Flanagan's Running Club – Issue 93

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, wine, rum, port, Pepsi, or whatever), and enjoy the read.

And once again I've only just about managed to squeeze this into this quarter on the last day. Nothing is flowing at all.

On This Day – 30th September

1882 – Thomas Edison's first commercial hydroelectric power plant (later known as Appleton Edison Light Company) begins operation.
1888 – Jack the Ripper kills his third and fourth victims, Elizabeth Stride and Catherine Eddowes.
1939 – NBC broadcasts the first televised American football game.
1954 – The U.S. Navy submarine USS Nautilus is commissioned as the world's first nuclear-powered vessel.
1968 – The Boeing 747 is rolled out and shown to the public for the first time.
1980 – Ethernet specifications are published by Xerox working with Intel and Digital Equipment Corporation.
1999 – The Tokaimura nuclear accident causes the deaths of two technicians in Japan's second-worst nuclear accident.

Agricultural Reform Day (São Tomé and Príncipe)
Blasphemy Day (educates individuals and groups about blasphemy laws and defends freedom of expression)
Boy's Day (Poland)
International Translation Day (International Federation of Translators)
National Day for Truth and Reconciliation or Orange Shirt Day (Canada)

Births

1207 – Rumi
1861 – William Wrigley Jr.
1882 – Hans Geiger
1924 – Truman Capote
1931 – Angie Dickinson
1947 – Marc Bolan
1947 – Rula Lenska
1980 – Martina Hingis

Deaths

1955 – James Dean
2003 – Robert Kardashian
2018 – Geoffrey Hayes

Number 1's

Number 1 single in 1969 – Creedence Clearwater Revival – Bad Moon Rising
Number 1 album in 1993 – Nirvana – In Utero
Number 1 compilation album in 2018 – Various – Now 100

#vss365

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

"The easiest way to get something viral, use a hashtag."

"But if I use #octothorpe, isn't that just saying hashtag hashtag?"

"Exactly, that's why it's so great."

"I'm not convinced we have the same definition of great; I don't like the tautology."

"But others won't know."

#vss365

Joke

A man runs into the vet's office carrying his dog, screaming for help. The vet rushes him back to an examination room and has him put his dog down on the examination table. The vet examines the still, limp body and after a few moments tells the man that his dog, regrettably, is dead. The man, clearly agitated and not willing to accept this, demands a second opinion. The vet goes into the back room and comes out with a cat and puts the cat down next to the dog's body. The cat sniffs the body, walks from head to tail poking and sniffing the dog's body and finally looks at the vet and meows. The vet looks at the man and says, "I'm sorry, but the cat thinks that your dog is dead too. The man is still unwilling to accept that his dog is dead. The vet brings in a black Labrador. The lab sniffs the body, walks from head to tail, and finally looks at the vet and barks. The vet looks at the man and says, "I'm sorry, but the lab thinks your dog is dead too." The man, finally resigned to the diagnosis, thanks the vet and asks how much he owes. The vet answers, "£650." "£650 to tell me my dog is dead?" exclaimed the man.... "Well," the vet replies, "I would only have charged you £50 for my initial diagnosis. The additional £600 was for the cat scan and lab tests."

Drabble

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

The Maze

Joanne sighed with disappointment, "I think you must have misunderstood me when I told you what I wanted."

Steve was a bit nonplussed, "Why? What's wrong with this?"

"It is very nice, but coming to Hampden Court wasn't what I had in mind."

"Why not? It's one of the most famous ones anywhere in the world. I mean, take a look around at all these other people enjoying it here."

"I know it is one of the most famous, but it is not what I said, I asked you to amaze me, not to bring me to a maze, fool."

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.

Blinding Flash Of Light

Now, listen very closely for I have a tale to tell you. In an empty house forgotten long ago, a young girl met a stranger who told her that light exists.

It had been something which Annie, who had been blind from birth had heard about, but of which she had no concept. And no one ever directly spoke to her about it. No one had thought to speak to her about what was on the other side of her sealed empty pits where her eyes should have been. No one understood the little blind girl enough to try and explain what was out there and what other people could see with their eyes.

By rights Annie should never have been able to find that house. Hidden as it was within the growth of the forest which had been left unchecked and untamed for more than a millennia. And certainly, no one should have allowed a young girl to wander into that dark forest by themselves. Let alone a young girl without the ability to see. But as she was unable to see, she was pretty much unseen herself by the rest of the village. She was overlooked. Unimportant. It wasn't as if she could go anywhere without tripping and falling over and crying out. Or so the villagers thought.

Yet, although Annie many have not been able to see, her other senses more than made up for the one which was lacking, and for which the other villagers took for granted.

If they could have been bothered to notice her at all, they would have seen that Annie never tripped and fell. She never walked into anything. She would deftly avoid any obstacle at any height with more sense than any seeing person could manage.

And so she had wandered into the forest, casually meandering between the trees, and avoiding the thickest of the cold damp undergrowth. She would reach out occasionally to feel the roughness of the bark on the trunks of the trees she passed. All the time heading deeper and deeper into the forest. When she had entered the forest, she had had no inkling of where she was going or what she was doing. But as the day progressed, she knew she was heading to a house hidden somewhere within these ancient trees. A house no one knew was there.

Annie could smell the smoke coming from a fire within the house, it was cooking something upon it. The like of which she had never smelt before. It wasn't just a smell; it carried a taste with it. Something that called out to her, promising her a feast the likes of which she had never tasted in her short life.

As if she belonged to the house, Annie walked through the door and drifted around the furniture within and sat in the large, too large for such a small girl, armchair facing the fire, and as she settled into it, she smiled to herself.

She didn't start or flinch when the voice spoke to her. She didn't even consider that she was trespassing. That she was an uninvited guest in this stranger's house. She just felt at peace.

The stranger spoke to her like no other had even spoken to her. And as he spoke, she found she now understood exactly what it meant for her to be blind. As he described the light that existed for others, she felt a sadness at what she had never known she was missing. And she wished that this truth had never been released to her.

But as the stranger continued speaking, Annie realised that she was supposed to have found this house hidden away in the forest. The house had been placed here long before the forest had grown around it, especially for the day Annie would find it. Although the stranger sounded as if he could have been any of the adults from her village, it was clear to Annie that he was as old as the house, and he had been waiting for her for his whole life.

He explained to her exactly what it was to be able to see the light. Truly see the light. That although she was what the villagers would call her, and mock her for, being blind, she was the only one who would ever truly be able to see the light and the truth it held. And the more she saw, the more she realised she would have nothing to do with those villagers again. She would stay here in the forest, in this house, only it wouldn't be with the stranger.

Now that he had shown her the light, he would be allowed to leave the house and the forest, and his life would come to a natural end. But before he left this world, he would set in motion all which was needed to support the girl in what she was to become.

