

# Flanagan's Running Club – Issue 80

## 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.

## On This Day – 29<sup>th</sup> February

1504 – Christopher Columbus uses his knowledge of a lunar eclipse that night to convince Jamaican natives to provide him with supplies.

1940 – For her performance as Mammy in *Gone with the Wind*, Hattie McDaniel becomes the first African American to win an Academy Award.

1988 – South African archbishop Desmond Tutu is arrested along with one hundred other clergymen during a five-day anti-apartheid demonstration in Cape Town.

2008 – The United Kingdom's Ministry of Defence withdraws Prince Harry from a tour of Afghanistan after news of his deployment is leaked to foreign media.

Rare Disease Day

Bachelor's Day

### Births

1792 – Gioachino Rossini

1928 – Joss Ackland

1944 – Dennis Farina

1976 – Ja Rule

### Deaths

2012 – Davy Jones

### Number 1's

Number 1 single in 1976 – The Four Seasons – December, 1963 (Oh, What A Night)

Number 1 album in 1988 – Terence Trent D'arby – *Introducing The Hardline According To Terence Trent D'arby*

Number 1 compilation album in 2000 – Various – *Rewind - The Sound Of UK Garage*

## #vss365

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

There were just so many of them, cluttering up the house, taking up room that could be used for more important things.

It was time to have a #purge and get rid of all the extraneous relatives from the house.

Replace them with bookshelves and fill them all with new books.

#vss365

## Joke

The middle-aged man was visibly shaken when his Doctor advised that he had only 6 months to live because of the terminal disease that was detected during a recent physical check-up. The Doctor suggested that he should get his "house in order", make sure his will was current and ensure all final arrangements were in place for the funeral. He should then make plans to enjoy what might be left of his life, to the fullest. "What will you do for the last six months?" asked the Doctor. His patient thought for a few minutes then replied, "I think I'll go and live with my mother-in-law". Surprised by the answer, the doctor asked, "Of all people, why in the world would you want to live with your mother-in-law?" "Because if I only have 6 months to live, I want it to seem like the longest six months of my life!"

## Drabble

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

### The Door

The door was closed. No one ever attempted to open it. Large signs covered it telling people to keep away. There were many so many rumours about what was behind the door, some of which included:

An entrance to the underworld,

A portal to a planet of beasts,

A million different plagues.

Any weird and wonderful reason possible had been thought up, and many had been written on the warning signs.

But none of them were true. The reason the door was kept closed and locked was only because it prevented the building falling down, and killing anyone entering it.

## 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 Lonely Key

The key was in the drawer. Tucked away in the back corner of it. a little stubby thing with a massive hippo bottle opener attached to it. the previous owners must have left it behind. On purpose I would think, it might open something here in the house. I would find somewhere that needed it later. A lock that can't be opened, and then I'll be back to get the key from the drawer.

Eighteen months down the line, the key still sits in the drawer, shoved to the back again, amongst all the rubbish I've crammed into the drawer since I've moved in. it is amazing what crap accumulates in such a short space of time.

I picked the key up and looked at it again. I hadn't found anywhere in the house that needed unlocking. I looked at the fob again. I could have sworn it was larger the first time I had seen it. And that it had been hippo shaped. But now it was a tree. A remarkably similar shape to the one in the garden. The one that shaded most of the garden in the evening when the sun moved around to the west. I couldn't even chop the damn thing down. It had a protection order on it. I wished it could be in the other corner of the garden, where it would block the sun in the morning when I wasn't up yet or out at work.

Turning the fob over there were words engraved on the back of it; 'try me' it said. Was my mind on its way out? I'd not seen any words on it before. Was it the same key? Had I misremembered? It was difficult to think back clearly to moving in. So much to do and put away.

I shrugged and looked from the fob attached to the key to the tree in the garden. The more I compared the two the more I was sure that they were the exact same shape in profile.

Had I really properly looked at the tree before. I had often glanced in its general direction and muttered a few choice words at its blocking out of the light. But as I couldn't do anything about it, I had left it to its own devices. I'd only gone near it the once. To remove all the acorns it had scattered down on the ground beneath it. I didn't want any of them working their way into the ground and sprouting up with mini versions of the light stealer. They would probably appear with ready-made protection orders as well.

