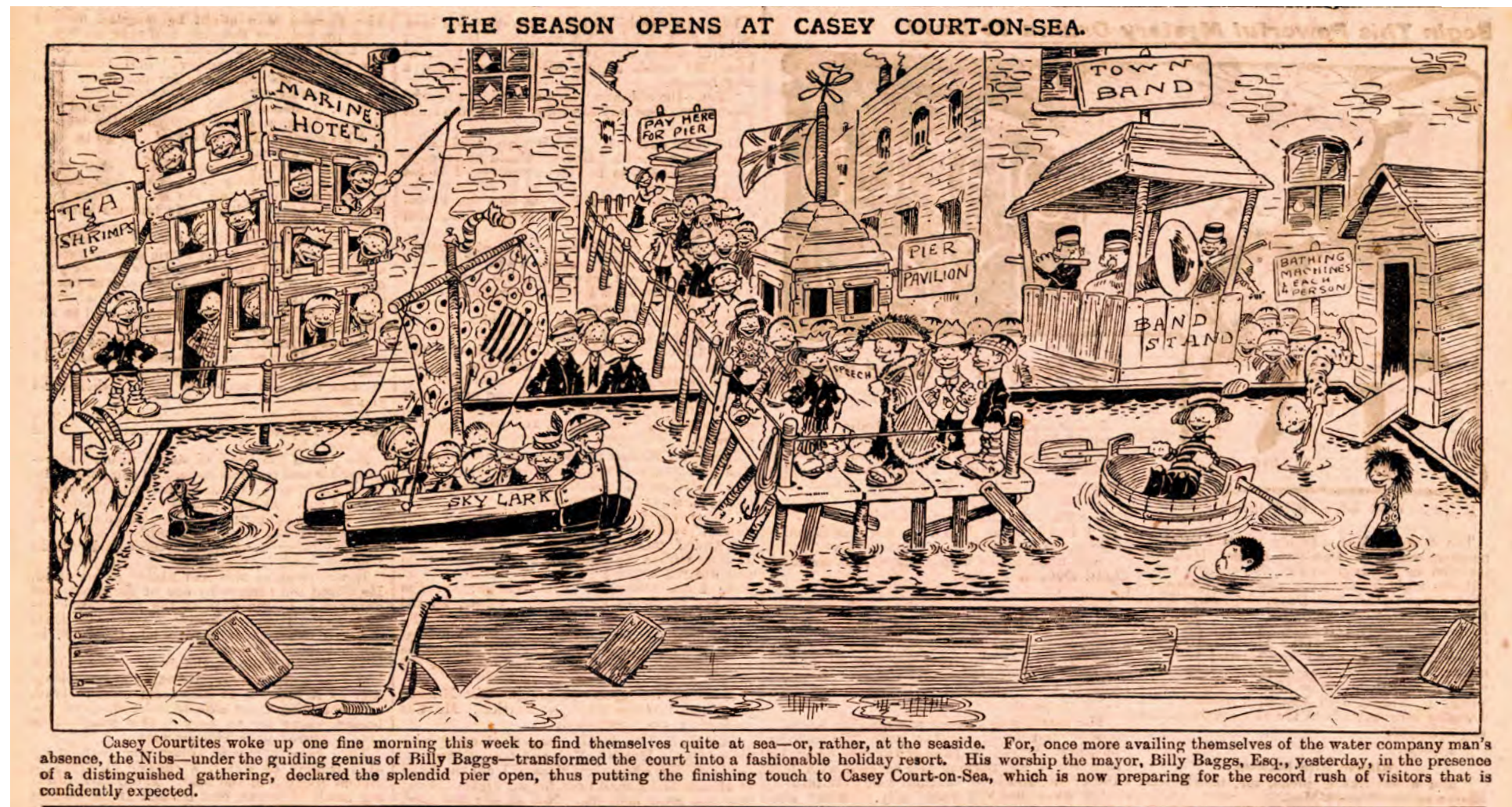
Illustrated Chips, 4 May 1907



Illustrated Chips, 11 May 1907 (damaged)



