

Flanagan's Running Club – Issue 70

Introduction

The first rule of Flanagan's Running Club is everyone should be telling everyone they know about Flanagan's Running Club! After all, sharing is caring. Details of how to sign up is in the epilogue.

There is no need to panic, there is no actual running involved, it is not a running club in that sense. The title is made up from extending the title of my favourite book – Flanagan's Run by Tom McNab.

So, sit back, grab a cup of coffee (or beer or wine or whatever), and enjoy the read.

On This Day – 17th April

1492 – Spain and Christopher Columbus sign the Capitulations of Santa Fe for his voyage to Asia to acquire spices.

1951 – The Peak District becomes the United Kingdom's first National Park.

2014 – NASA's Kepler space telescope confirms the discovery of the first Earth-size planet in the habitable zone of another star.

Malbec World Day

World Haemophilia Day

Births

1940 – Billy Fury

1957 – Afrika Bambaataa

1957 – Nick Hornby

1972 – Jennifer Garner

1974 – Victoria Beckham

Deaths

1790 – Benjamin Franklin

1960 – Eddie Cochran

1998 – Linda McCartney

Number 1's

Number 1 single in 1966 – Spencer Davis Group – Somebody Help Me

Number 1 album in 2003 – The White Stripes – Elephant

Number 1 compilation album in 2013 – Various – Now 84

#vss365

A short story in 280 characters or less, based on a prompt word on Twitter

The detective asked. "Do you know why we #arrested you?"

"No, do you?"

"Take a guess."

"Quotas? It's arrest a fat white guy day? If you don't know, can I go?"

"It's about your dead wife."

"I've never married."

"Then whose body is in the morgue?"

"You're the detective!"

#vss365

Joke

The following is an actual question given on a University of Washington chemistry mid-term. The answer by one student was so "profound" that the professor shared it with colleagues via the Internet, which is, of course, why we now enjoy it as well. Bonus Question: Is Hell exothermic (gives off heat) or endothermic (absorbs heat)? Most of the students wrote proofs of their beliefs using Boyle's Law (gas cools when it expands and heats when it is compressed) or some variant. One student, however, wrote the following: First, we need to know how the mass of Hell is changing in time. So, we need to know the rate at which souls are moving into Hell and the rate at which they are leaving. I think that we can safely assume that once a soul gets to Hell, it will not leave. Therefore, no souls are leaving. As for how many souls are entering Hell, let's look at the different religions existing in the world today. Most of these religions state that if you are not a member of their religion, you will go to Hell. Since there are more than one of these religions, and since people do not belong to more than one religion, we can project that all souls go to Hell. With birth and death rates as they are, we can expect the number of souls in Hell to increase exponentially. Now, we look at the rate of change of the volume in Hell because Boyle's Law states that in order for the temperature and pressure in Hell to stay the same, the volume of Hell has to expand proportionately as souls are added. This gives two possibilities: 1. If Hell is expanding at a slower rate than the rate at which souls enter Hell, then the temperature and pressure in Hell will increase until all Hell breaks loose 2. If Hell is expanding at a rate faster than the increase of souls in Hell, then the temperature and pressure will drop until Hell freezes over. So, which is it? If we accept the postulate given to me by Teresa during my Freshman year, that, "it will be a cold day in Hell before I sleep with you," and take into account the fact that I slept with her last night, then Number 2 must be true, and thus I am sure that Hell is exothermic and has already frozen over. The corollary of this theory is that since Hell has frozen over, it follows that it is not accepting any more souls and is therefore, extinct...leaving only Heaven, thereby proving the existence of a divine being which explains why, last night, Teresa kept shouting "Oh my God." THIS STUDENT RECEIVED THE ONLY "A

Drabble

A drabble is a complete story that is exactly one hundred words long.

A Carve Up

Jobu was one of hundreds of men abducted from Alaxis that were now forced to work on the travesty of a monument to the Emperor of Xefalis. All he did was carve symbols of power into the wood. He was shown which symbols had to go where and left to get on with it.

But Jobu had been reading in secret, learning what all the different symbols meant, and introducing subtle changes to them.

Today was the unveiling of the monument. The Emperor and his court were waiting for the shaman to power it up.

The explosion killed them all.

Random Items

Facts

Sylvia Miles had the shortest performance ever nominated for an Oscar with "Midnight Cowboy." Her entire role lasted only six minutes.

The average slug has 27,000 teeth

A slug has a maximum speed of 0.0007 miles per hour.