Annie was to be the most powerful person in this world. She was the first seer to have been born in more than fifty generations. Many would flock to have her touch them, for her to tell them what questions were hidden away in their hearts. Others would fear what she would reveal, and that fear would mean attempts to end her life. No one would be able to hide from the light she would be able to shine on them.

Leicestershire

Bradgate Park

Bradgate Park is a public park in Charnwood Forest, in Leicestershire, England, northwest of Leicester. It covers 850 acres (340 hectares). The park lies between the villages of Newtown Linford, Anstey, Cropston, Woodhouse Eaves and Swithland. The River Lin runs through the park, flowing into Cropston Reservoir which was constructed on part of the park. To the north-east lies Swithland Wood. The park's two well-known landmarks, Old John and the war memorial, both lie just above the 210 m (690 ft.) contour. The park is part of the 399.3-hectare Bradgate Park and Cropston Reservoir Site of Special Scientific Interest, which has been designated under both biological and geological criteria.

The area now enclosed as Bradgate Park was one of a number of parks surrounding Charnwood Forest. Since medieval times it has been part of the Manor of Groby. In the reign of Edward the Confessor, the area was owned by Ulf. The manor, along with some one hundred others in and around Leicestershire, was awarded to Hugh de Grandmesnil in the eleventh century as reward for his assistance in battle to William I. The name Bradgate is thought to derive from Norse or Anglo-Saxon, meaning "broad road" or "broad gate" respectively.

The first mention of Bradgate Park is from 1241, by which time it was laid out as a hunting park, although rather smaller than the current boundary. It was subsequently acquired by the Beaumont family, passing to the de Quincy family and on to William de Ferrers of Groby. It remained in the de Ferrers family until 1445, when it passed to the Grey family after

William's only surviving daughter married Edward Grey. The inquisition into the estates of de Ferrers, made after his death, mentions the park, with "herbage, pannage and underwood, worth 40 shillings yearly". The Grey family retained it for the next five hundred years, and in the 19th century was opened to the public several days a week. In 1928 it was bought by Charles Bennion and given, as a plaque in the park describes, 'to be preserved in its natural state for the quiet enjoyment of the people of Leicestershire'.

The park was originally enclosed using a bank and ditch topped by vertical pales of oak. These first ditch works cross the River Lyn east of the Little Matlock Gorge. A parker, living in a moated house, was the only occupant, maintaining stocks of deer for the lord of Groby Manor to hunt. The park was greatly extended by the first marquis in the late 15th century, to occupy land previously farmed by both Newtown Linford and the now lost village of Bradgate.

Lichen dating of the dry-stone walls suggests that the north and west boundary walls were built in the 17th and early 18th centuries, when Bradgate was still occupied by the earls of Stamford. The walled spinneys are a later feature, built and planted in the early 19th century as coverts for shooting. The park still has herds of red and fallow deer, which probably have an unbroken occupancy since medieval times.

Edward Grey's son Sir John Grey of Groby married Elizabeth Woodville, who after John's death married King Edward IV. Their son Thomas Grey, 1st Marquess of Dorset prepared for building Bradgate House in the late fifteenth century but died before he was able to begin. It was his son Thomas Grey, 2nd Marquess of Dorset who built Bradgate House, the likely completion date being 1520.

A prominent landmark is the folly known as 'Old John' on the top of the highest hill in the park. Built by the Greys in 1784, the folly is, by local legend, a memorial to John, an estate worker killed in a bonfire accident during celebrations of the 21st birthday of the future sixth Earl of Stamford. It is reputed that the stonework at the side of the tower was altered to look like a handle, perhaps knowing John's liking of ale. However he was not twenty-one until 1786, and a map of 1745 names the hill as 'Old John'. The tower was used during the 19th century as a viewing point for the horse-racing practice circuit laid out by the seventh earl.

Cropston Reservoir was constructed in the south-east corner of the park in 1871, submerging the Head Keeper's house and a substantial area of former parkland. It was Leicester's second reservoir (after Thornton), built in response to the 1831 and 1841 cholera epidemics. The water level was raised two feet (60 centimetres) in 1887, to increase capacity and the original steam powered beam engines ran until 1956. A number of pools were also constructed along the course of the River Lin through the park, to allow silt to settle before reaching the reservoir. A second, covered reservoir was added on the northern side of the park in the early 1960s.

In 1905 the estate was bequeathed on the death of the 7th Earl of Stamford's widow to the earl's niece, Mrs Arthur Duncombe. Limited public access had been allowed while the park was in the hands of the Greys. In 1928, the ancient Deer Park with the ruins of Bradgate House was included in the sale of the whole Grey estate and the Park was bought by local businessman and British United Shoe Machinery founder Charles Bennion who gave it in perpetuity to the people of Leicestershire. Plaques on Old John and the main path through the park commemorate the gift. Bennion's son subsequently added the gift of an adjacent piece of land, and in 1936 the City Council purchased an additional 46.5 acres of land abutting the park.

The nearby Swithland Wood had previously been sold in 1921 to the Leicester timber merchant William Gimson, who began to extract the timber commercially, with the aim of dividing up the land for building plots as it was gradually cleared. Following public concern about the threatened loss of this ancient woodland of importance for its geological, natural history and industrial history features, in 1925 the Rotary Club of Leicester, with the cooperation of William Gimson, bought the whole site of approximately 137 acres (55 ha) for preservation and to provide access to the public for recreation "as a national heritage".

The Rotary Club established the Swithland Wood Trust, repaired and renewed the fencing of the area, provided car parking, and restored the paths, spending around £6,000 on the original purchase, fencing and landscaping. The Club opened Swithland Wood to the public on August Bank Holiday, 2 August 1925, employing its own staff to manage the Wood and visitor services. In 1928 the Club initiated the annual Bluebell Service in the Wood, in partnership with Swithland Parish Church. On 29 December 1929, the Bradgate Park Charity with trustees nominated by the County Council and the National Trust was established to manage Charles Bennion's purchase and gift of Bradgate Park, with the appropriate senior officers of the Council providing the necessary professional and administrative services, including land management, legal, secretariat and financial support.

Although there does not seem to have been a formal opening of Bradgate Park, public access to the Park became available soon afterwards in 1929. In 1931, once the Bradgate Park Trust was fully operational and established, the Rotary Club approached the County Council and trustees about the possibility of merging the two properties and charities under the Bradgate Park trustees and this was completed in 1931. The park is now administered by the Bradgate Park and Swithland Wood Charitable Trust, with trustees nominated by Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council, and the National Trust. With the consent of the Charity Commission, the charity has adopted the shorter working title of Bradgate Park Trust.

The visible geology in Bradgate Park ranges from some of the oldest (Precambrian) rocks in England to the youngest (Quaternary). The rock outcrops were created in conditions varying from volcanos rising out of the ocean, to magma flowing deep underground and from tropical deserts to Ice sheets. Within the park the outcrops are widely distributed as hillside crags and outcrops, both along the valley sides of the River Lin and on the hilltop of Old John. They include rocks with some of the oldest known developed forms of fossil animal life in Western Europe.