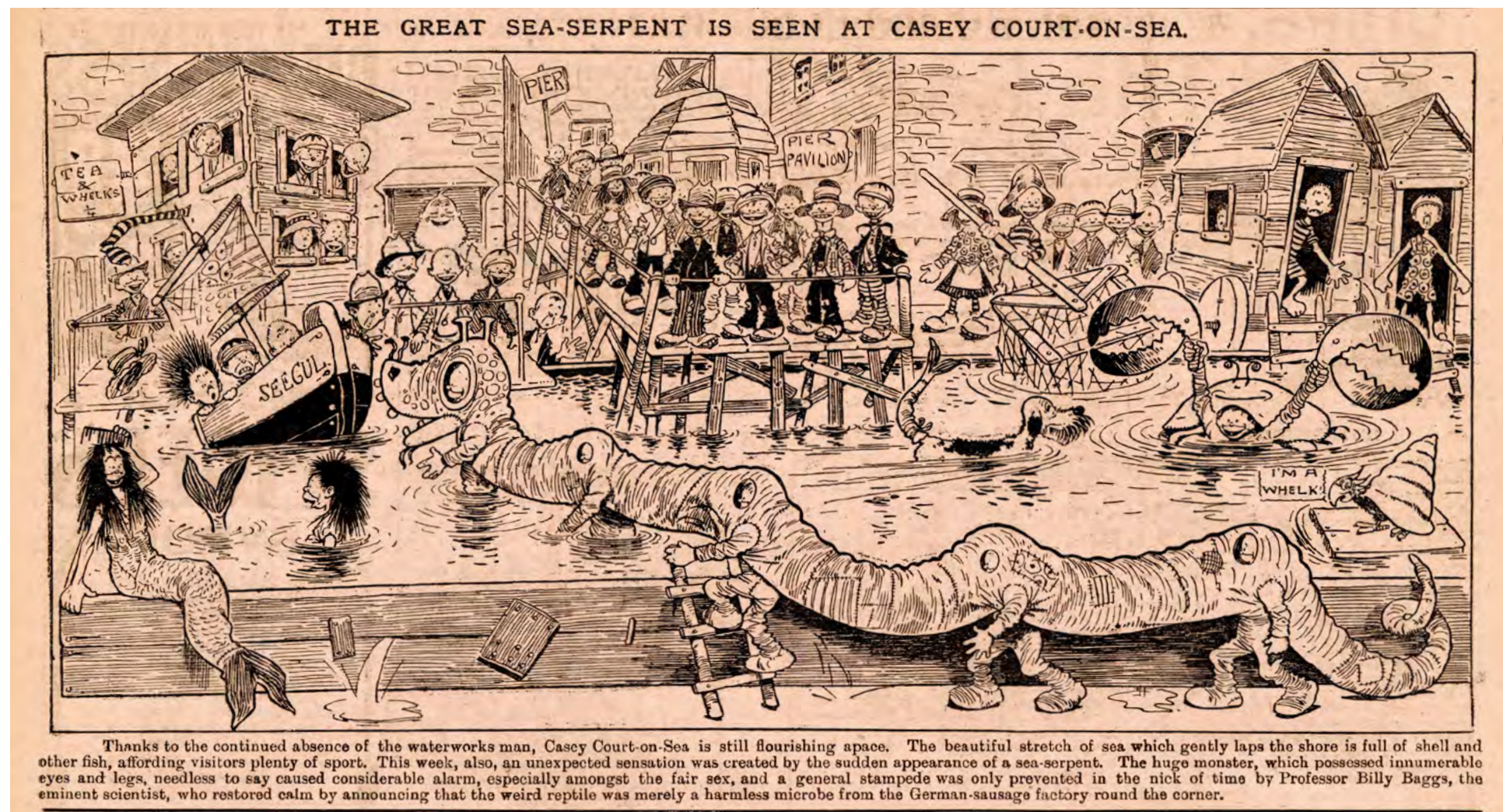
Illustrated Chips, 18 May 1907



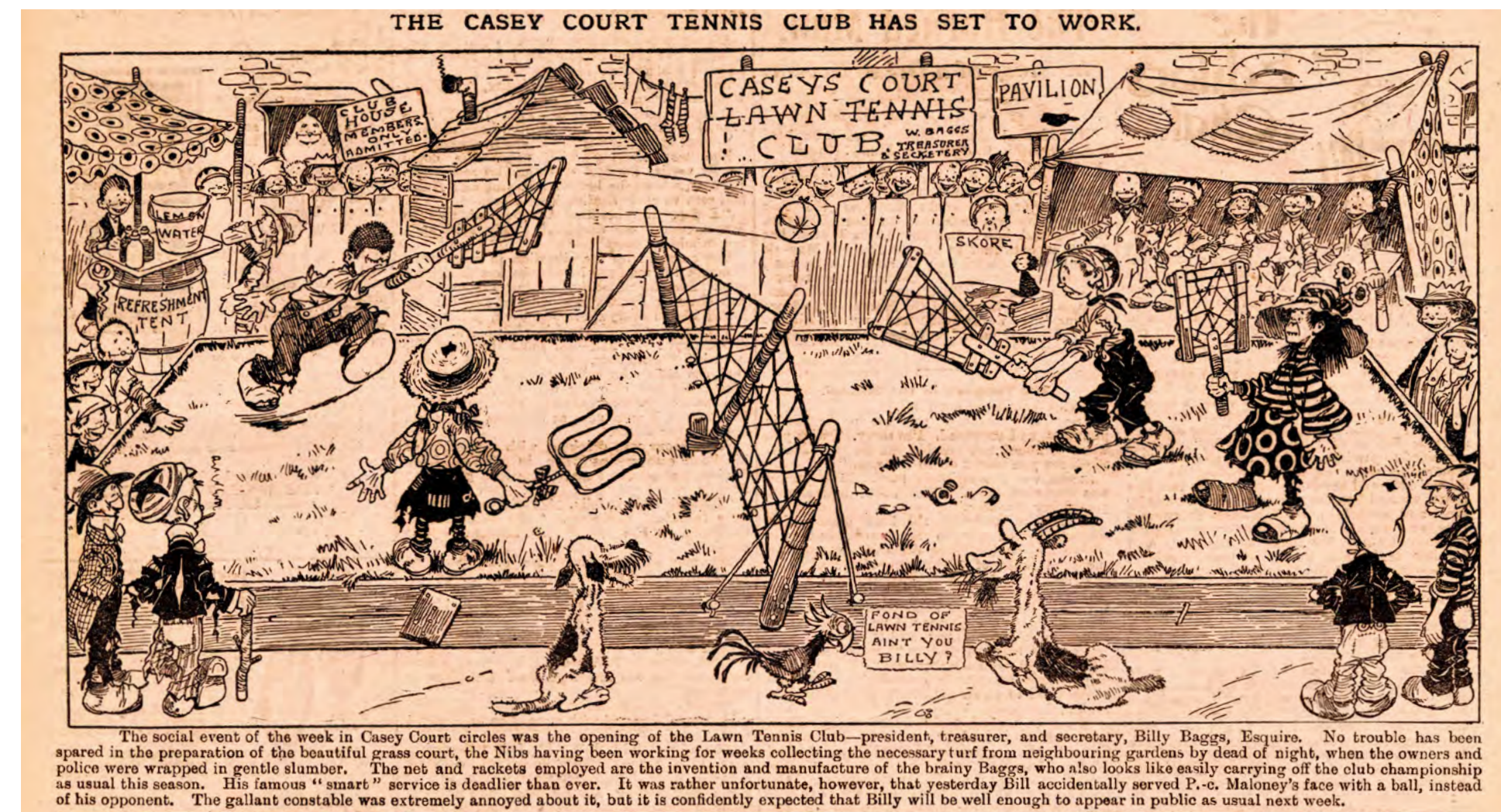
Illustrated Chips, 25 May 1907



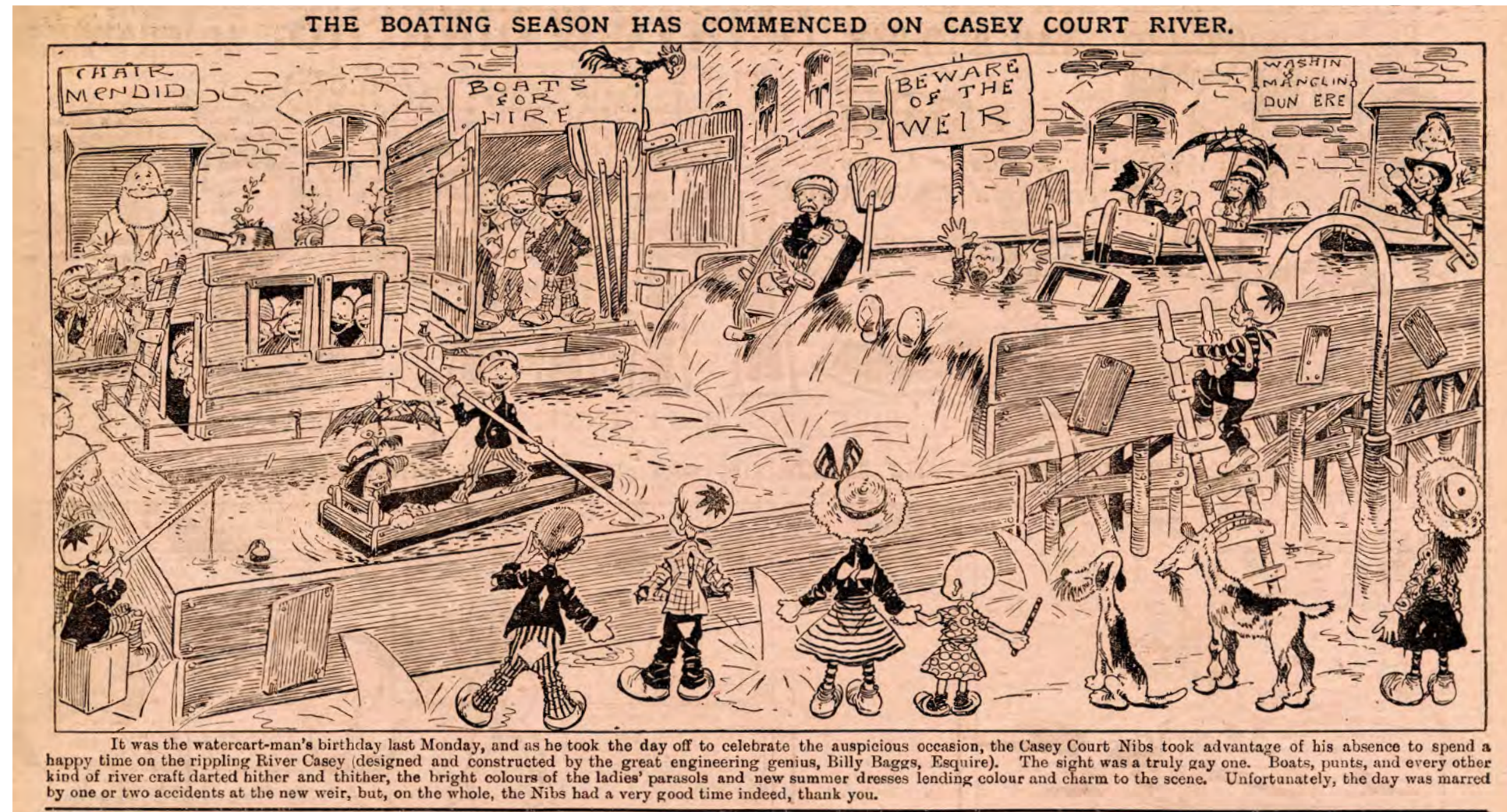
Illustrated Chips, 1 June 1907 (damaged)