But now I went to have a proper look. And I took the key with me. Because, why not? If I was having a mental breakdown, then what did it matter about taking the key with me?

As I got to the base of the tree, I felt a chill. Yes, I was in the shade, but this was colder than it should have been. The day had been warm. There should at least be some residual heat here. I reached out and touched the bark of the tree. Feeling the roughness against my fingers. I was feeling for, as well as looking for somewhere to put the key.

And it was the feeling that found it. A smoother piece amongst the rough bark. A little flap. Copper, or bronze, or something. I pushed it and it started to move aside and beneath it was a keyhole.

I drew the key up to it and it fitted into the slot that was there. I took a deep breath and turned the key. Once. Twice. Three times. And then there was a click and the front of the tree opened outwards. It was quite sudden, and I stepped back to avoid getting hit by it and tripped over.

Inside the tree it was a black void. Darker than it should have been, as if it were stealing the light from the air around it. I climbed back to my feet and edged towards the open trunk and stared into it. I couldn't make anything out. Even stood staring right into it from up close there was nothing to see, no reflection, no light. Nothing at all.

Then I reached out to touch that blackness. My hand went into that dark void, and as it did something pulled my arm with great force and I stumbled forward into that dark hole, and then I was gone.

## Leicestershire

### Welford Road Cemetery

Welford Road Cemetery is a public cemetery in Leicester, England.

The Leicester General Cemetery Company was founded in 1845, and the cemetery itself opened in 1849. The buildings and plan of the cemetery were designed by J. R. Hamilton and J. M. Medland, who also designed cemeteries for Birmingham and Plymouth. Welford Road Cemetery was initially intended for dissenters, but the local Anglican community was able to gain inclusion. The site was initially seventeen acres (6.9 ha) in size, but was extended by thirteen acres (5.3 ha) in 1894.

The original parts of the cemetery were built to a symmetrical plan. Two adjacent chapels were built, serving both Anglicans and non-Anglicans. Similarly, the original cemetery contained roughly equal areas of consecrated and unconsecrated ground.

The two chapels have now been demolished, as has a gothic lodge near the main entrance. The gardener's lodge survives as the University of Leicester chaplaincy, and the ornate 1895 entrance gates are still in place. A modern visitor's centre is located near the cemetery's main entrance

The cemetery contains over 300 British Commonwealth war graves, cared for by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), 286 from the First World War (more than half of these in a war graves plot where a Screen Wall memorial lists names of those buried in it) and 46 from the Second, beside graves of 8 Belgian servicemen (one unidentified). It also has a war memorial which includes a statue designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield.

The dense collection of monuments in front of where the two chapels once stood demonstrates the symmetrical layout of the cemetery: the area on the left is unconsecrated ground for non-conformists, while the area on the right is consecrated ground for Anglicans.

A leaflet published by Leicester City Council identifies one hundred notable burials within the cemetery. The cemetery itself contains a large number of commemorative plaques, giving biographical information about notable interments.

Ewart Astill – cricketer, playing for Leicestershire County Cricket Club  
Thomas Cook – early travel agent and founder of the Thomas Cook Group  
John Flower (artist) (1793–1861)  
William Green – soldier in the Napoleonic Wars  
Bert Harris – professional cyclist  
Arthur Wakerley – architect

Between 2002 and 2004 about one thousand memorials and headstones were laid flat after Leicester City Council 'topple-tested' them for stability. Initially unaware that they needed to obtain a faculty to authorise this in the consecrated ground, the council applied for a faculty retrospectively, although they were opposed in this by relatives of 119 Polish descendants whose relatives' memorials had been laid flat. At first the Consistory Court rejected the Council's application, but this was subsequently granted on appeal to the Court of Arches in 2006. However, in granting the faculty the Court required the Council to work with the Friends of Welford Road Cemetery and members of the local Polish community to restore those flattened memorials.

Between 2012 and 2014 a number of tombs were moved to the cemetery from the grounds of Leicester Cathedral as the churchyard was repurposed with the reinterment of Richard III.

## **Kirby Muxloe**

Kirby Muxloe is a village and civil parish that forms part of the Blaby district of Leicestershire, England. Located to the west of Leicester, its proximity to the city causes it to form part of the Leicester Urban Area. The Leicester Forest East parish border runs along the Hinckley Road A47. According to the 2001 census, the parish had a population of 4,523, increasing to 4,667 at the 2011 census.