Thoughts

Veni, Vedi, Vegi . . . I came, I saw, I had a salad

The best beer in the world, is the open bottle in your hand

An optimist laughs to forget. A pessimist forgets to laugh

Random Top Ten

The first ten (non-compilation) albums released by Weird Al Yankovic

No	Title	Release Date
1	"Weird Al" Yankovic	26th April 1983
2	"Weird Al" Yankovic In 3-D	28th February 1984
3	Dare To Be Stupid	18th June 1985
4	Polka Party!	21st October 1986
5	Even Worse	12th April 1988
6	UHF - Original Motion Picture Soundtrack and Other Stuff	18th July 1989
7	Off The Deep End	14th April 1992
8	Alapalooza	5th October 1993
9	Bad Hair Day	12th March 1996
10	Running With Scissors	29th June 1999

Flash Fiction

Something between the 100-word shortness of a Drabble, and the short story, these are works of fiction somewhere between five hundred and seven hundred words.

The Cabin Of Memories

The knock on the door made Eleanor jump. She wasn't expecting anyone at this time of night. In fact, she wasn't expecting anyone at all. No one knew she lived in the cabin. It was so far off the beaten track that there wasn't even a track. No deer or fox, no bear or wolf came near here. It was a place not to be found, and that was the exact reason that Eleanor liked the place, and why she had moved here all those years ago.

And yet someone had found it. Someone was here. And they were knocking on the door.

She picked herself up off the cushion on the floor and eased her way around the various piles of books that formed the majority of the inside of the cabin, and she made her way to answer the door.

She opened the door and the dark and cold of the night rushed in over her and she shivered and blinked against the blast of the cold air. And then she blinked again. Her mouth hung open, aghast at what she saw across the threshold of the doorway out into the woods.

For there, across the threshold, as if the doorway had become a mirror was what looked to be herself. As sure as she had ever seen herself within a mirrored glass. The woman stood outside in the cold and dark night was her exact duplicate. A twin she wasn't aware existed. Then the woman spoke.

"Are you going to invite me in?"

The woman outside didn't appear to be the slightest bit surprised by how Eleanor looked. Perhaps she didn't look the same to her, or the woman outside hadn't ever seen herself in reflection. Eleanor asked,

"Who are you?"

"As I am sure you know, I am Eleanor, but a better question would be, who are you?"

Eleanor couldn't bring herself to speak. But the other Eleanor outside the door carried on and walked in through the open door and into the warmth of the room. Eleanor followed the intruder as she walked around the room. The intruder looked through the piles of books, knocking some of the piles over as she did so. Finally, the woman stopped looking, and picked up a tome, bound in red leather, with the single word title of 'Eleanor' upon the cover.

The woman took the book to the fireplace and threw it into the fire. And as the book burnt Eleanor forgot her name. The woman dragged her across the room and placed her in front of the mirrored glass on the wall and showed her her reflection. To her surprise she looked nothing like the woman in the room with her. Where there had been a young woman's face with long thick black hair, there now stood an old woman, full of wrinkles, with straggly grey hair.

The woman spoke again.

"The book I burnt was my own story. I don't care whose memory you live in. Choose any of the others you have in these books, but you will have mine no more."

And with that the real Eleanor left the cabin. The crone looked at the pile of books and chose one at random and started to read. And as she did, she saw her reflection change, she became younger, this time blonde, and found her name to be Dorothy, and she liked what she saw. And she hoped Dorothy never found the cabin.

Leicestershire

Battlefield of Bosworth

Two miles south east of Market Bosworth, from which it gets its name, one mile east of Shenton, and just west of Sutton Cheney, and addressed as Sutton Cheney, stands Ambion Hill Farm, the site of the Battle of Bosworth Field, the site of the last battle of the War of the Roses, in which the Lancaster Henry Tudor, the future Henry VII defeated King Richard III, in 1485.

The actual site of the battle is disputed.

Officially the site of the battle is deemed by Leicestershire County Council to be in the vicinity of the town of Market Bosworth. The council engaged historian Daniel Williams to research the battle, and in 1974 his findings were used to build the Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre and the presentation it houses. Williams's interpretation, however, has since been questioned.

Sparked by the battle's quincentenary celebration in 1985, a dispute among historians has led many to suspect the accuracy of Williams's theory. In particular, geological surveys conducted from 2003 to 2009 by the Battlefields Trust, a charitable organisation that protects and studies old English battlefields show that the southern and eastern flanks of Ambion Hill were solid ground in the 15th century, contrary to Williams's claim that it was a large area of marshland.