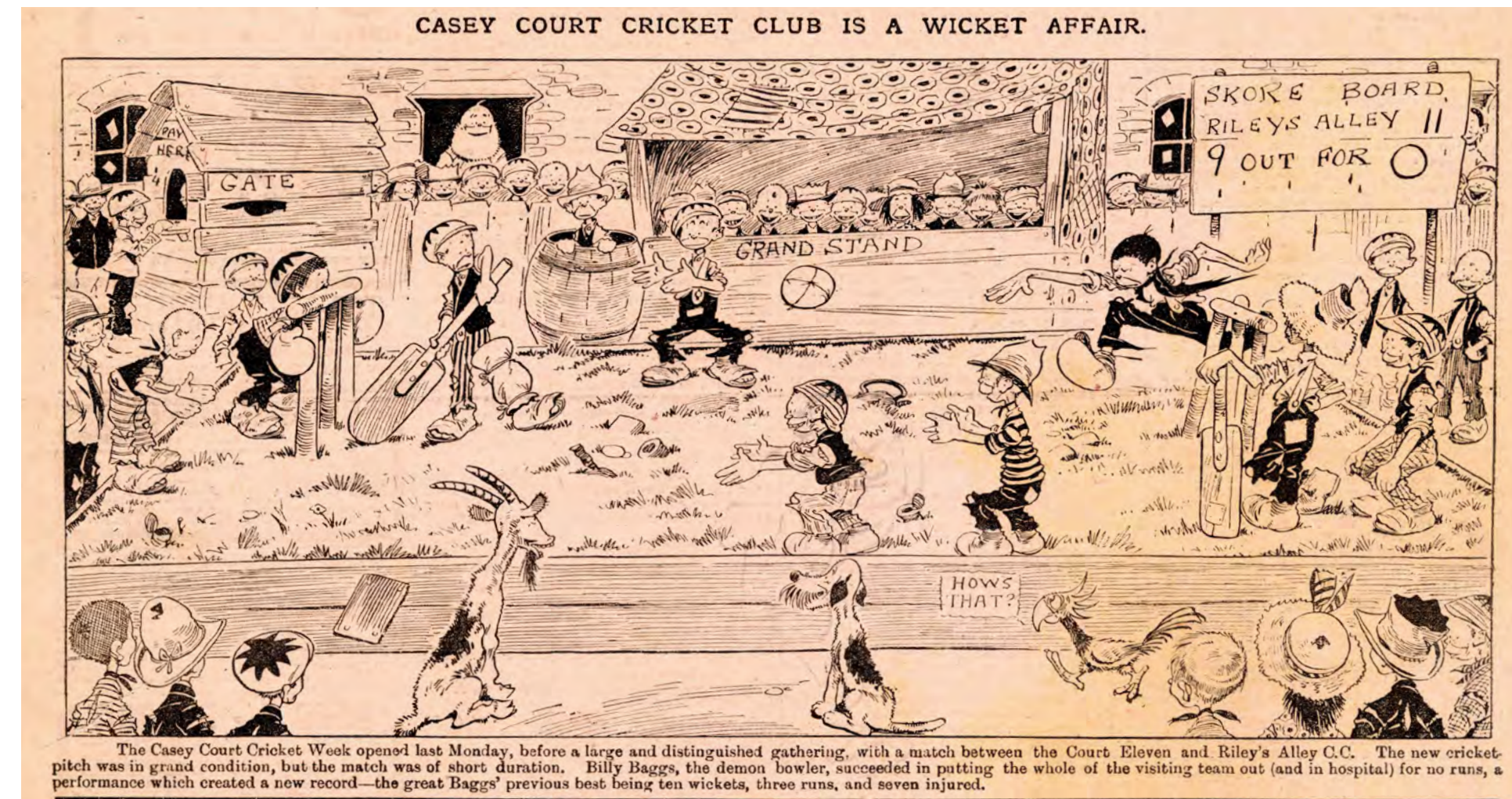
Illustrated Chips, 8 June 1907



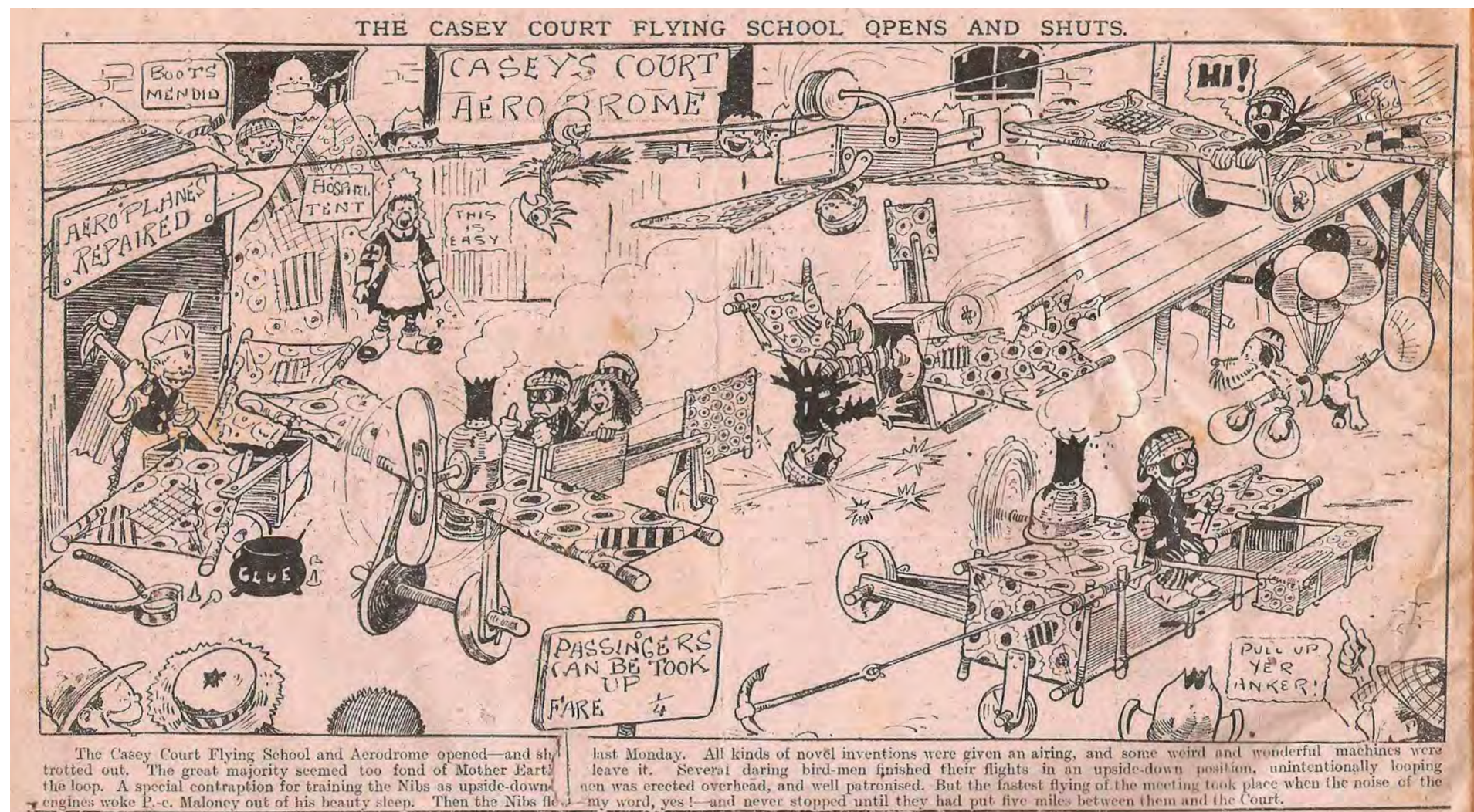
Illustrated Chips, 15 June 1907



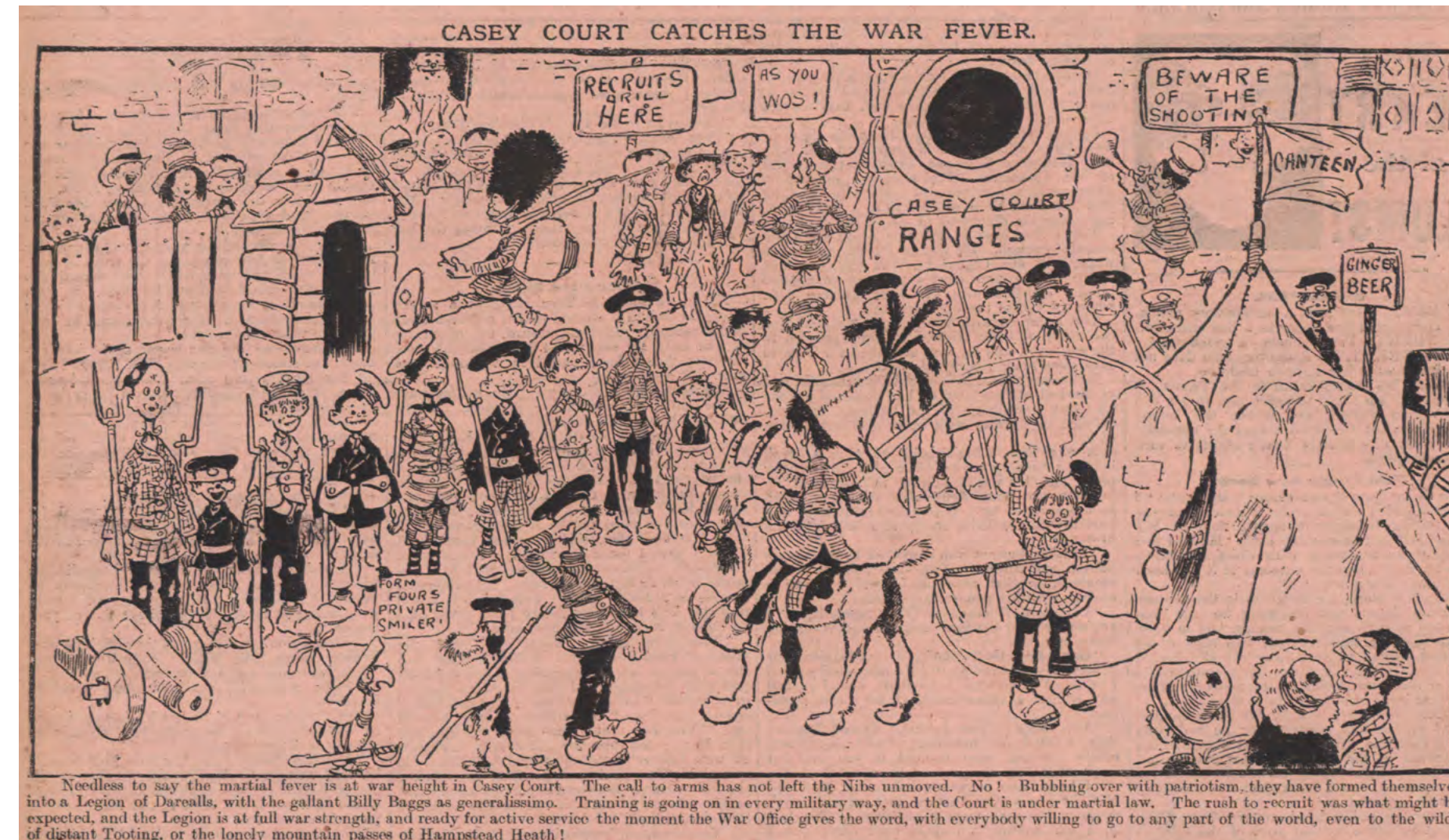
Illustrated Chips, 22 June 1907



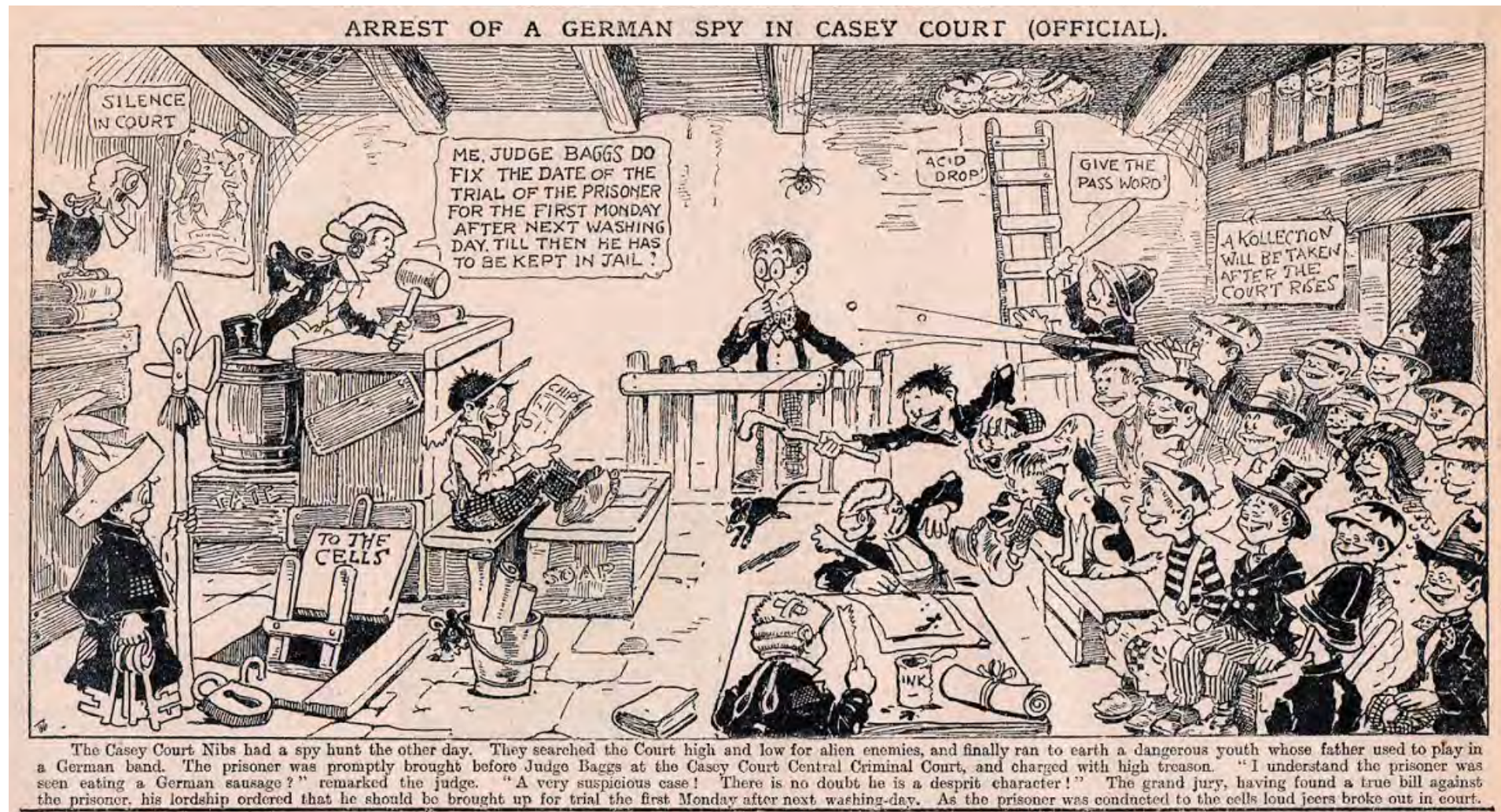
Illustrated Chips, 29 June 1907