The Precambrian outcrops include four 'type-members' of the Charnian Supergroup, formed some 560 million years ago. Bradgate is one of the few areas of Britain where these ancient basement rocks can be seen at the surface. The oldest of the Charnian rocks within Bradgate Park are the rocks nearest the Old John and memorial summits.

This is the Beacon Hill Formation. It appears to have formed in deep water, out of sediments of volcanic ash and other pyroclastic material, which were then subject to slumping and submarine flows, to create rocks with various degrees of stratification. The volcano itself was in the north-west of Charnwood Forest, and the whole area was in the southern tropic, off the coast of the continent of Gondwana. (A modern parallel might be the sea surrounding Montserrat.)

Some of the layers show great variation, showing how an initial volcanic eruption would result in larger sediments rapidly settling to create course-grained tuff, followed by settling of much finer material to form much smoother dust-tuffs – smooth light grey to creamy coloured rocks seen to the north of Old John. The various layers were subsequently deeply buried, subject to vast periods of mountain-building (orogeny), heat, pressure, and erosion of overlying material, to expose the hard, jagged outcrops seen in the photograph.

Overlying the Beacon Hill Formation, but found a little further down the hillside to the south, are the Bradgate Formation beds, the most notable of which is the Sliding Stone Slump Breccia rocks. Forming a line of crags below Old John, these are laminated mudstones, with layers of sandstone, mainly of volcanic origin. The beds are substantially warped, contorted, and folded.

Many of the more intricate folds and 'sag' patterns are thought to have occurred while the sediments were unconsolidated and water saturated. Suggested causes for these include slumping, earth tremors and fault-movements, trapped water or gases and volcanic bomb impacts. Outcrops of other rocks of the Bradgate Formation are found further down the slope. These are younger than and stratigraphically above the breccia, but the uplift from ancient mountain-building, the dip of the beds and erosion of overlying rocks mean that the younger rocks are encountered at progressively lower altitudes.

The youngest of the Precambrian rocks are the South Charnwood Diorites. These are known locally as granite, (geologically they were formerly described as markfieldite) and are quarried commercially at Groby and Markfield. These are igneous intrusions of magma which formed within the existing Beacon Hill and Bradgate Formations. They cooled slowly and at great depth to create their large crystalline structure, and were subsequently exposed by erosion of the uplifted rocks above. The Diorites are the cliffs and blocks seen along the Lin valley, through the so-called Little Matlock Gorge and near Bradgate House. They are massive blocky outcrops made up of crystals of feldspar, quartz, and mafic minerals.

An area of rock overlooking Cropston Reservoir is of Hanging Rocks Formation, the only other example being at Hangingstone Hills, near the Outwoods, 4 km to the north. It is unclear if this is late Precambrian or early Cambrian. It is distinguished by conglomerates with well-rounded volcanic pebbles mostly 5–15 mm but some up to 100 mm in diameter, which may have been smoothed on a volcanic shoreline before being washed, along with much finer material, into deeper water.

These are younger than the Bradgate Formation, but again at a lower altitude. A possibly explanation is that it formed in a channel cut into the existing sea floor, but a preferred conclusion is that movement along fault-lines has relocated it relative to its surrounding rocks. The relationship between the different outcrops in Bradgate are made more obscure by the overlying peat and Boulder clay, which mean the contacts between adjacent stratigraphic sequences are nowhere exposed.

Previously classed as Precambrian, but now accepted as early Cambrian are the Brand Group of rocks which include Swithland Slate, locally important as a source of roof slates and gravestones. The nearby Swithland Wood has extensive outcrops and was one of the principal quarry areas until the mid-19th century.

Rocks close in age to the slate can be seen in the 'stable pit', a medieval quarry near Bradgate House. This outcrop is part of the Brand Group and is known as the Stable Pit Member, a Quartz arenite rock with a smooth glassy appearance. A metre-wide dyke of diorite also runs through the exposed rocks of the quarry, possibly of late Ordovician age, which places it at a similar age to the Mountsorrel granite formations.

During the Triassic period, some 350 million years after those ancient rocks were formed, they were exposed due to the erosion of the rocks above. By this point they were part of the Pangea supercontinent and desert conditions resulted in

an accumulation of windblown Loess, which now forms the Mercia Mudstone Group. With the subsequent sinking of the East Midlands crust, these deposits became waterlogged and formed into red clay.

It is this clay that was used to make the bricks for Bradgate House. The mudstone is only visible where it was extracted, across the stream from Bradgate House. However, it covers much of the valley floor around and beneath Cropston Reservoir, – demonstrating that the present Lin valley was also there 220 million years ago.

Bradgate Park and its surrounding areas were heavily overlain in the (geologically) recent past by glacial deposits of Boulder Clay. The Quaternary period includes the last ice age. As the ice melted, some 10,000 years ago, the solid material within the ice settled over the 'natural' rocks below. This material includes unsorted clay and sand particles, small and large pebbles and large stones and boulders. It travelled great distances within the ice sheets and glaciers, so individual rocks, whether on the ground, or within the great lengths of stone walls of the Park, may be local stone, or may be a specimen from northern Britain or even from northern Europe.

The fossils at Bradgate and in other nearby Charnian rocks are the only known Precambrian fossils in Western Europe. Until 1957 it had been thought that complex life forms and perhaps life itself began with the Cambrian Period and that all rocks older than this developed in a world without plants or animals.

The 1957 discoveries, by Roger Mason, in rocks near Woodhouse Eaves, subsequently named in his honour as Charnia masoni, required a re-evaluation of when life began. It also resulted in the re-classification of other rocks in Southern Australia and Newfoundland, which have similar fossil marks. At Bradgate Park there are some fifty known examples. They mainly take the form of two-dimensional impressions of fronds and disks and have at various times been described as seaweed, jelly fish, corals, or sea anemones.

They are now described as belonging to the Ediacara biota, with no consensus on which kingdom, current or extinct, they should be placed. The Bradgate examples include Bradgatia linfordensis and Charniodiscus concentricus as well as Charnia masoni. Because of the risk of vandalism and damage, specific locations of these fossils are not disclosed and those wishing to investigate them should first of all seek the permission of the Bradgate Park Trust. None of the rocks in Bradgate Park should be chipped, hammered, or otherwise sampled, replicated, or removed.

The landscape is rocky moorland with a covering of coarse grass and bracken. Several spinneys of woodland (pine and mixed deciduous) are enclosed by stone walls and are not accessible to the public. There are a number of magnificent specimens of ancient oaks several hundreds of years old. The park is home to herds of red deer and fallow deer.