Landscape archaeologist Glenn Foard, leader of the survey, said the collected soil samples and finds of medieval military equipment suggest that the battle took place two miles (3.2 km) southwest of Ambion Hill, contrary to the popular belief that it was fought near the foot of the hill.

The site is set up with a film theatre, book and gift shop, model and exhibition show set up at the Ambion Hill Farm site. It has a number of footpaths and Battle trails set up through the country park, which with guides and or maps allows the visitor to navigate the site and see where everything happened. These include King Dick's Well, where Richard is said to have quenched his thirst during the battle, and the spot called Sandleford, where Henry slain Richard. The country park has a number of picnic areas laid out as well.

Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre was built on Ambion Hill, near Richard's Well. According to legend, Richard III drank from one of the several springs in the region on the day of the battle. In 1788, a local pointed out one of the springs to Hutton as the one mentioned in the legend. A stone structure was later built over the location. The inscription on the well reads:

"Near this spot, on August 22nd 1485, at the age of thirty-two, King Richard III fell fighting gallantly in defence of his realm & his crown against the usurper Henry Tudor.

The Cairn was erected by Dr. Samuel Parr in 1813 to mark the well from which the king is said to have drunk during the battle.

It is maintained by the Fellowship of the White Boar."

There are many special event days, where recreations take place, and that show medieval life. At the west of the site lies Shenton station, which stands on the Battlefield line, which is a light railway that runs from Shenton to Shackerstone, the station itself houses a battlefield information point, and a traditional country pottery and showroom.

From Sutton Cheney, there is a canal trip centre, offering various canal trips along the Ashby canal. There is the seventy-two feet long boat, which has a number of facilities, such as bar and band, and runs all sorts of trips. There is also a twenty feet long open sided launch, which runs from the wharf at Sutton Cheney on a 40-minute round trip, which stops off at both the Battlefield, and the railway at Shenton.

Billesdon

Billesdon is a village and civil parish in the Harborough district of Leicestershire, England, with a population of 745 according to the 2001 census, increasing to 901 at the 2011 census. It is just off the A47, nine miles east of Leicester. The Billesdon bypass opened in October 1986. Nearby places include Houghton on the Hill, Skeffington, Tilton on the Hill, and Gaulby. The Billesdon Brook flows through the village.

Billesdon was formerly the seat of Billesdon Rural District, which was merged into the Harborough district in 1974 under the Local Government Act 1972.

An earthwork just below the crest on the south side of Life Hill may be a promontory fort.

Domesday Book enumerated twenty-five people here in 1086. The number of households grew substantially between 1563 and 1670, from 38 to 134. In 1851 the village had 1,085 residents. Bricks and stockings were once manufactured here. By the 20th century Billesdon had reverted to an agricultural village. The population declined to 543 by 1931. The population of the parish in 2011 was 901.

Two fairs, annually on 23 April and 25 July, and a weekly Friday market, were granted in 1618. The market was held on the green, where Front Street meets the main road, and the base and shaft of the former market cross can still be seen. The market and one fair had been discontinued by the end of the 18th century, but one annual fair remained, and was noted for the sale of brass, pewter, and toys. Cattle fairs were held from 1846 until the early years of the 20th century.

The fields were enclosed in 1764. Land tax records of the 18th and 19th centuries give the impression of a village of smaller landholders.

The Quorn and Fernie hunts had stables in the village.

There was a parish workhouse in the village by 1776. Billesdon became the centre of a new poor law union in 1835, and a new workhouse at the west of the village, with an entrance from Coplow Lane opened in 1846. The building became a military hospital in the First World War.

The old school, which still stands in the village, was erected by William Sharpe of Rolleston as a free school for the parish. It was also used for vestry meetings. The National School and master's house were built in 1875.

There was a church here by 1162, which had been given to Leicester Abbey by William de Syfrewast. The present Church of England ironstone building, on Church Street near the junction with Brook Lane, is dedicated to St. John the Baptist and comprises a nave, north and south aisles, chancel, tower, and spire. The base of the tower and the north wall of the arcade were probably both built before 1250; the upper stages of the tower and the spire are from the later 13th-century; the north aisle may have been rebuilt in the 14th century; the chancel was rebuilt in the 15th century. When John Throsby visited in 1790, he found the 'principal aisle' was 'crowded with two shabby galleries, not unlike two large pigeon boxes stuck against a wall'. The south aisle was built in 1864, when traces of an earlier south aisle were found, which no one then alive could remember. The old box pews, galleries and high pulpit were taken away in 1864, when the church was restored.