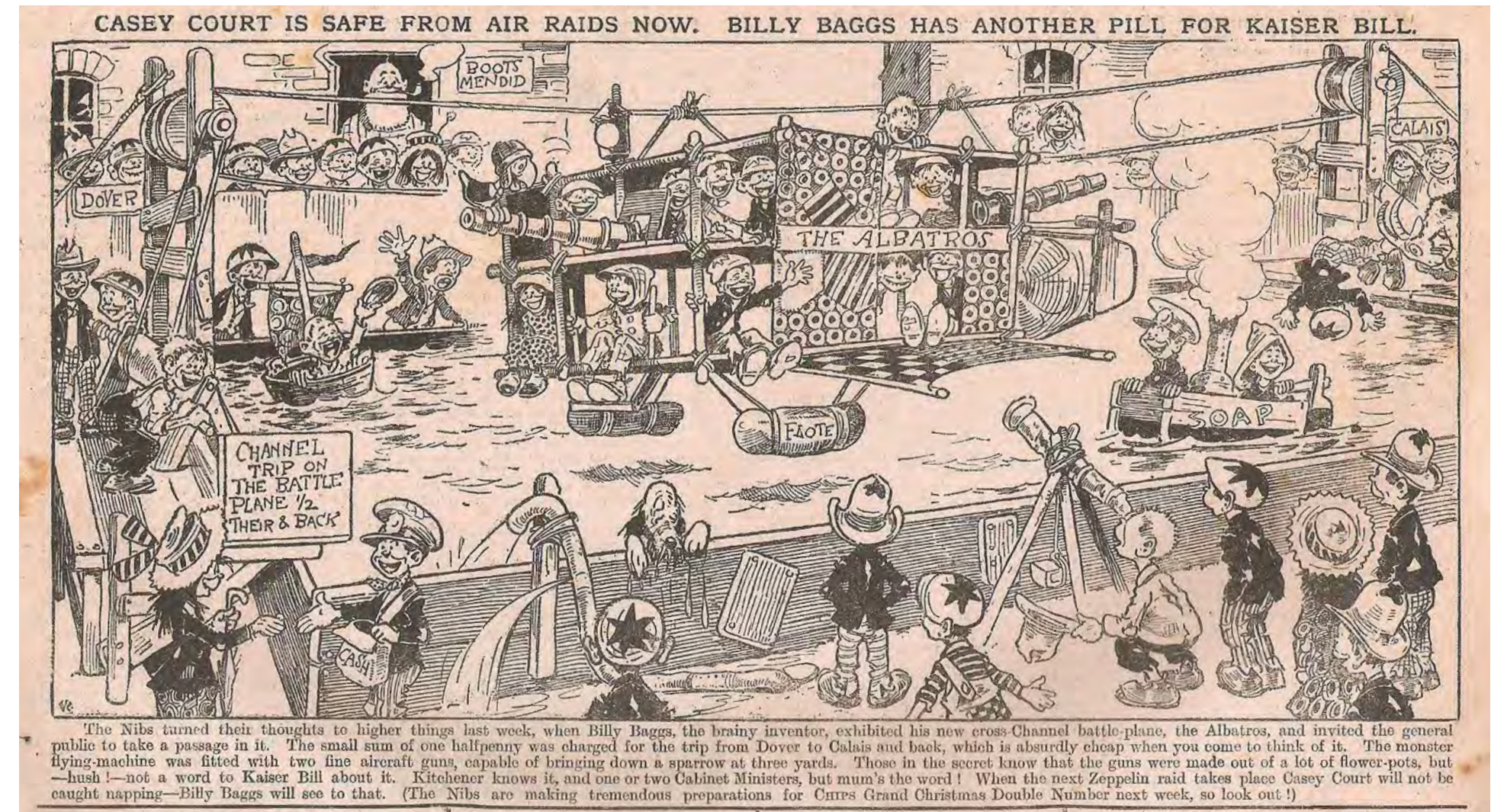
Illustrated Chips, 28 February 1914



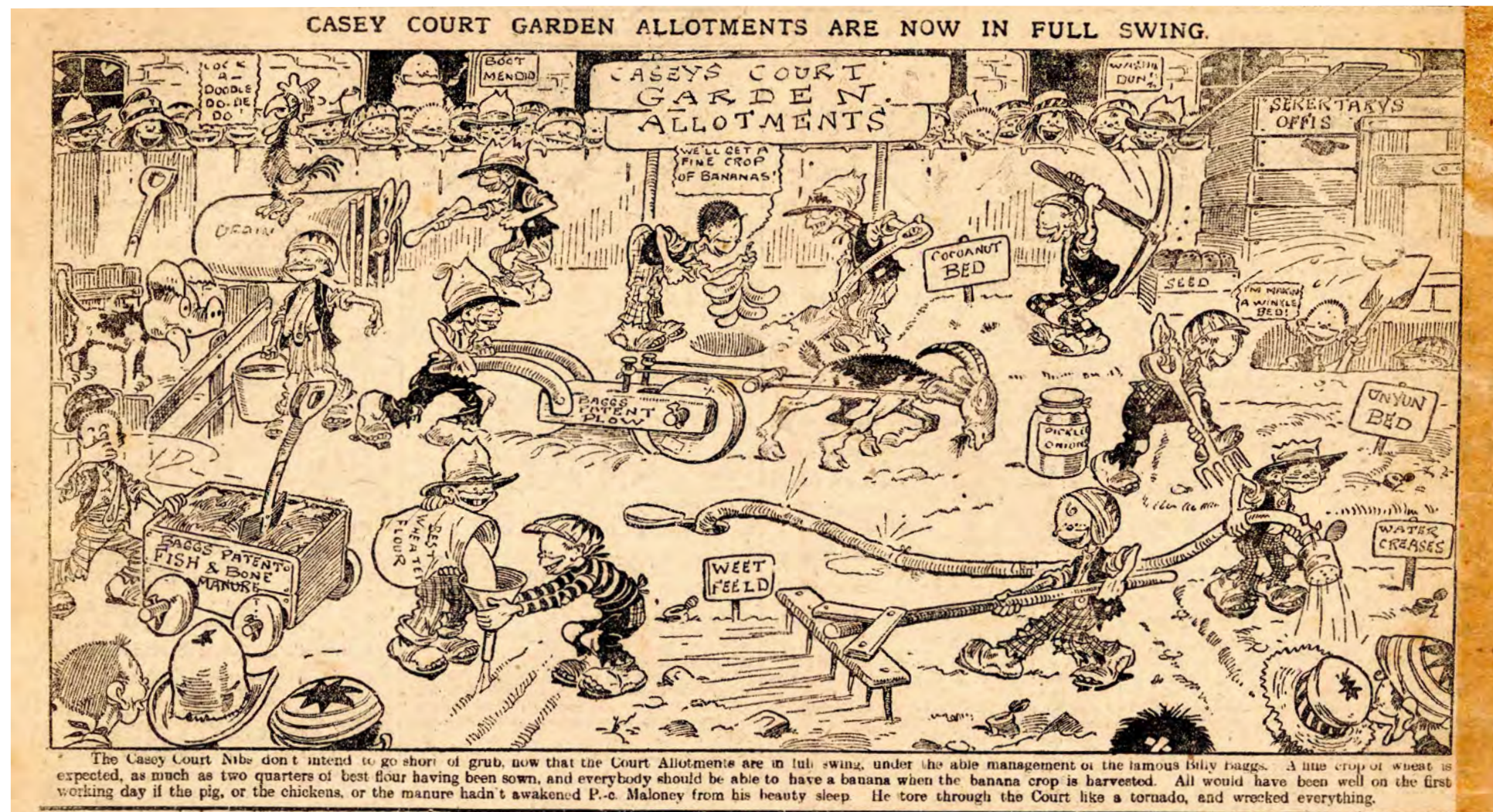
Illustrated Chips, 12 September 1914



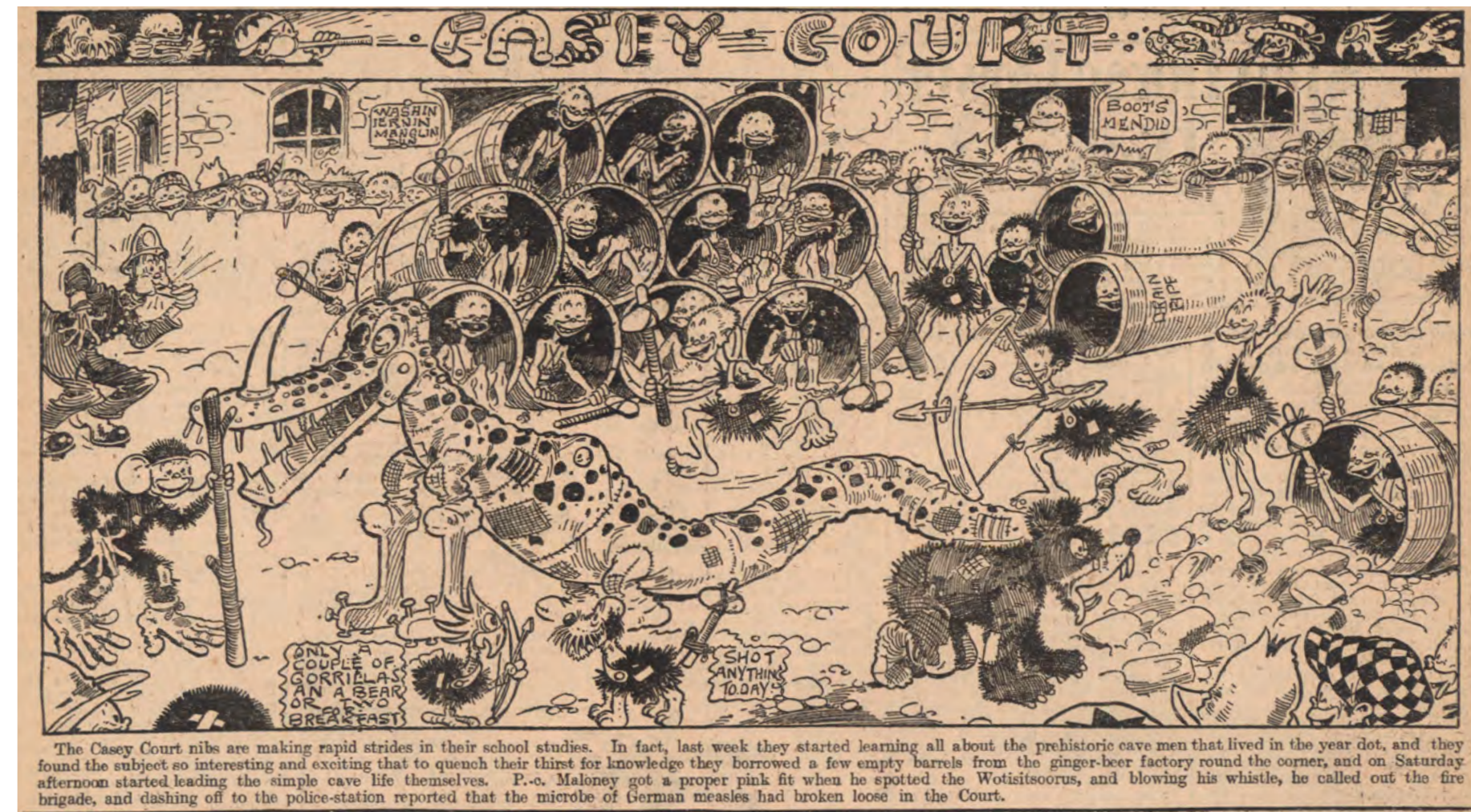
Illustrated Chips, 30 October 1915



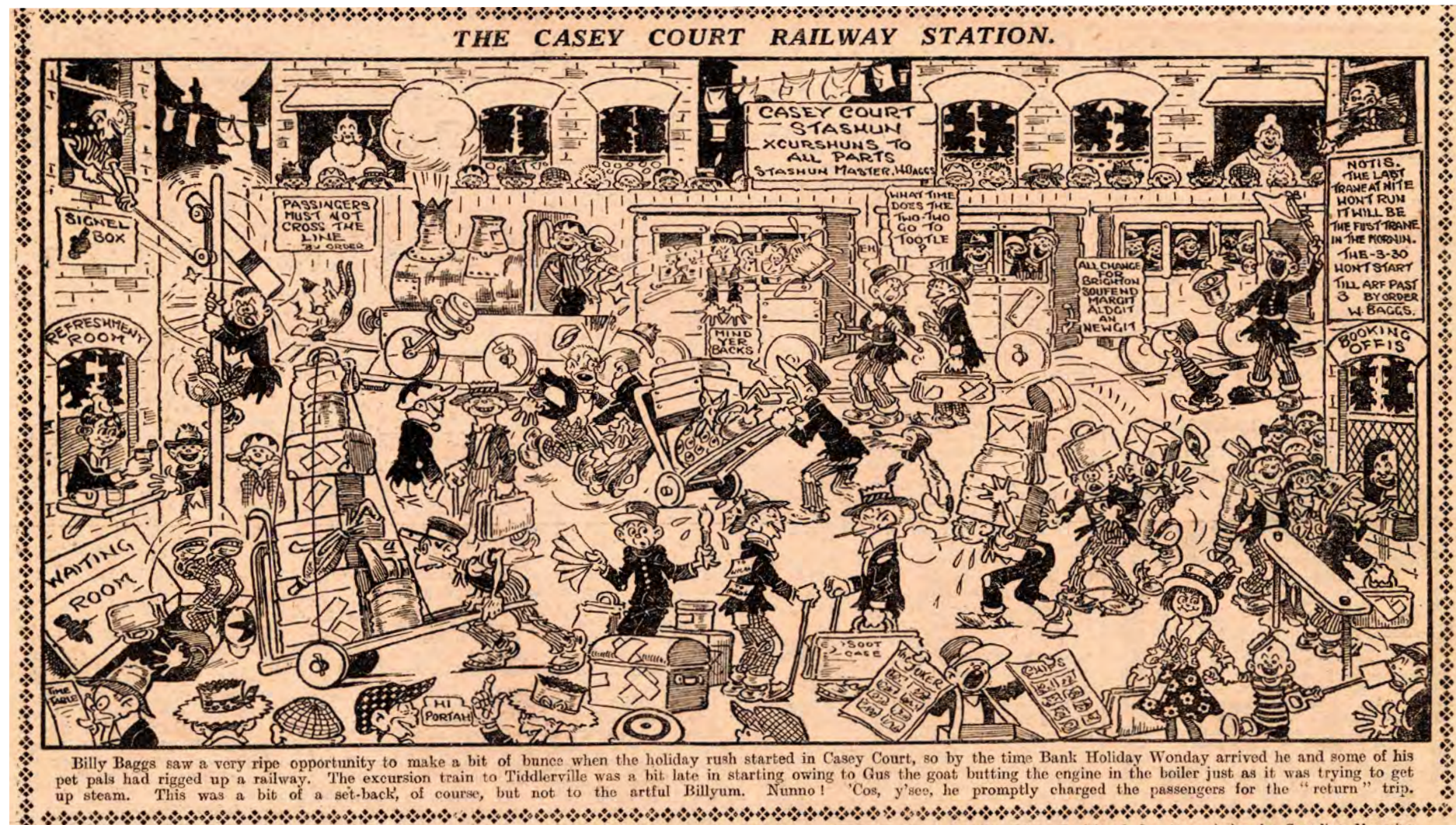
Illustrated Chips, 20 November 1915