Birdlife is profuse – the reservoir attracts many species of wildfowl, as does the river and the spinneys provide secluded nesting areas for many other species, including large colonies of rooks. Species such as yellowhammer, reed bunting, skylark and meadow pipit are a common sight in the open areas of the park. Deadly nightshade is allowed to grow within the ruins of Bradgate House, having been originally established there during World War II by Leicester Polytechnic's School of Pharmacy for medicinal purposes.

In July 2016, a visitor centre opened in the Deer Barn buildings off the main path east of Bradgate House in addition to the existing cafe. The geology section features details of the park's formation during its stages of volcanism, glacial erosion, and inhabitation by Ediacara biota. It also shows the tracks of a later land-based lizard. The archaeology section features work by Leicester University beginning in 2014 and includes evidence of Creswellian sites from 14,500 years ago. There is also a cafe (with gift shop) at Newtown Linford.

Donisthorpe

Donisthorpe is a village in the North West Leicestershire district of Leicestershire, England. It is situated 3.5 miles southwest of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, four miles south of Swadlincote and 0.5 miles from the Derbyshire border, at the heart of The National Forest. A former mining village, it is located only four miles due east of Church Flatts Farm (near Coton-in-the-Elms, Derbyshire), the furthest point from coastal waters on the British mainland.

The historic county boundary between Leicestershire and Derbyshire is the River Mease, which runs less than a mile south of Donisthorpe, with the village centre previously on the southern (Derbyshire) side, which formed part of an exclave of Derbyshire. Together with Measham and Oakthorpe, the village became part of Leicestershire in 1897 when administrative counties were established and now lies within the civil parish of Oakthorpe, Donisthorpe and Acresford. The Derbyshire town of Swadlincote, four miles to the north, is usually given as the nearest town for the purposes of the postal service, though the village is marginally closer to Ashby, to the northeast. Surrounding villages include Moira, Oakthorpe, Overseal, Netherseal, Acresford and Albert Village.

In 1086, Donisthorpe was part of the land given to Nigel of Stafford by William the Conqueror. It was then known as Durandestorp which has been interpreted as 'the outlying settlement associated with Durand'.

From: A Topographical Dictionary of England, published by S Lewis, London, 1848.

DONISTHORPE, an ecclesiastical district, in the union of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, partly in the parish of Nether Seal, W. division of the hundred of Goscote, N. division of the county of Leicester, and partly in the parishes of Church-Gresley, Measham, and Stretton-en-le-Fields, hundred of Repton and Gresley, S. division of the county of Derby, 3½ miles (S. W.) from Ashby-de-la-Zouch; containing about 1700 inhabitants, of whom 344 are in the hamlet of Donisthorpe. The district includes Oakthorpe and Moira; the Moira baths are celebrated for the cure of rheumatism, and there is a convenient hotel for the accommodation of visitors. The living is a perpetual curacy, in the patronage of the Bishop of Lichfield; net income, £150, with a parsonage-house. The impropriate tithes of Donisthorpe have been commuted for £87. The church, dedicated to St. John, was built and endowed in 1838, at an expense of £6000, chiefly by three maiden ladies of the name of Moore; it is a neat edifice, with a tower and pinnacles. A national school was built in 1840, by Sir John Cave Browne Cave, Bart., by whom, also, it is supported

From: Kelly's Directory of Leicestershire & Rutland (1899)

DONISTHORPE is a parish, formed in 1838, from the civil parishes of Church Gresley, Measham and Stretton-en-le-Field, and Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Seal, in Leicestershire, with a station on the Ashby and Nuneaton joint line of the Midland and London and North Western railways, 3 miles southwest from Ashby-de-la-Zouch, 8 southeast from Burton-upon-Trent and 114 northwest from London, in the Western division of the county, hundreds of Repton, Gresley and West Goscote, petty sessional division, union and county court district of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, rural deanery of Repton, archdeaconry of Derby and diocese of Southwell. Donisthorpe and Oakthorpe hamlets form a joint township in this ecclesiastical parish.

This parish, formerly in Derbyshire, was transferred to Leicestershire under the provisions of the “Local Government (England and Wales) Act, 1888,” by the counties of Derby and Leicester (Woodville &c.) Order, which came into operation Sept. 30, 1897.

The church of St. John the Evangelist, erected in 1838, is a building of grey sandstone in the Perpendicular style, consisting of nave, west porch and an embattled western tower, with pinnacles, containing a clock and one bell: the nave was restored in 1889—90, and further restorations were effected in 1891, at a total cost of £700, and again in 1898: there are 500 sittings, 200 being free. The register dates from the year 1838. The living is a vicarage, net yearly value £214, including seventeen acres of glebe, with residence, in the gift of the Bishop of Southwell, and held since 1885 by the Rev. Edward Bertram Lavies Theol. Assoc. K.C.L. Here are two Primitive Methodist chapels. A cemetery, containing 1 ½ acres was opened in 1875, and is under the control of the Parish Council of Oakthorpe and Donisthorpe and Urban District Council of Moira. There is a colliery, worked by Messrs. Checkland, Son and Williams, and the brewery of G. and W. F. Cooper. The principal landowners are the trustees of the late Lord Donington (d. 1895), Sir Mylles Cave-Brown-Cave bart. of Stretton-en-le-Field, the trustees of the late William Turner, Messrs. W. F. Cooper, S. Greaves, Drewry and some small freeholders. The soil is mixed, subsoil, chiefly clay. The chief crops are wheat, barley, and oats. The area is 1,785 acres of land and twenty of water; rateable value, including Oakthorpe, £6,671; the population of the township in 1891 was 1,678, and of the parish 2,955.

A Primitive Methodist Chapel was built in 1852, and the Ordnance Survey map of 1884 shows one just north of the Engine Inn, the Mount Zion Chapel that was demolished in 2003. By 1908 there were two Primitive Methodist Chapels together with a Wesleyan chapel.

58 New Street was assessed in 1993 as being a late 17th Century timber framed thatched house. The house was badly damaged by fire in May 2011.

Donisthorpe Hall is early 18th Century and Grade II listed.

The Grange, 69 Church Street was thought to date from 1761 with early 19th Century additions. However, a survey in 2010 showed the building was built in the early 18th Century not 1761 as shown on the rainwater head and it has a fireplace dating from 1690-1730. It is listed as a Grade II building.

Donisthorpe was served by the Ashby and Nuneaton Joint Railway which opened a station near Church Street in a very deep cutting including three arch bridges. The line also had sidings to the colliery at Donisthorpe. The station allowed passenger travel to Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Moira, Burton-Upon-Trent, Nuneaton, Hinckley, and Coalville until 13 April 1934 when the line was closed to passengers. The line remained open to goods traffic until 1971, when the section from Measham to Shackerstone was closed by British Rail. The stub as far as Measham via Donisthorpe remained open to serve the colliery until 1981 when the stub near Overseal Junction was closed and lifted. The site was still traceable after closure of the stub but has since been filled in and forms a footpath from Moira to Spring Cottage via Donisthorpe and Moira.