Very detailed arrangements were agreed for the payment of tithes to the vicar in the 17th and 18th centuries, including that he was entitled to the tithes of corn and hay on enclosed land only if the closes showed no signs of ridge and furrow. The earliest record of Protestant nonconformity is from 1719. A General Baptist chapel was built in 1812. A congregation of Particular Baptists formed in 1820. The Salem Chapel in West Lane was built in 1846 for the Particular Baptists and the Independents. A Wesleyan Chapel was built by 1854.

Life's What You Make It

Excerpts from life writing.

That's Not How You Steal A Bike

My dad never drove. Well, apart from his claims of driving a tractor back on the family farm in Ireland before he moved over here, of which there is no physical evidence. But he did cycle.

He would cycle to work five days a week. In rain, shine, snow, hail, and gale force winds. And when on night shift he would wheel the bike down the entry, lean it against the little wooden fence surrounding the front "garden," then lock the entry gate from the inside, lock the gate into the yard, lock the back door, and then leave by the front door locking it behind him, and get on his bike.

Only for one night someone to come along and steal his bike in the thirty seconds or so it took him to make the little circuit. Most people would be upset, but dad was quite happy.

It was an old bike. He could put a claim in on the insurance and get a brand new one. In fact, he was quite excited by the fact. So, to be able to make the claim he wandered along to the local police station to report the theft of his bike and get a crime reference number for the insurance claim.

He described the bike to the Constable on duty, only for the PC to lead him into their little yard at the back of the station. Where, there was dad's bike, in the same working order as when it had been stolen a couple of nights before.

It had been dumped just a quarter of a mile away in front of the police station on the night it had been stolen. Whoever had stolen it was probably glad to be rid of it and its horrible clanking mud guards.

It was a quite dejected looking dad who wheeled his bike into the back yard. He was complaining about the bloody thieves who can't even do their jobs properly around here.

Not even they wanted his bike.

Poetry Corner

Apart For Evermore

It started with a crash, a bang, and a wallop
And it ended in pretty much the same way
Two objects collided in space and time
And they rocked each other's worlds

After hitting each other, they hit it off
Which was handy as they were now co-joined
They meandered through life as one
Inseparable, or so they both thought

Blazing a trail wherever they happened to go
Equals in everything, together forever
A perfect combination, all mutual support
An inspiration to some, and envy from others

Other object collisions could not compare
All crash and wallop yet no bang or spark
It was the only perfect coming together
The one that nothing could rend asunder

Or so they, and everyone else thought true
Until that fateful day when a third object came
Crashing into the pair of them at their join
And splitting them apart for the rest of time

And now they try to find each other again
The night chasing the end of the day
And the day chasing the end of the night
Unable to be as one at peace and rest

They govern our life as they try to reunite
Only briefly being within in touching distance
Two romantic times for all as they almost meet
For a brief glimpse at every dawn and every dusk

Did I Really Blog That?

A Blink And Six Weeks Have Gone

Originally published 13th May 2022

It's been a while since I've done a piece on Medium. After the barrage of posts following the trip to Budapest and then Bodiam and Brightling straight after, there has been nothing. And it has been six weeks. It isn't as if we haven't been

doing things or going to interesting places. I've hit a malaise and haven't converted days out into photo packed articles (and there has been lots of photos taken). I've done a couple of match reports and rants on my own website's blog.

<https://onetruekev.co.uk/Mutterings/>

And it's not like I haven't had the time to write, no, just a severe lack of inclination, and I've slipped out of the daily writing habit. So, this is a, ease back in, catch up, cover all piece.

Thursday 31st March. The last event of the Crawley Wordfest was the comedy night. Not in the library this year, but at the Charis Centre. Nice food available, and the best line up at a Wordfest comedy night yet, headlined by Nathan Caton. A good night and well worth the very reasonable cost of the ticket.



Friday 1st April. Dinner and drinks in London for Lianne's fortieth birthday at the famous Hippodrome Casino in its swanky restaurant. The company and the evening itself was great. But the restaurant was taking the April Fool's Day thing far too seriously. I can't remember what I ordered for starter and desert but suffice to say Pac-Man would have only moved one dot for each. What really sticks in the mind is the main course. Advertised as lamb on pita bread with yoghurt and garnish, it did tick all of those boxes, but the miniscule size of the actual edible food was the issue. Six small pieces of lamb less than you'd get on a basic supermarket lamb chop, each on a sliver of pita bread, not even half a pita.