The name "Kirby" comes from the Dane Caeri who established the community here in the late ninth or early tenth century. The settlement was known as Carbi, and then later Kirby. The village was recorded in the Domesday Book as 'Carbi'. (Caeri's settlement) with a working population of eight.

At the time the land in Kirby Muxloe was owned by Hugh de Grandesmaynel and by William Peverel. In 1461, William Hastings, the 1st Baron Hastings of Hungerford, became the Steward of the Honor of Leicester and Ranger of Leicester Forest. His father, Sir Leonard Hastings, had owned a modest estate in Leicestershire and Gloucestershire, where the family had long been established.

On 14 April 1474 Hastings acquired the manorial right to Kirby from the Pakeman family, although he had rented it for some years previous to this. In 1480 he began to build the moated Kirby Muxloe Castle during the period of the Wars of the Roses. However, work on the castle stopped soon after Lord Hastings was executed on 13 June 1483 on the orders of Richard, Duke of Gloucester (days later to become King Richard III) at the Tower of London for conspiracy. William was caught up in the rivalry for the throne after the death of Edward IV.

In 1582 the name of the village is recorded as Kirby Muckelby, with variants Mullox, Muckle. About 50 years later in 1628 disafforestation of Leicester Forest occurred, effectively dividing the land near Kirby Muxloe into forest and pasture. The results are visible today. In 1636, the Hastings families sold the castle, and estates in Kirby and Braunstone, to the Winstanley family. The first official use of Kirby Muxloe was in 1703 in the Oxford Dictionary of Place names, which states that 'Muxloe' is a family name. There was such a family, but they lived three miles away, in the village of Desford. An early Quaker, John Penford, was a substantial resident of Kirby Muxloe and member of the Leicester Quarterly Meeting. A business meeting of the Society held at his home to consult on works of charity in 1670 was interrupted by informers; with the result that Penford and others were heavily fined.

The railway came to Kirby Muxloe in 1848 when the Midland Railway built a line through Kirby, and on 1 July 1859 Kirby Muxloe railway station opened at Kirby fields. (The station closed on 7 September 1964 as part of the Beeching cuts). In 1882, the fields known as Far and Near Townsend Close were bought by Kirby Muxloe Land Society. Barwell Road, Castle Road, and Church Road were laid out for the village and building went on over the next 30 years.

In 1911, Kirby Muxloe Castle was handed over to the Office of Works. It is now in the care of English Heritage. In 1941, during World War II, the village was heavily bombed. A German bomber returning from an attack on Coventry emptied its load on two streets, destroying the Free Church and several houses. Gaps left in the houses can still be seen.

## **Life's What You Make It**

Excerpts from life writing.

### **Secret Aftershave Drinker**

One of the adverts I really remember from my childhood was the R. White's one. The one where the middle-aged bloke dressed in stripy pyjamas and typically chunky framed glasses, sneaked down to his kitchen in the middle of the night only to break out into loud song. Singing "I'm a secret lemonade drinker." Well, you were, until you burst out into a song loud enough to compete with the lungs of the Go Compare moustachioed opera singer nowadays.

The main problem about my memory of the R. White's advert was that it always seemed to be preceded or followed by the Old Spice advert, the one with Carl Orff's Carmina Burana pumping out over images of a surfer. The two adverts became intertwined. I used to go around singing a mash up of the two adverts. "Old spice aftershave, I'm a secret aftershave drinker." Much to the amusement of my parents and the bemusement of my classmates.

The adverts faded away and I forgot about my mash up. Right up until the point where I was seventeen, and our 'A' level economics group had gone away for an intensive three-day retreat to help cram for our forthcoming exams.

We were staying in dorms at Beaumanor Hall, a stately home in Northwest Leicestershire, close to the village of Quorn on the edge of Charnwood Forest. The first couple of days had dragged, and there was talk of an escape on the second night. A group of the lads were going to sneak out and go traipsing around the grounds and the forest.

There would also be alcohol involved. We had been allowed to have a couple of beers as most of the group were now eighteen and we had been to The Bull's Head in Woodhouse Eaves with the teachers. But some of the other lads had come prepared with additional secret stashes of spirits.