St John the Evangelist Church, Erected in 1938 it lies within the Parish of Donisthorpe and Moira with Stretton-en-le-Field, Archdeaconry of Loughborough in the Diocese of Leicester. It is listed as a Grade II Building. Church Hall opposite was donated to the village by Sir John Cave and was originally the village school. It was later converted into the church

hall; subsequently it fell into disrepair and was sold. The current owner is refurbishing and remodelling the building into a private house.

The Donisthorpe Memorial Park was opened in as a War Memorial on 17 April 1920 by John Turner, High Sheriff of Leicestershire. The War Memorial Gateway was erected around 1922 (with additions for WWII); the Gateway is a Grade II listed building. The cemetery is registered with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission as having casualties (9 in total) from both WWI and WWII.

Life's What You Make It

Excerpts from life writing.

The Day We Almost Made It To Cleethorpes Pier

A tale of trains from my teens.

It was the summer of 1985 and for a week there were four of us wandering around the Midlands on British Rail, as if we were some kind of trainee inter-railers.

I don't know how my mum found out about it, but there was a weekly ticket for unlimited travel in a certain area of which Leicester was pretty much at the southern end of, but in the middle. We could go as far south as Kettering, as far southeast as Peterborough, as far east as the North Sea coast, as far northwest as New Mills, and as far southwest as Nuneaton.

Over the course of the week, me, my brother Larry, and two friends, John, and Gef, were going to go to the very boundaries of where the ticket let us travel to. There was only one strict no go from our parents. Skegness (viva skeg-Vegas) was out of bounds.

We went to Kettering one day, to Peterborough another, New Mills and Sheffield happened on the same day, Lincoln (and a tour up to the top of the tower as well), Matlock Bath was an extended curfew day and we went to Gulliver's Kingdom, and on the Sunday both Larry and Gef had had enough and John and I went to Nuneaton. It was shut.

The other day, the plan was to go all the way to the furthest northeast point we could get to – Cleethorpes.

We had worked out how to get there and stay in the realm of our travel card boundaries. The easy route via Doncaster was out of the question as Doncaster was out of bounds. So it was a three-legged route each way. With the usual return home set for half five, it was going to be a case of get there see the sea and come back. We had about forty-five minutes in Cleethorpes before having to come back.

There would also be some hanging around waiting for connections along the way as well. We left early, getting out in the morning had no time constraints, and got a train from Leicester to Nottingham. There wasn't too much hanging around there before the next train from Nottingham to Lincoln. We had already done this journey a couple of days before when going to Lincoln.

This time we were heading on though, and there was a long wait for the connecting train of Lincoln to Cleethorpes. Over the week we must have spent a lot of time in waiting rooms on various stations around the Midlands. We were well prepared. Packed lunches were brought with us, flasks of drinks, and games to play, a pack of playing cards and a couple of packs of Top Trumps (you can never have enough packs of Top Trumps, but that is an article for another time).

And the train was late. When it turned up, we were happy it had the old-style coaches with the side corridors and six seat compartments. Four of us in one of them were left alone and the adults were more than happy the kids were out of sight and out of hearing range.

It had caught up on it being late by the time we got to Grimsby Town, and then it pulled out of the station, went around the corner, and came to a halt just after going over a level crossing on the way to Grimsby Docks station. And it sat there. And sat there. We were leaning out of the window to see if there was anything going on. The guard wasn't being helpful. And the other passengers on the train were getting restless.

From out of the window we could see the pavement of the road crossing over the level crossing. So could other passengers. A couple opened the doors and got out and went back to the road. They were shouted at by the guard. It looked a tempting proposition at that moment. We were seriously considering jumping off the train and walking back to Grimsby Town and giving up. The only reason we didn't was Gef. He didn't have the same week travel card the other three of us did. He didn't need one, his dad worked for British Rail and so he had family free travel pass. And he couldn't risk getting questioned for it. So we stayed on the train.

It was half an hour before it began moving again, slowly chugging along until it pulled into the terminus of the line at Cleethorpes. The train hadn't stopped, and we were already racing down the platform to the exit.

Through the doors we could see the lights of the pier and the sea, but that was as far as we got. The train would be going straight back as it was so late, we had two minutes, enough time to get a drink and get back on the train. We never even made it out of the station, let alone onto the pier and over the sea.

Typically there were no hold ups on the journey back. And I've never been back to Cleethorpes to see the pier or the sea, the closest was to the Grimsby Town football ground, and even that was in a drunken haze, but tomorrow I will put that right and I will see the sea and walk on the pier.

Poetry Corner

Sitting In The Car In The Dark

Sitting in the dark
Quietly cocooned away
Hiding inside my car
Watching the very few
People and cars passing by
In their own little worlds
Oblivious to my presence
Not seeing me, seeing them
Programmed to ignore parked cars
Without suspecting them not to be empty
Muffled words are spoken
Not quite decipherable
With the windows and doors shut
I would be able to hear clearly
If I opened the window a crack
A cat pounces on to the bonnet
And stares through the windscreen
Seeing me more clearly
Than I can see them
They glare at me
Questions in their eyes
What am I doing in the dark
Sat in their domain
A lorry rumbles past
Their bright headlights illuminating all
And the cat is gone
Back into the night somewhere
Now I am calm again
Pulse, heartbeat, and breathing back to normal
I exit the car and head for home
Finally able to face the world again

Did I Really Blog That?

Another Week Bites the Dust

They say that times flies when you are enjoying yourself. (And not when you throw a clock out of the window.) Well, in which case, all the misery I'm feeling about being in lockdown and having to work from home must be false. I must really be enjoying it, as the last ten weeks have gone quicker than any other time I can remember. I do something that I think is a quick follow up to another activity only to see that I did the original activity four weeks ago, and not four days as I thought I was.

Two more e-mails from the National Lottery Thursday morning, I've won two lucky dips. Stop taunting me you MFs.

Sniffles it would appear, has turned into a food snob, he now refuses to eat any of the supermarket brands, and only touches the Whiskas (and any butter he can get his tongue on). Well, the jelly from the Whiskas, he's not too keen on the actual meaty lumps. If we could get pouches of just jelly then it would be a lot easier. Or perhaps dog food as he now checks the dog's bowl to see if there is anything in there he can snaffle. Well good luck with that with Charlie around.

Charlie however has a new trick. Once we've had dinner and go to have some dessert, he follows Helen to the living room, and once we've sat on the sofa, he climbs onto the far end, ignoring shouts to get off, wriggles into the corner and then keeps knocking Helen's elbow with his head to get at the dessert. The only way to get him off the sofa is to take a sock off and throw it across the room. He gets off the sofa to retrieve the sock, and unrolls the end before lying on it on the rug. Three nights on the trot now. At least they aren't clean socks.