It arrived in a dark wood cigar box, which had some greenery sticking out the side. When opened there was the whole thing swamped by more rosemary than I'd seen in one place. In fact, the only way there could have been more rosemary was if we'd gone back to the eighties and Rosemary Conley was filming one of her exercise videos next to our table.

Unfortunately, it just proves that you can't have swanky, without it containing wanky.

We stayed overnight in London on the edge of Marylebone village, which gave us an opportunity to go into the wonderland that is Daunt Bookshop. It is a wonder both for the vast selection of books, and it looks like it came straight out of a movie set. It's the first place I've seen selling the whole collection of Pevsner's, and so I bought the Leicestershire and West Sussex ones without having to resort to giving money to the evil empire of Amazon.



Sunday 3rd April. Simple Minds fortieth anniversary tour at the Brighton Centre. Nearly two years to the day after it was originally scheduled for, and rearranged three times due to Covid protocols, we finally get there. They have no support act, but who needs one when they can do two sets and an encore of songs we know and do nearly three hours' worth of show. Only two of the original line up remain, and Jim Kerr now looks like he's a morphing of Ally McCoist and John Higgins, but he knows how to do a show.



It was another wonderful night. And seeing the queues for getting out of the car parks around Brighton we were glad to be staying over. We'd been given a nice upgrade to a room with a balcony overlooking Brighton beach and what is left of the west pier.

It would appear that it was quite windy overnight judging by the state of the house that landed on the beach overnight.



The following weekend should have seen us off to Leicester to catch up with old friends, to see Paul Weller at De Montfort Hall, and a Van Gogh immersive experience in the medieval All Saints church. None of which happened due to me coming down with some non-Covid lurgy.

It was Easter weekend before I was out again. We took Helen's mum to the Firlie Country show. Which was just like a massive open air garden centre with street food in some posh bloke's garden. But with it being Easter Sunday, it would have been the only garden centre type of event open in the country due to the Sunday trading laws.



Firle Place is a privately run stately home not far from Lewes in East Sussex. It isn't usually open to the public in April, but with the show on in the grounds, it was open to those at the show for half price. And so, I took advantage of this.



The Gages who own the house have ended up with an enormous collection of pottery and furniture that they have inherited through marriage, it includes pieces from two former Prime Ministers — Lord Palmerston and Viscount Melbourne.



Their wall of plates is especially impressive



and knocks Helen's mum's place into a cocked hat.



Following on from our visit to Bodiam Castle, we had joined the National Trust, and so the following Wednesday we took our temporary membership cards and went all of four miles up the road to Nymans.



I had walked through the woods before, but I'd not been to the house and gardens. As I will have mentioned several times in previous posts, I'm not a massive fan of gardens (or the countryside generally), but they were really quite impressive. Lovely trees in bloom



and lots of different flowers.



None of which I could tell you the name of.



The view out over the North Weald is spectacular. In the distance, with maximum zoom on the camera we can see this impressive looking crenelated tower.



Turns out, after some research and map reading when back at home, it is just a water tower.



The house at Nymans was bought by the Messel family in 1890, and over the next forty years the family set about transforming the large Victorian house that was there into a grand Elizabethan style mansion, both inside and out.



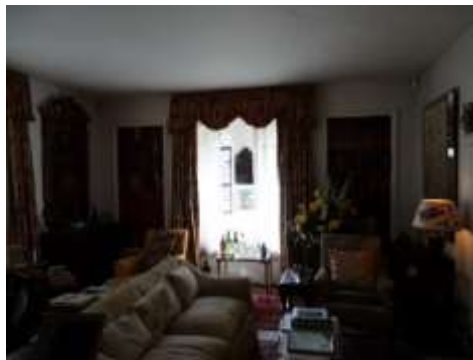
And to set out a wonderful array of gardens.



Then in 1947, disaster struck as a fire caught hold and burnt a lot of the house down. Some of the shell of the old house remains as a reminder of this.



But the surviving part of the house was lived in until the eighties by a descendent of the family which had married into the aristocracy over the years. It shows glimpses of what the original house would have been like.



There was a bit of a pause until last weekend where we put in a double header. Saturday night we were at the Hawth to see Nathan Caton (tickets bought on the back of the Wordfest comedy night). I'd definitely recommend watching him, he was really funny and engaging. It's a shame he was only in the Studio, as he deserves to be playing to much bigger crowds. Supported by Dinesh Nathan who was quite good too, and not trying to trade on his brother's name by dropping the "ranga."