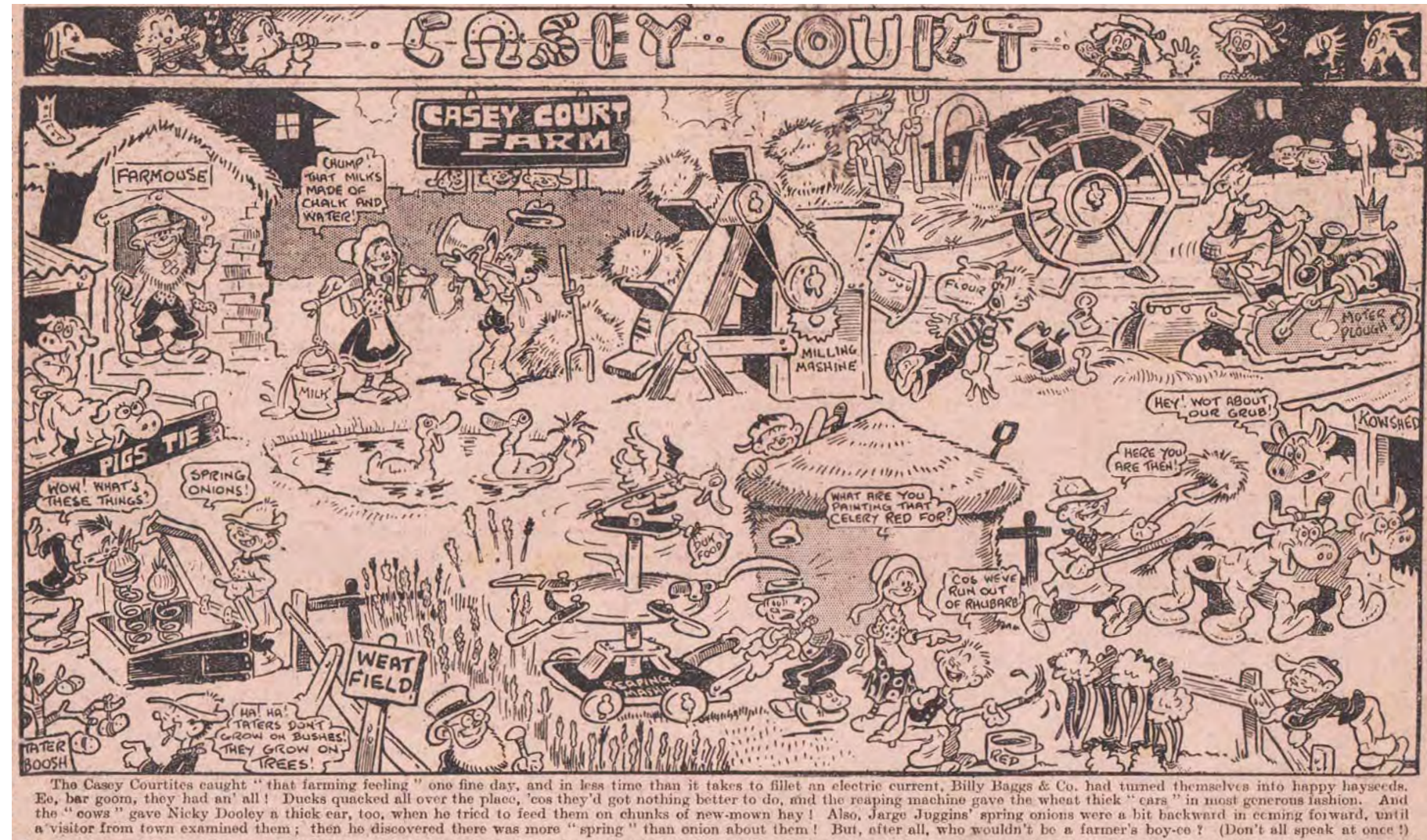
Illustrated Chips, 17 February 1917



Illustrated Chips, 29 April 1922



Illustrated Chips, 2 August 1930



Illustrated Chips, no exact day, 1932
drawn by Charlie Pease

DIVERSIFICATION ACROSS TITLES

Amalgamated Press pushed new titles into the comics market and dominated it quite quickly. Content and talent was shared and moved between the different publications, while adjustments for different audiences were made. Some comics appeared in several of the titles without changes to their narration or style, others were contextualised differently (see examples and comment on the following pages).