I think the work technology has had enough of this lockdown crap and working from home nonsense as well. Skype voice has given up the ghost, making it appear as if everyone is a Norman Collier impersonator. And I see the mad rush to put all our applications in the cloud is paying off. Just not in the intended way, it's giving all employees extra time, as they can't actually do anything when the vpn internet pipe keeps falling over.

Saturday was a nice day, so we had thought about going out, only for it to be too damn hot to go anywhere during the day. We had had dinner before finally going out, another nice trip that was covered by a previous blog.

https://onetruekev.co.uk/Mutterings/2020/05/31/isfield/

Sunday was similar; it was too bright and too hot to venture out of the house after eventually managing to get out of bed. It was a complete unwind day, which was good.

The heat was obviously affecting everyone and everything by the time it got to Monday. One of the work e-mail servers gave up the ghost and so half of our team don't have any access to e-mails. I was one of the unfortunate ones who were still receiving them. I spent a twelve hour day dealing with setting up a new business unit after integrations had failed and needed manually dealing with, which is what happens when the data for a planned change that has been nine months in the making turns up at half three on the Friday afternoon before go live. I really hate this job at times.

In my zombiefied state Monday evening I saw the hashtag #BLM was trending. But being in a bit of a brain fog my initial reaction was they were changing the tomato in a BLT. Not a bad thing until I tried to think of foods beginning with M. Mango, marshmallows, maple syrup, melon, mint, mushrooms, and then I thought of one that I could go with – mozzarella. Only to start reading the posts and realising I should stop being flippant. BLM is serious and is something we should all support.

The most WTF news headline I saw this week was the one "Monkeys escape with Covid-19 samples after attacking lab assistant." They talk about life imitating art, but no one expects to see headlines straight out of a Planet of the Apes film. I suppose all we need to wait for now is for the aliens to land. Turns out the story wasn't as bad as the headline; they were samples to be tested for Covid-19 and not phials of the disease itself. Well, not this time anyway.

Tuesday wasn't any better; I still had access to e-mail as they tried to fix it for those that didn't. If they could fix the others and break mine, it would be a much better state of affairs. And if they could break skype permanently as well that would make my week.

And this sun can do one; nobody needs to have their retinas burnt out just putting the washing out. It's saying it is creeping up towards the thirties on the thermometer. This is not acceptable; the only thirties allowed on the thermometer are those that show in Fahrenheit. It is the one good thing about the lockdown is there is no need to go out into the nasty harsh environment.

There has been talk about being able to go back to the office, and an application form went out as a link to a HR comms mail a couple of weeks ago. It was on a single word at the bottom of a long rambling e-mail, so of course no one had

noticed it until Katya pointed it out. I typed quicker than usual to fill the form in and send it off. Hopefully, I will get accepted and I can go back and work in the (deserted) office.

The pets have been especially vocal about going in and out and so it prompted me to rewriting more song lyrics, this time bastardising Elton John's Passengers into Pesky Pets.

Damn the pesky pets, who want to come in
Damn the pesky pets, who want to go out
Damn the pesky pets, who want to annoy
Want to come in
Want to go out
They want to come in
They want to go out
Want to come in
Want to go out
They want to come in
They want to go out

To be really annoying
You need a mismatched pair
One whining little cat
And a dog that doesn't care
They are rarely silent
When you're trying to rest
They know it's the best time
To act as a pest

Damn the pesky pets, who want to come in
Damn the pesky pets, who want to go out
Damn the pesky pets, who want to annoy
Want to come in
Want to go out
They want to come in
They want to go out
Want to come in
Want to go out
They want to come in
They want to go out

One eats a bowl of food
In twenty seconds flat
Then licks his little lips
While eyeing up the cat
The fussy little mog
Only eats the jelly
Then licks the butter dish
To fill up his belly

Damn the pesky pets, who want to come in
Damn the pesky pets, who want to go out
Damn the pesky pets, who want to annoy
Want to come in
Want to go out
They want to come in
They want to go out
Want to come in
Want to go out
They want to come in
They want to go out

Be careful where you stand every time
Pesky pets never stand in line
Under your feet or lying on the stairs
They'll trip you up without a care

Damn the pesky pets, who want to come in

Damn the pesky pets, who want to go out
Damn the pesky pets, who want to annoy
Want to come in
Want to go out
They want to come in
They want to go out
Want to come in
Want to go out
They want to come in
They want to go out

Damn the pesky pets, who want to come in
Damn the pesky pets, who want to go out
Damn the pesky pets, who want to annoy
Want to come in
Want to go out
They want to come in
They want to go out
Want to come in
Want to go out
They want to come in
They want to go out
Whereas in reality they need to make their bleeding minds up.

I'm about to start washing up, and one of the items was the fruit bowl, which had, over the last few weeks managed to get a layer of dry green mould in it from a satsuma skin. I'm thinking, that's fine it'll come off easily, and I go to rinse it first only to send up a small cloud of green dust. I'm sure I breathed some in, and so now, instead of worrying about contracting Covid-19, I'm worried that the inhaled mould will now grow inside of me and burst out Alien style the moment I get back to the office (just putting that image out there to dissuade any potential rivals for desk space in Atlantic House). Now I know that some of you will be struggling with the imagery above, I mean who would have thought I would live in a house with a fruit bowl.

Wednesday felt even more sluggish than normal, probably due to the fact that Charlie spent most of the night barking or making strange squeaking noises, despite being let out numerous times. He only shut up at 4am, just in time for the birds to start their dawn chorus. The cat spent forty-five minutes miaowing at me to be fed when I was on a conference call, only to run off out of the open back door and out over the back gate as I took my headphones off at the end of the call.

Later in the day the People Development team call was taking place. They were doing a cookie baking master class, which was being broadcast live in the kitchen. The plus side being there is going to be warm cookies in the very near future. Now that's something that could make me enthusiastic about going to work every day.

Story Time

A Rum Do

He sat, staring at the unopened bottle on the table in front of him. Not only unopened, but it still had its wax seal, stamped with the crest of that Dominican distillery. He had forgotten all about this bottle. About buying it on the tour of the island. How it wasn't really what anyone would call a normal bottle. It was more a kind of Kilner jar. One which had spent two years buried in the soil at the sugar cane plantation. He had seen it dug up from the ground. It was that bottle's day to see the light. And for another to be filled and take its place underground.

They hadn't wanted to sell it to him, but it the country, away from the spruced-up parts of the towns where the tourists were allowed unsupervised, money talked. And a hundred and fifty dollars was a lot more than they would make from decanting it into four standard commercial bottles.

The guide had warned him it was bad luck to take the jar from the island. It very nearly wasn't a problem. They didn't want to let him through security at the airport with it to take onto the place. But again behind the tourist façade, the Dominican Republic is a poor country. Money talks. And with enough of it you can make those people sing and dance, and you can certainly make them walk; away from you and look in the opposite direction.