Then on Sunday we were National Trust-ing it up again with a trip to Chartwell; the house and estate bought and transformed by Winston Churchill in the 1920s, and his family home until his death in 1965.



The house and grounds have echoes of Nymans, with views out over the North Wealds (only Kent this time), a house modified by the owner, and extensive grounds and vast formal gardens laid out.



It is impressive and beautiful, and Chartwell has the bonus of not having been burnt down at all. It is also a lot older with parts dating back to Tudor times (and not just redesigned to look like it).



The house and outbuildings are maintained as they were when Churchill was alive, although some parts have been updated to function as a museum to him and his life. Giving all the positives of course, with only Gallipoli mentioned on the negative side.



It isn't the most balanced picture. But it did show things of which I wasn't really aware. Mainly the paintings he did. Hundreds of them. Everywhere. Especially in the studio building.



We would have quite happily taken the dining room in its restful greens



and the sun terrace to be part of wherever we lived.



By the time we were finished wandering around the house and grounds and having a bite to eat, and exiting through the gift shop (Guidebook, pen, and fridge magnet), it was too late to nip across to the nearby Quebec House, another National Trust property — that would have to wait for another day. But we did head onto the village of Godstone for a little wander about.



The A25 takes a torturous detour through the village, and we do a loop to find a parking space before starting to explore. It has a lovely green, lots of old houses and pubs. Lots of pubs.



We eventually find the footpath that will take us to the church. It is quite a trek away from the main village. Past a large fishing lake with a pair of Cranes in residence.



Before we see the back of what would have been the village school.



There are some more lovely old cottages here.



And the amazing looking old Almshouses which sit next to the church.



The church has a large churchyard with some impressive looking monuments in, but a church that sadly wasn't open to enable us to have a look around inside.



In some ways the location of the church (and former school), half a mile away from the main village reminds me of Breedon-on-the-Hill in Leicestershire. It's a mini pilgrimage to get to the church every Sunday.



And now I'm pretty much up to date, and I'll try and keep on top of things having hopefully come out the other end of the writing malaise.

Story Time

Nathaniel

From the start they knew there was something not quite right with him. A lot of the members felt it was a mistake letting him into the magician's guild. They said his family had arranged it, and that being rich had its benefits. But even donating enough money for the guild to be able to build new premises had come with the promise that the guild could have the money, but they had no obligation to take their son into their ranks. There would have been no withdrawal of the funds if he didn't pass the entrance exam.

The problem was he did pass the exam. In fact, what he did for his audition was quite remarkable and it had chilled some of the entrance committee to the bone. But with the donation, the chair thought it would be churlish not to admit Nathaniel.

And so, his reign of terror began, although it would take a while for it to come to light. Unsuspecting volunteers would bound onto the stage to take part in his show. Word hadn't taken long to get around about his new style nightly show with its bizarre, occult theme. A lot was written off as showmanship and staging, but the volunteers and their families may have begged to differ.

The highlight of the show was always the trapdoor trick. The volunteer would be invited onto the stage and was offered the chance to stand on any of the large chessboard squares painted on the floor of the theatre's stage. They chose where to stand whilst a blindfolded Nathaniel stood with his back to where they were making their choice.

It didn't matter which square the volunteer stood on. Nathaniel would shout out the number of the square, a trapdoor would open beneath them, and they would drop through it, most of them screaming as the floor disappeared from underneath them. And yet in the same instance they would reappear back in their seat in the audience. They would then be invited back to the stage to take a bow to rapturous rounds of applause.

And they would never be seen again.

Alive.

But their families would see them. At night. Backlit in their house doorways. Groaning and rattling chains. Haunting their sleeping hours. But whenever approached the figure in the doorway would disappear. The light would go out and the door would slam.

Word of these hauntings got around. In some cases, the police were brought in, only for them to find nothing they could do about it. The finger of suspicion pointed at Nathaniel, who had now added the moniker "The Dark One" to his act. But despite the ever-growing number of volunteers to disappear, only to return to haunt their families, the police couldn't prove anything apart from coincidence.

The magician's guild sent watchers to Nathaniel's show. They couldn't work out how he was doing the trick in the first place, and they suspected dark practises were at work. They also struggled to prove this was the case, and so couldn't find a way to expel him from their guild. They just kept a watching brief.

The people kept disappearing, but it didn't stop the stream of volunteers to take to the stage. Some were doing so in the hope that the rumours and coincidences were true. One was heard to say to friends trying to physically prevent them getting to the stage, "but it is what I have always wanted; the opportunity to haunt the shits that are my family for eternity is too good an opportunity to miss."