All of which were hidden in rinsed out bottles of Old Spice. It was perfectly normal to expect seventeen- and eighteen-year-old lads to have brought aftershave with them, even if it was thought by the teachers that two bottles of aftershave might be a tad excessive for a two-night stay.

Once out of the dorm the bottles were opened and passed around. I hadn't really drunk spirits much in my life up to that point, so when I was passed an open bottle of Old Spice, I wasn't sure what to expect. I didn't know what spirit was supposed to have been in there, and as I found out by bottle three, it didn't matter a great deal.

Every single one of them tasted exactly the same. They all tasted of bloody Old Spice. All of them claimed they had rinsed out their old aftershave bottles thoroughly, but I suppose that the Old Spice had permeated every cell of the aftershave bottle and was passing it back into the spirits. Every single bottle tasted of Old Spice; they smelt of Old Spice, hell they even looked like Old Spice. As we sneaked through the grounds of Beaumanor Hall we were doing what I had sung about all those years before. We were secret aftershave drinkers.

I couldn't help it; I was running around singing my made-up jingle from year before at the top of my voice. "Old Spice aftershave, I'm a secret aftershave drinker."

A few punches brought the singing to an abrupt halt as I was told out secret wouldn't last long if I didn't shut the fuck up. So I did. We were out for ages. We wandered down to old Quorn railway station, open, yet deserted, with a steam train from the Great Central Railway sat at the platform. We got on and had a good look around until some bright spark decided to pull the cord in the engine and sounded the whistle. We ran like hell back up the stairs from the platform and up the road to the grounds of Beaumanor Hall again.

It was 5am when we crept back into the dorm. One of the others climbed through a window we had left open earlier and then let the rest of us in through the fire escape. We would have been back earlier if it hadn't been for the tree climbing incident. I was good at climbing up shit back in those days. Up to the point where I had to get back down again. Being scared of heights, I'd look down and freeze and lose all ability to think straight or climb back down. It took three of the other lads twenty minutes to get me back down the tree it had taken me twenty seconds to climb up.

The teachers must have known we'd been out overnight, especially as we were all falling asleep in the sessions during the day. They were taking great delight in torturing us with loud music at random points during the day.

And through it all I kept thinking the same thing over and over.

Yes, I was now officially a secret aftershave drinker.

## Poetry Corner

### Rejection Dejection Injection

The fear of rejection  
Could paralyse you  
Could make you never want to try  
Never want to interact  
Just in case you were told no  
Or told just to go  
Hopes, dreams, wishes, and needs  
Dashed, bashed, broken, and smashed  
So you retreat inside yourself  
And hide there away from it all

The fear becomes dejection  
And you sink down  
Depression encompasses you  
Smothering out the light  
Taking away your fight  
The black dog barks ever louder  
It snaps at your heels  
Paralysing you with the fear  
The rejection is made by you  
Of yourself and of your plans

You reach for the injection  
A needle, a syringe, plunged in  
Something to change the spiral  
A way to stop the pain

To wash it all away  
A hit, a high, a brightening  
Something to raise your mood  
To push away the darkness and fears  
But your body rejects this too  
And you cease being you

## Did I Really Blog That?

### A Trip To Truro

On a rare day of escape for the two of us, we headed to Truro, main roads all the way once we got out of the backwaters around the lodge. When we got to the outskirts and saw the words "park and ride" we decided that that was probably going to be the best idea, rather than having to struggle around an unfamiliar town trying to find possibly non-existent parking spaces.

Park and ride was a great idea, but we turned off too soon and ended up on a quick tour around the very empty cattle market. When we then took the next turn off on the main road, it looked like another wrong turn, past all kinds of mechanical building vehicles and long blue wooden fences, over muddy roads, through an obvious building site, but then the park and ride appeared at the end of the road.

Parking there wasn't easy, as it appears that Truro runs a special abandon your car scheme which made finding a spot that you could actually get your car into a little bit more difficult. However the bus was good and took us into the centre of the city, over the ridiculously small river, the tide must have been completely out, as there was a little meandering trickle of water through a big bank of mud with various boats beached on either side.