Once he was back at home he couldn't open it immediately, he had actually listened to what they were saying on the tour, even if he had been ten rums to the wind. It had to stay in the jar for another two years for the full fermentation to be complete, they left them in their ice shed. At home he had put it in the fridge in the garage, and it had been forgotten about.

Time change. People change. And time changes people. His wife had left him. Apparently. He came back from work one day and there was no trace of her. No one would admit to having heard from her or to where she had gone. She hadn't taken much with her apart from the car.

And he had given up the drinking as well. Gotten himself clean, gotten himself fit. And he had taken up new hobbies which didn't involve his old daily triangle of doom, the bookies, followed by the pub, followed by the kebab shop.

It had been nigh on eight years since he had returned from that holiday to the Dominican Republic. Had it really been that long? How had he not been and sorted through the garage in all that time? All those boxes of ephemera collected over the years as a child, and into adulthood. Put into cardboard boxes by his parents decades ago and left in piles after they had died and left him the house. The annuals and other books, the football cards and sticker albums, the stamps, the toys, the cassettes, the magazines, the beer mats. All the junk he had once thought worth collecting and keeping. A life of a mundane child and young adult.

Now it was all going to go on eBay or take a trip to the charity shops. There was nothing here he had any use for nowadays. He was surprised when he went to move the fridge when something heavy clanged inside it. Who knows how long the thing had been unplugged for? He had opened the fridge with trepidation, expecting to find some mould infected former foodstuffs. But there wasn't a single spore of mould to be seen in the fridge. Just the large bottle of that dark golden-brown rum.

And now he couldn't decide whether he was sat there looking at it in the bottle, or if it was there staring at him. Judging him for deserting it. Ha, could he hear himself now? How ridiculous does he sound having that conversation with himself out loud?

He had vowed never to drink alcohol again, but rum had always been his weakness. He should have snapped the wax seal and poured it down the sink as soon as he found it. But instead, it had been sat on the table, taunting him, for the last week. He wondered what harm would it do? Break the seal, have a sip, see what the fuss was all about when he spent all that money to get it back here. Have the one sip and pour the rest away. It has probably gone on anyway. He had expected there to be sediment in the bottom of the jar. After all it had never been filtered for sale as it should have been. But there was no layer of particles on the bottom of the jar, or anything floating on the small surface.

He looked away, not wanting to give into it. Throw it away, get rid of it. But he found that he wasn't just looking away from the bottle. He was looking at the Welsh dresser, at the Waterford Crystal cut glass tumblers in it. They were sat there, unused, the perfect vessels to drink out of.

He didn't notice himself do it, but he was sat back at the table, with the glass in one hand and the paring knife in the other, poking at the wax seal, surprised how easy it was to remove it. Underneath was a cork stopper, which didn't need much persuasion to ease itself from the neck of the bottle.

And then the smell hit him, and he wondered if there were a finer smell to be smelt anywhere in the world. His mouth watered as the rum's scent invaded his nostrils. It wasn't just a sip he poured into the glass, half a tumbler full was there in seconds and that glass didn't seem to make a dent in what was in the bottle.

With a small part deep within him trying to resist, he brought the glass to his lips and let the brown, warming liquid pass them, to flow over his tongue, and to trickle down his open throat. It was good. No, it was better than good. Better than any of the numerous fancy boutique rums he had quaffed at all those gin and rum festivals over the years.

The glass was empty. It hadn't taken long. Mere seconds. But it was so good. Sod just having a sip, he would have some more. And so he poured another glass, filling it up to the brim. And that disappeared down his gullet in the same lightning fashion the first one had. Now all abandon was gone, and he kept pouring, and no matter how much he poured, and how much he drank, the bottle never went down.

After five years sober his body wasn't prepared for the toxin overdose of the rum's alcohol. As the bottle never showed signs of the level going down, there was no way he could tell how much he had drunk, just that with each glass finished he just wanted more.

When they found his body two days later and did a toxicology report, it suggested he had imbibed the equivalent of twelve bottles of spirits. But police were left puzzled, as no empties were found in the house, and he had not appeared anywhere on any CCTV, not visiting pubs, off licenses, or supermarkets, and no one had been found near his house removing any bottles. There were no other fingerprints or DNA samples to be found in his house. There was no sign of the bottle either. No wax seal remains, no cork. Nothing. As if it had never existed.

When the tour to the sugar cane plantation arrived for the daily digging up of the buried jar, the worker was surprised and confused to find two large jars in the hole. The one they had buried two years ago, and a much older one, in a style they hadn't used for many years, sat beside it.

Chapter and Verse

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

Where The Light Shines Brightest – Chapter 37

There was an audible click as the voice signed off from the maniac's end. He stood there for a moment and considered just what if anything he would tell the rest of the people on the plane when he left the cockpit, he thought about their attitude towards him, and realised the voice was probably correct, most of them wouldn't even give him the time of day, let alone want to speak to him, most of them wouldn't even look at him. He was probably best not saying anything; they would need to find out what was in store for them on their own when they arrived at their destination.

He looked down and realised that he was stood in the pilot's blood, and quickly shifted side wards, and wiped his feet on a clean part of the cockpit carpet, he also checked the clothes he was wearing, he hadn't thought about the gore lying around the cockpit when he made his mad leap for the controls. As far as he could tell there was nothing on his clothes, how he'd managed to avoid getting anything on himself was one of those little mysteries, and in this case lucky for him. He dragged the co-pilot's body further away from the cockpit door to make it easier for him to get out; he opened the door and squeezed through back into the main cabin.

It felt like he had been in the cockpit for some considerable time, but if it seemed like a couple of hours in the cockpit, it seemed like no time had passed at all outside of it. The air of hysteria that he'd left to go into the cockpit hadn't reduced any in the time he'd been in there. Various people were still screaming, others were crying, but there was no one speaking and everyone else remained in their seats.

He slowly made his way back down through the plane to his seat, with a multitude of thoughts swimming through his mind. On the walk back, no one stopped him to speak to him, or to ask about his time in the cockpit, in fact most of the other passengers looked away as he passed them as if he was part of all this madness that was going on. Most of them didn't even know he'd been in the cockpit; let alone how long it was since he'd walked past them on his way there. None of them cared, he thought all of them just wished they were anywhere else but here, and were quite happy to be left alone in their own little worlds to try and cope with the horrors around them.

He got back to his seat and sat down, and went to rub his eyes, not even realising he was still wearing his sunglasses. He sat with his eyes closed trying to clear his head of all the multiple strands of internal conversations going on, and to focus them into a single train of thought, from which he might pull a plan together. He had been doing this for a few minutes when he suddenly felt someone stood over him. He opened his eyes and looked up and said,

"Hello Sonia."

"So you do know my name then." Sonia replied, somewhat tartly.

"Yes, I do now, but only since I spent some time in the cockpit talking to a lunatic." He replied,

"It's amazing what some people will tell you when you act like a massive pain in the arse, and they happen to be a raving egomaniac."