Next came the marionettes.

Nathaniel had added them to the show soon after the police investigations had started. As if he was taunting them and the guild.

There were now two volunteers called to the stage. A contest of dubious merits would take place for who would get the honour of taking place in the trapdoor trick. The loser would get a consolation prize of the marionette. Supposed replicas of the larger marionette who appeared on stage as part of the act.

A carved, painted boy, one whose strings couldn't be seen, but who appeared to be controlled by a giant spider who would hover over the stage on a single gossamer thread. The spider would move its legs and with that the marionette would move its limbs, body, and head. And appear to speak. Shouting out arcane words and phrases, insults, and gestures. And accompanied by a nerve shredding cackling laugh.

The replicas looked harmless enough, and the string less pieces of painted wood were taken home and given to the children.

And so, the nightmares started. The children would bring the rest of the household to them by screaming in the middle of the night. Telling their parents and governesses of unspeakable things the marionette was doing to them. But when the adults arrived the marionettes just sat there. Crumpled in a pile of wood, pointing at strange angles. No string, no giant spider hovering above the bed controlling them.

Nothing.

Just an increasing number of children admitted to the asylums, and unexplained deaths, whether of fright, or by suicide trying to escape the madness it couldn't be said.

And as with the volunteers, the police investigated and found nothing. Nor did the guild.

The marionettes would be moved on, to another child in the household or given away to another unsuspecting family. Rarely were the wooden toys deservedly destroyed or used as kindling in the fires of the house.

Nathaniel was in his evil element, and neither the police nor the magician's guild were able to do anything about him.

And then along came television. It was to be Nathaniel's downfall. Not in that people might begin to film his show and would be able to see what he was doing. But, in the fact that he became obsessed with the little box of pictures in the corner of the room in his mansion.

As with so many other things, word of this got around.

The magician's guild saw an opportunity, and decided to try and take advantage. They went out on bended knee to some of those they had expelled from the guild over the year for dark practises. It was what they desperately needed now.

After much acrimonious deliberation on the council, they agreed to work with two dark practitioners to spell Nathaniel's television set whilst he was out performing his show.

When Nathaniel returned from his nightly performance of death, terror, and mayhem, he walked into the television room in his mansion and turned the set on. He struggled to get a picture. He spent ages try to tune it in, turning the dial this way and that, until finally a screen came into focus.

It was not the screen he was expecting. It was a quickly rotating spiral and it was captivating. As it span, he leant closer to it, his eyes drawn to the centre. And as he leant further and further forward his forehead eventually touched the cold glass screen. But it didn't stop, it carried on through the screen and into the spiral. Nathaniel's scream wasn't heard by anyone, and he disappeared into the television set, his body following his head around the spiral and through the black dot in its middle.

When he was gone the television set turned itself off and the screen went black.

No one ever saw Nathaniel again. After ten years his mansion was cleared for new occupants. His furniture was taken away, and the now old television set was snapped up by the British Museum.

It sits on display to this day.

Waiting.

Chapter and Verse

A chapter from one of my completed books, works in progress, or novella length short stories.

The Eclipse – Chapter 2 - Chantelle

Chantelle wasn't happy; she hadn't been since she had managed to get chosen to run this event. She had been working on smaller events since joining Global Events Management two years before. She had applied to run some of their larger events several times without success, so she was determined to get the next big event. It just so happened to be the Meridian Eclipse celebration, she had gone in to pitch for the event with all guns blazing, and a certain amount of exaggeration, claiming she knew a lot about astronomy, and that she had been to eclipse events before.

They had bought it, and she was made the project manager for the event, something she had been cursing about pretty much since outset. She didn't know anything about astronomy, and when it had been flagged as Greenwich Park for the venue, she should have gone and checked it out first, and not just assumed it would be a large flat space like the events at Hyde Park had been at.

For an event like the Eclipse party, Greenwich Park was a nightmare of a venue, hilly, uneven ground, with random tree coverage and various buildings scattered around inside the boundary of the park. There wasn't anywhere to set up the massive sound stage where it would be possible to have the music go out across the whole of the park without several relay stations and screens. The health and safety executive had been on her case since day one, marking large swathes of the park out of bounds for spectators, numerous grassy banks having to be fenced off. Then it had cost them a fortune to ensure that the National Maritime Museum would be closed to tourists that day, but they still hadn't been able to prevent a wedding taking place in Queen Anne's House, the couple had booked it years before for this date, knowing then the eclipse would be taking place, and they refused to budge.