The city itself is lovely, lots of great old buildings, many from the Georgian period, but narrow roads instead of broad avenues. There were a good mix of little local shops, high end specialist stores, and the usual smattering of the high street brands seen almost everywhere, all mixed in together. There were a couple of horrible seventies monstrosities on display, but on the whole most new buildings in the city have been built to be sympathetic to the existing architecture.

As seems the norm for us now, we arrived at the Cathedral during a concert performance of some form, it's almost as if they know we are coming and want to prevent us looking around their cathedral. However this time, we had a few hours to spare, so we went for more of a wander, browsed in a very nice local art shop, looking at the pictures and then buying the greeting cards versions.

We decided to get some lunch and perused the menus in several cafes and pubs, only to find none of them did traditional Cornish pasties. They were only available as take away options from bakers, so after a while traipsing around, we took the plunge and went into the Britannia Inn.

It seemed a mistake when we walked in, it was pretty much deserted, and two men, one of whom was the only person working there, were discussing a break in and robbery of a local off license the night before.

When we ordered the food and the guy headed off to the kitchen, I was certainly fearing a microwave meal. It wasn't though; it was nice, freshly cooked food, generous portions, and all very tasting and filling. Probably too filling, the kind of lunch that would encourage an afternoon kip.

We also had the in-meal entertainment of the tale of the robbery. Apparently, a couple of fairly well know local pissheads kicked in the bottom panel of a door to the shop at about midnight, only minutes after the last of the members of staff had left for the evening. One of them then clambered through the hole and into the shop, whilst the other, larger one of the two sat on the floor in front of the door hiding the hole from passers-by.

After taking four bottles of vodka, a bottle of JD, a bottle of JD honey, and some gin, along with four packets of each of about six assorted brands of cigarettes, the thief crawled back out of the hole and then pulled the panel back into place behind him.

In the morning it took the staff in the shop a while to notice anything missing, but when they checked the CCTV, they recognised the two thieves, one of whom had had the nerve to be sat outside the shop waiting for it to be opened at 8am, totally off his face.

Not only that, but the two inept thieves had left the one hundred and forty-two pounds that had been in the till that had had the key left in the drawer.

The other guy who was in the pub, who wasn't working was a scouser, and made a comment recognising this fact in regard to the robbery, "And you say us scousers are bloody thieves."

Whilst the two were discussing this they were breaking off to rush to the windows or out of the doors to see what police activity was going on nearby, they were acting like a regular neighbourhood watch scheme.

Once they had finished talking about crime they moved onto darts, and in particular about the Cornwall A and B sides performance over the weekend, and how badly the scouser had played for them on his debut, moaning about the fact that he only averaged a score of nineteen. I immediately thought damn, you aren't joking, you really are crap, but as their conversation continued and they talked about good performances and their averages in the high twenties being really good, I realised that he wasn't so bad, they were talking about per dart average, and not per three darts as I was used to seeing on televised darts.

Anyway we managed to tear ourselves away from all the scintillating chat and headed back to the cathedral. Not as grand or large as some we have visited, it was still an impressive gothic structure; you certainly wouldn't have thought it was built in this style in the late Victorian era. All the detailing around the cathedral was exactly as we had seen in cathedrals built six hundred years earlier. There were lots of assorted colours in the stained-glass windows, all intact as they didn't have the reformation or Oliver Cromwell to contend with. A lovely light airy feel to the day chapel, adorned with a nice lattice roof with the coats of arms of local families and contributors. It had three large rose windows, a number to match the unusual three spires on the outside, and an impressive reredos.

Parts of the cathedral were being worked on, with scaffolding holding up a corner of the south transept, even though the cathedral isn't as old as a great many others, the upkeep of it still costs one point three million pounds a year, so as usual we did our bit, leaving a donation and buying my obligatory guide book, pen and fridge magnet.

It was then time to get the bus back to the park and ride, which was a lot emptier than when we had arrived, time to head back to the lodge and other people.

## Story Time

### Old Man Jenkins

Everyone knew Old Man Jenkins was a hoarder. His house had been deemed a fire hazard decades ago, piles of all sorts of everything making the inside of it like a maze, one in almost complete darkness as natural light couldn't get in through the windows, covered as they were with boxes and piles of rubbish, and no one wanted to turn the lights on for the fear of their bare bulbs sparking a fire on one of the many piles of books, magazines, or papers. It had got so bad his wife had left him before the new millennium had started, sick of state of it.