The advantage of cross-publication marketing as well as the pull-factor of established successful figures was maximised, not least on the editor's pages, where these editors advised to buy and recommended the sister papers to their readers. Figures reading the different papers published by Amalgamated Press are included in several of the comics and one-panel series like Casey Court.

While coloured comic journals were more up-market and expensive, the papers printed in black were cheaper and directed at a different audience. These one-colour publications were called "black comics" despite their tinted papers. These spread into a group of approximately a dozen newspaper-format comics produced for lower-middle-class and working-class families: Larks, Jester, Joker, Butterfly, Favourite Comics, Jolly Comic, and others, including the established Comic Cuts and Illustrated Chips. They contained four pages of serialised story in small print and four pages of humorous strips.

Due to the immense speed and pressure in Julius Stafford Baker's production of material for different publications within the Amalgamated Press, recognisable overlaps happened, as scenarios, ideas, and jokes were re-used to some extent. For the Amalgamated Press, Julius Stafford Baker produced amongst other work also:

- 'Hans the Double Dutchman' (Comic Home Journal, 1904),
- 'Billy Smiff's Pirates' (Puck, 1904),
- 'Stone Age Peeps' (Illustrated Chips, 1904),
- 'The Inventions of Pat' (Nuggets, 1905),
- 'Henry Hawkins' (Jester and Wonder, 1906),
- 'Comic Cuts Colony' (Comic Cuts, 1910),
- 'Raggs Rents' (Merry and Bright, 1915),
- 'Prehistoric Pranks' (Funny Wonder, 1919),
- 'Dr Croc's College' (The Sunday Fairy, 1919),
- 'The Moonshine Movie Nibs' (Lot-O'-Fun, 1920).

Jester and Wonder, 24 November 1906, page 7
Dooley's Guests.

The Jester (with various fusions).
London: Amalgamated Press.
10 May 1902 to 18 May 1940.



"CHIPS" HOLIDAY NUMBER, ½D. OUT ON THURSDAY NEXT. — NEW STORIES. NEW PICTURES.



No. 871. (NEW SERIES.) [ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.] PRICE ONE HALFPENNY. [TRANSMISSION ABROAD AT BOOK RATES.] MAY 11, 1907.

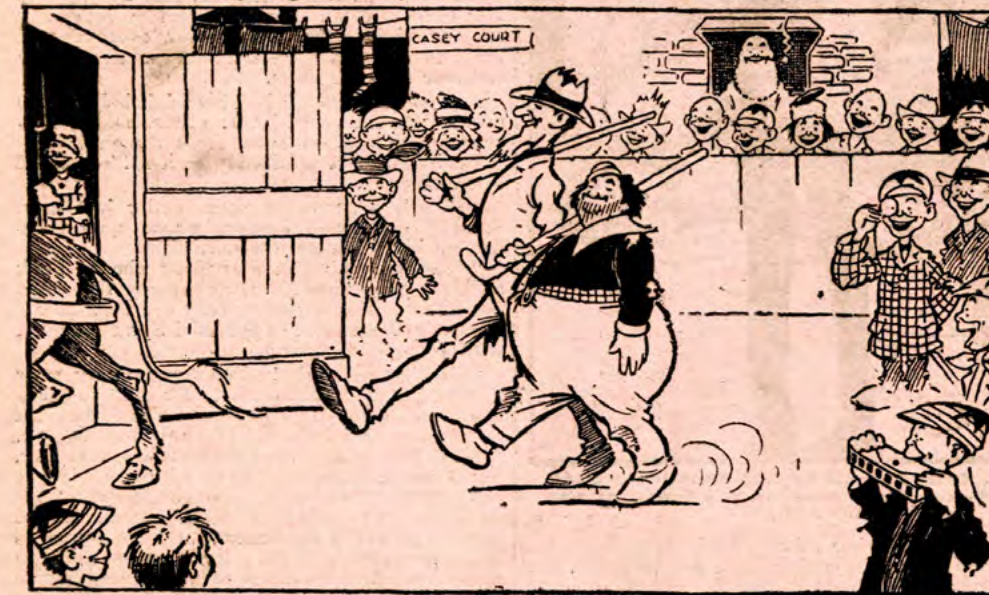
WEARY WILLIE AND TIRED TIM ARE CASEY COURT-MARTIALLED.



1. Weary Willie and Tired Tim had just got back from a little walking tour through Wendover, Andover, and Bound-over, and were consequently feeling more weary and more tired than usual when the sudden sound of martial music seemed to put new life into them. Then the Casey Court Boy Army marched past, and a large salt tear quivered on Tim's eyelash as he thought of his young cadet days at Sandhurst.



2. "Noble lads! Noble lads!" he cried exultantly. "The eyes of Europe are on you!" "Mine, too!" put in Willie, with passion. Then that glowing spark of imperial pride that smoulders in the bosom of every true Briton leapt to flame (Hark at us!), and our tired heroes, travel-stained and footsore though they were, shouldered their staves, and with flashing eyes and swelling breasts stepped lightly forward, their throbbing feet keeping rhythmic time to the stately march music. (Oh, just hark! We're off again!) It was a touching spectacle. These two hardened men of the world, whose patriotic zeal— (That's enough for one picture.—EDITOR.)



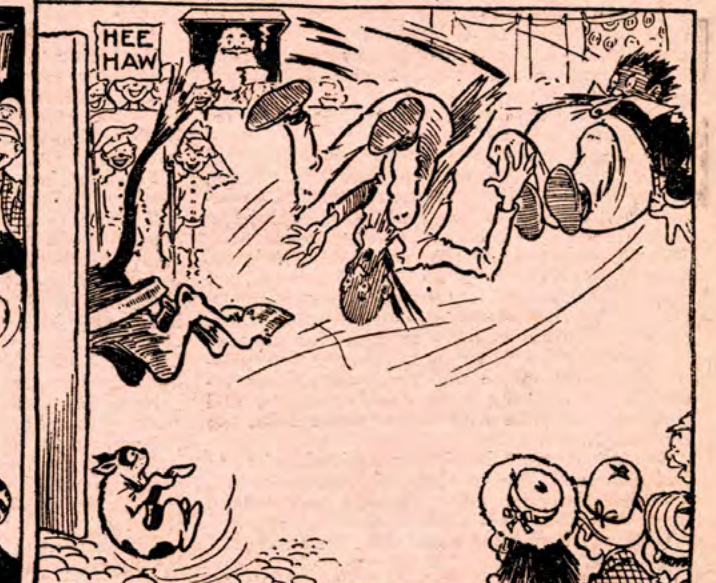
3. On, on, on they marched to the soul-stirring strains of "Johnny, get your gun!" till anon they reached Casey Court, where Casey himself, standing at his cottage door, smiled proudly to find himself figuring so unexpectedly upon the front page of the greatest comic journal in the world.



4. On, on, on they peregrinated (no extra charge for peregrinated. Wonderful how we do it for a halfpenny, isn't it? The "Times" would have just said "walked," but we spare no expense). On, on, on, through the barrack gate; on (three times as before), till at last they found themselves in the guard-room before that stern, relentless martinet Captain Billy Baggs.



5. The next moment the heavy door had slammed behind. "Seize the spies!" shouted the cruel captain, in cold, hard tones. And immediately our pair were seized in several places. But let us get outside into the fresh air, where we cannot behold their anguish. The smiling faces of the Caseytes are more pleasant to look upon. "I'd rather be a dog and bay at the moon," remarked Smiler, quoting from the classics, "than be either of them front-page fellows at the present moment."



6. Then Gertie the mule (who, by the way, is having a ripping adventure in next week's "Comic Cuts."—Adv.) presented our patriotic heroes with the Grand Order of the Iron Hoof, to be worn upon their pants till further notice. 11-5-7

A SPANISH EDITION

These comics were not only available in Britain and Ireland. Many “overseas editions” were distributed through agents in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, the shipped-out versions generally consisting of one or more comics folded or stapled inside one another. Comics were evidently a viable export.

Beyond these direct exports of the publications within the Empire and Commonwealth, they were re-published in other languages, too. So far, it has not been established if they were simply copied without consent or if some form of licencing agreements had been reached. Practice in early comics' publishing suggests otherwise, and it has to be remembered that from the very beginning of comics, material from other countries and publications was used or adapted without pay nor reference to their authors and illustrators.

For context, it is worth to look into the example of the nineteenth-century German caricaturist Wilhelm Busch, who became a very massive influence on comics storytelling. His “picture stories” (“Bildergeschichten”) were frequently reprinted in European comics without any mention of the original artist’s name. Barefaced pilferings appeared in numerous cheap periodicals from 1869 to around 1900 with derivative strips to follow his original stories and designs. Most pairs of wild boys simply copied his Max & Moritz-designs and storylines into US-newspaper comic strips as well as into British comics etc.