Then there were the acts, she hadn't really been aware of any acts that were definitively linked to events like this, so she had gone on artist and song names. A couple of her team had cottoned on to this and had suggested that she try and get Jonathan King to sing his first hit "Everyone's Gone To The Moon," which she had tried to do, only to find out that they had been baiting her lack of knowledge in a lot of aspects. When she had found out about the charges, she had to do an embarrassing climb down with his agent.

As it was, she had still managed to get Bonnie Tyler who was scheduled to sing "Total Eclipse Of The Heart" just before and right after the totality. She had also booked The Moons, but after the Jonathan King debacle, she concentrated on getting any acts that were up for the event, regardless of any connection to the eclipse.

The day was now here, and she stood on the stage whilst finishing touches were made. She was pretending to tick things off on a list on a clipboard she carried round with her, but she was using it as a crutch, it being the only thing keeping her from running screaming from the stage and the park never to be seen again. In less than three hours the park would be full, and the music should be underway. Night would fall for pretty much half an hour in the middle of the afternoon, and then it would be light again. Her phone was buzzing again, the stewards were complaining they were being overrun at Blackheath Gate by the number of people coming in early, and they wanted to get more staff down to open other gates.

Chantelle didn't want so many people here this early, but the police commissioner for the event was also on her case about the number of pedestrians blocking Charlton Way. Under pressure she authorised the Croom's Hill and Vanbrugh Park gates to be opened, they were the nearest to Blackheath Gate, and she really didn't want the lower gates opened until much nearer the time.

She looked around the stage at the people working, and then at the growing crowds around the park, looking over her shoulder to the back of the stage, and the steep drop just behind where the stage ended and shuddered, she just hoped the scaffolders had done their job well, or the stage might end up down the hill.

Medium

A lot of my blog posts were also get published on my Medium account, especially ones that are picture heavy, as there are no hosting costs to store all the photos there, the link is <https://medium.com/@onetruekey>. A lot has gone onto this site over the last year, and it would be good if you are on there looking at my work if you could register and become a standard member – it's free for the basic member level, but it allows you to follow me on that site and allows for claps and comments to be made on pieces. Anything to help with profile raising is much appreciated.

As a user with over one hundred followers, more recent posts are on what they call the metered site, so full members of Medium who read or like my posts generate me money, which is good. It also means I become part of their referral scheme. So, if you are not a member, and are considering [subscribing to Medium](https://medium.com/@onetruekey) if you do so through that link then you

will be supporting my writing and you may also discover lots of other great writers, posts, and articles, including those I have already published [here](#).

Epilogue – Where To Find More Of My Writing

To get people to sign up, point them in the direction of my website's homepage of <http://www.onetruekev.co.uk/> scroll down past the menu and then enter their e-mail address and select whether they want Flanagan's Running Club or blog post updates or both and then hit submit.

If you want to catch up on old issues, go to the website at <http://www.onetruekev.co.uk/frc.php> where all the issues are available.

For blog posts go to <https://onetruekev.co.uk/Mutterings/> which will have the most current post and the ability to scroll back in time.

There are various short story competition entries on my Reedsy prompts page at <https://blog.reedsy.com/creative-writing-prompts/author/kev-neylon/>

For all previous works including the old Surerandomality pieces go to <https://onetruekev.co.uk/Mutterings/else/> where pretty much everything I've written before is linked through to.

Then there are my books. Nothing published yet, but I have one full book available online, it's called "Where The Lights Shine Brightest." Can I ask you all a favour, please can you review my book on Inkitt, and the link is below? Even if you don't take time to read it properly, please flick through a few chapters, give it ratings and a review, and vote for it please. It may help me get it published.

<https://www.inkitt.com/stories/thriller/201530>

I have had a number (seventy-three) of Drabbles published on the BookHippo web site, and they can all be found at <https://bookhippo.uk/profiles/kevin.neylon/drabbles>

I've recently been submitting to Paragraph Planet and have had some pieces published there, they will be in the archive somewhere, one piece a month from me since June. <https://www.paragraphplanet.com/index.php>

You can also follow me on Twitter, where I will occasionally put up some micro fiction or micro poems, my Twitter handle is @Onetruekev – <https://twitter.com/onetruekev>

You can also follow all my writing on the Facebook page Onetruekev which is at <https://www.facebook.com/Onetruekev-102649357993650/>

And also, now on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/onetruekev/>

E-mail any ideas or suggestions to kev@onetruekev.co.uk

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