Sonia's voice softened a bit in her reply,

"I had noticed that you were gone for some time. You also looked drained when you came out, but I didn't say anything immediately as I was expecting you to say something to everyone, or at least try to say something."

He made a kind of scoffing noise before replying,

"What would have been the point of that? Most of the passengers fear any form of contact with me, to the extent that they won't even make eye contact with me. They all act as if I'm in some way responsible for what's going on here. Well, that and the fact that I appear to be having problems keeping my mouth shut. They wouldn't want to speak to me, even if I had started saying anything, and they certainly wouldn't want to listen to anything I had to say."

"Besides, not only would they not believe what I've just heard, the majority wouldn't want to believe it, and those that did would be freaking out more than any of the serial screamers we've got going at the moment."

"Furthermore, I would have needed to stop and have conversations with almost every person separately, have you not felt the abnormal silence on this plane; they have some serious sound dampening technology running on full force. I could stand at the front of the plane screaming at the top of my voice, and people two seats away wouldn't be able to hear me properly. Just look at how far you are leaning in to talk to me, and to hear me."

“Not only that, but there are far too many fully loaded firearms lying about all over this place on this plane to start people off with tales of woe.”

A new thought entered his mind, and he continued,

“Actually, I wouldn’t mind one or two of those fully loaded firearms for myself before we eventually get off this plane. They would be easy to pick up, but I need to do it subtly, to prevent anyone else realising what I’m doing. If they see me picking up guns, it might really tip them over the edge given their high opinion of me that they currently have.”

Sonia shifted from leaning over him, and knelt so that she could speak to him at the same level and so they could talk without really being overheard, something he believed they didn’t need to worry about. As soon as she did so, that smell hit him again, bringing back buried memories.

He smiled despite himself and looked at Sonia. She looked so much like Keera it was untrue; it was all he could do not to lean over the few inches and kiss her. He closed his eyes briefly and shook his head in an attempt to clear those thoughts from his head, and by the time he opened them again Sonia had already started speaking again.

“As it stands now, I’m not sure which conversation I want to have with you first. I’d like to know what the hell is going on here, which I think you now have a fairly good idea of now after your cockpit visit. At the same time, I also want to talk to you about you. You looked like you’d seen the devil himself when you dived off the Tube this morning, or yesterday morning, or whenever it was? I’ve no idea what day or time it is.”

“I think you would have been more accurate if you had said the devil herself, rather than himself!”

“Why do you say that?”

“I’d never actually seen you in the flesh until I sat next to you on the Tube yesterday morning. I had seen a couple of photos of you as a teenager that Keera had, but hadn’t really taken a lot of notice, and you’ve changed a bit since then. I thought that in the photos you looked similar to Keera, but had forgotten all about those pictures and on the whole about you. I must admit that when I sat down next to you on the Tube, I couldn’t help checking you out, but the resemblance to Keera didn’t really click whilst I was doing so. Then I smelt the Eternity on you, and that set me off.”

“Ever since your sister died, I can’t smell Eternity without thinking of Keera, and after I had briefly drifted off upon smelling it, once I reopened my eyes and I looked at you again, the resemblance to Keera was so obvious. Then you called me by my name in a voice that was so similar to hers and I lost it completely. It was like I was meeting a ghost of her. It freaked me out big time and I had to get out of there and bolted as fast as I could. The fact you were on the same plane set me off again, it had already been one of those freaky mornings before “our meeting” on the Tube.”

“The strange thing is that when the hijacking of the plane happened, it focused my mind, and I’ve been sharper and more prepared to deal with anything since then.”

Sonia smiled, and responded,

“I had seen photos of you from all the time you were with Keera, she kept in regular contact with me, sending letters, and exchanging phone calls, you haven’t changed that much at all over the years, and very little since I last saw you at the funeral.”

He was a little taken aback at this, he couldn’t remember that happening at all, and whispered,

“You were at the funeral?”

“Yes, I was.”

She paused, looking intently at him, before continuing,

“Not that I think you would have seen me, I was there in the distance, watching, but never really getting near enough to the service that any of the other mourners would have noticed me.”

After another pause Sonia continued,

“Apart from Keera, I haven’t spoken to any of the rest of my family in nearly twenty-five years. My parents disowned me after I came to Europe as a teenager and got married. They didn’t approve of my living in Europe to start with, and not of me marrying Thorsten. Their general dislike of Germans would have been bad enough, but the twenty-eight-year age gap between him and me kind of sealed it. The rest of the family fell in line quite quickly, all except Keera of course.”

“Being a young teenager herself, she thought it was all so wonderfully free and romantic, and she was always so happy for me. All the way through, she wrote to me, and then in later days e-mailed. I’m quite sure that our parents didn’t know about it, as they would have given her such a hard time over it. Rachel rang me to let me know about the funeral details, and I came to say goodbye to Keera, even if it was at a distance.”

He questioned the name used,

“Rachel??”

Sonia smiled and continued,

“Of course, you wouldn’t have known Rachel, you may have met or seen her, but not have spoken to her. She was my father’s secretary for many years. Besides Keera, she was the only person that kept in touch that had anything to do with the family. Though I never really knew whether it was because she felt what the family had done was wrong, she had used to babysit me at one point, or whether it was a way for my father to keep tabs on me and my life, without having to appear to sully his hands in the eyes of the rest of the family by being in open communication with me.”

He thought about Keera’s parents, and he remembered he always thought that her mother was the head of that family, that she was the one that laid down the law. Even so, her father had seemed a hard-nosed man as well, which was probably required for him to be a success in business. He very much doubted either of them would have gone back on a decision purely based on sentiment.

Books

After years of prevaricating, I have finally gotten around to self-publishing some books. Since the last issue of this I now have three books available. The first is the novel which spent many years available on the Inkitt website. “Where The Lights Shine Brightest”, this is available on Amazon at https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/1738539601 .

Next up is a collection of drabbles, three hundred and sixty six of the little hundred word stories, under the title of “A Drabble A Day Keeps The Psychoanalyst Away”, this is available on Amazon at https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/173853961X .

Finally, there is an autobiographical work, released under my alter ego of Kevin Rodriguez-Sanchez, which covers a two-year period in the early noughties when I lived in Manchester – “Five Go Mad In Manchester.” Again, this is available on Amazon at https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/1738539628

They are all available as paperback or eBook. And if you have Kindle Unlimited then they are available on there to read whenever. Please buy / read / leave reviews.

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.

Lots of stuff on my Medium page, clap, comment, or highlight any article. https://medium.com/@onetruekev

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.

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 X, 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/

I have two Mastodon accounts, one on the central server, and one on the Medium server.

Recently I've added accounts on Threads https://www.threads.net/@onetruekev

And BlueSky https://bsky.spp/profile/onetruekev.bsky.social

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

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