In consequence of that practice, it remains unclear on what legal basis the reprint on the right stood. Like in the British publications, the name of the artist is not given.

Casey Court by Julius Stafford Baker in Spanish:
the backyard court is transfered to «la República de los Zaragateros, en el archipiélago de las Mandangas»

Editorial Marco (Spain): La Risa Infantil. Primera época: 1925-1936.
No. 164 (?)



REPEATING THE PATTERN

As described before: during the First World War, comics publishing separated into two divisions: The black-ink comics basically retained their mixed-audience orientation, even if they did cater increasingly to early-teen readers. Colour-printed comics slowly transformed themselves into comics for young children.

The diverse titles offered by the Amalgamated Press constantly needed new content. Overlaps and reproductions in variation happened, as scenarios, ideas, and jokes were re-used with more or less adjustments. Artists were under constant pressure of deadlines as they worked for many papers, sometimes also in marketing. For example, Baker was fired from his work on Tiger Tim in 1914 because he too often missed his deadlines, as he was stretched between editing other papers and producing his own material. Despite that, he continued production for other papers within the Amalgamated Press even after, Casey Court for example, until some point in the 1920s.

In the need to produce new material quickly, tried and tested plots, stories, and environments were returned to, for example mystery, romance, and adventure plots from serialised texts were repeated heavily and adapted for visual storytelling. Also, to counter criticism of the comic as vulgar and of bad influence, stories that related to the ideals of the middle-classes were peddled at working-class readerships as well: for example, adventure stories set in or around public school-environments became successful and remain so to this day, despite or because of their mystical remoteness.

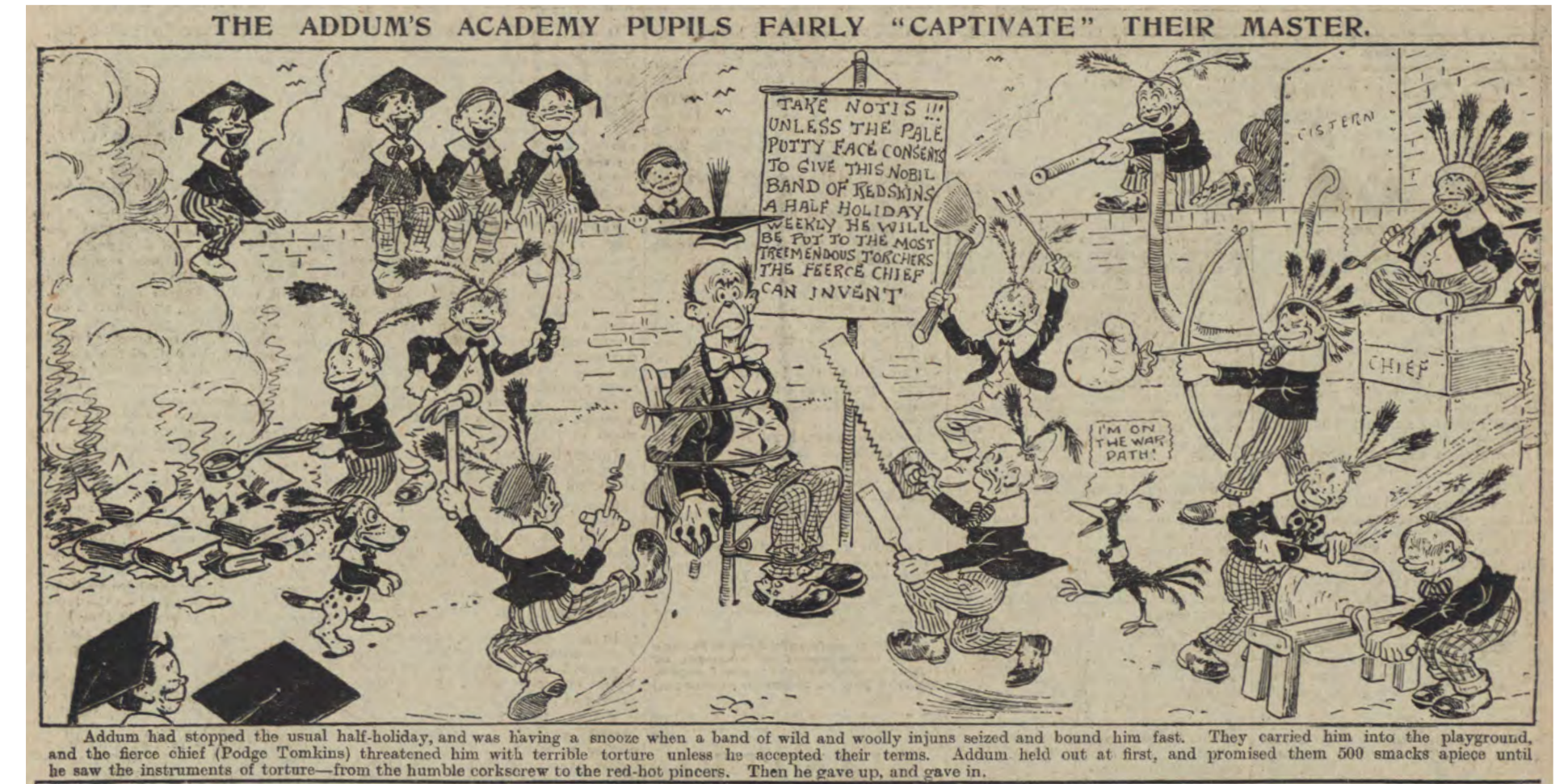
Merry And Bright, March 21, 1914.

Addum Academy by Julius Baker, beginning 1913.

Merry and Bright / Merry & Bright.

London: Fleetway House [Amalgamated Press].

22 October 1910 to 19 January 1935.



**STEREOTYPES, TYPES,
AND FICTIONS OF EMPIRE**

All publications from that time, not only the entertaining press with its ready use of ethnic and racial stereotypes, reflect and mostly sustain the Imperialist world view interwoven with racist ideas of superiority for some. This is true for all real or imagined empires in Europe before and after the First World War, and the position was predominant in British popular media, too, but not shared by all.

Current events fed straight into the entertainment section, with wars and revolts in foreign parts of the empire being hinted at in the ethnic types used. But in Baker’s early Casey Court, Asians seem not to appear at all, while faces and clothing do not allow for black or white racial differentiation easily. While the Comics Cuts Colony used routines established in other contributions, like Casey Court, the racist dimension is obvious: Visual stereotypes go beyond simplifications into types, in early comics they often combine with the use of derogatory terms and names. Even when comparing these to the generally rough humour that is played out in names and attributions given irrespective of racial or national contexts, the difference is getting more clear in the use of these figures for telling jokes, usually around their generally child-like-ness is taken into consideration. In the example on the right, the image uses established visual stereotypes to show crowded but harmless cartoon chaos, while the text tells unperturbed of carnage to come. The narrative strategy is exactly as in the Casey Court-installments, but with all cartoon violence suggested, people there do never get eaten.

Please bear in mind that these routines were conspired by some already then, while the mainstream continued to consider racist stereotyping funny much longer. It continued easily into post-Second World War society, where some elements of this everyday racism were so established that

some less-reflective members of society defend it as part of their nostalgic memories of childhood even today: There is a straight line from the material here to the racism of Boris Johnson and sorts.

It has to be pointed out that the Science Fiction adventure comics of the 1950s and 60s apply the same jingoistic approach too, only black figures have become extra-terrestrial green, Africa has turned into a planet of its own, and the colonial officers have gotten new uniforms (Carpenter 1982, 77). The treatment of the Windrush-arrivals and after is part of the wider picture, not an illustration of its excesses. Earlier, in 1939, George Orwell examined the contents of the best-selling boys’ weekly papers and concluded that these preserved the Edwardian mindset. The positions taken in these papers had not reacted to changes in the world nor to the increasing demands for representation and independence from colonies and dominions - in his words the position taken was that ”the clock has stopped at 1910 and Britannia rules the waves” (Orwell, George: ”Boys’ Weeklies.” In: Horizon, March 1940). Most of the material shown in this volume is taken from exactly those final years of the Edwardian rule with emphasis on 1907, as the collection happens to contain a long stretch of Illustrated Chips published then.

Comic Cuts, August 12, 1922
Comic Cuts Colony, drawn by Julius Stafford Baker.

Comics Cuts (with various fusions).
London: Amalgamated Press.
17 May 1890 to 12 September 1953.



RELATED PUBLICATIONS:

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