But none of us knew that he also had the storage unit.

I had taken a call from his eldest daughter, Lorilyn, a few days after Old Man Jenkins' death. She had found a key to a unit at the local Lok 'n' Store. She was struggling with the sheer size of the task in dealing with what was in the house and couldn't face having to sort through a storage unit as well. Her siblings had washed their hands of the lunacy many years before, not long after their mother had left, and they had no intention of getting involved now. I was retired and Lorilyn knew I had made a living out of hunting through junk shows and antique stores and the like to find to what had value and what didn't.

In truth there was no trick to it. Everything had value if you could find the correct market for it. The saying one man's junk was another man's treasure was true, and so was the reverse of it.

I had known and had a few dealings with Old Man Jenkins over the last thirty years, it would have been difficult not to in a town this size, but he was a difficult man to read or get a feeling for, and so I didn't know quite what to expect when I made my way to the Lok 'n' Store. But I did groan inwardly when I found the key belonged to one of the larger units, the ones you could keep trucks in, or live in if you ignored the Lok 'n' Store rules about such things.

I turned the key and removed the padlock and cautiously started to lift the metal shutters. When they got to the top of their track, I was just happy the piles of boxes that filled to storage unit floor to ceiling, side to side, and front to back didn't spill out and collapse on me. Being buried by another man's junk wasn't the way I was intending to leave this life.

There didn't look to be an inch of space in the unit where anything else could have been crammed in. I wondered how long Old Man Jenkins had been filling this space for.

It was difficult to know where to start, and so I went for the logical approach and took down the box from the top right-hand corner at the front. It was probably a foot long in all directions and heavier than I had been expecting it to be sat at the top as it was. I lifted the tape holding the cardboard flaps down, pulling it back and opening the top. Inside it was full of fridge magnets. Neatly stacked up within the box. Hundreds of them. From all over the world, and in no particular order. I had a think and couldn't remember the old man ever leaving town, let alone the state or the country, and yet here were magnets from multiple countries on multiple continents.

I took out the next box and it was the same there, filled with fridge magnets. It continued with the first three columns at the front of the unit being the same, boxes and boxes of fridge magnets, enough to cover the door of every fridge in town.

Then came the postcards, again boxes and boxes full of them. From the most diverse set of locations possible, again in no particular order. Some of them were in their original state, blank on the back, no one had written on them or sent them. Others had writing on, filled with tales of wonderful trips, or mundane details, written by various people to various other people, with neither the sender nor the recipient being Old Man Jenkins on any of the cards I looked at.

And there was too much for me to look at in any real detail. I had spent far too long looking through the fridge magnets and post cards. If I carried on at this rate it would be months, if not longer before I got through all of the boxes in here. So instead I looked in the boxes, and wrote in marker pen on the side of each what the contents were and tried to pile them together. It all seemed to be piled neatly together in types of item, as if it had all been sorted before being put into the storage unit.

It took another eight hours of following a similar pattern. A box would be full of one type of item: stickers, pens, snow globes, t-shirts, guidebooks, pin badges, key fobs, bottle openers, mugs, caps. A cornucopia of items seen in every cheap tacky tourist gift shop around the world. It was all here. A lot from places I hadn't even heard of, let alone been to. Far too many separate places for a single person to have visited.

And then came the change. I took out a box and there wasn't another one directly behind it. There was space there instead. I didn't even look in that box, I just took it down and placed it behind me. I took out the one below it, then the one to either side and none of them had any other boxes behind them. It seemed clear to me there was an open space in here.

Only for me to continue to remove the boxes and reveal that it wasn't really an open space. Well, not entirely.

In amongst the piles of floor to ceiling boxes was an open area, surrounded on all four sides by boxes, there was an area of about six feet square, and in the middle of that space sat an old hickory style rocking chair. And if that wasn't unexpected enough, in the chair sat mummified remains. Tattered clothes suggested the body may have been a woman, but the grey tightened skin left no real indication of who this was.

In my shock I suppose I must have let out some kind of scream, as the staff at the Lok 'n' Store came to see what the noise was about. I don't quite think they believed what they were seeing either. Who would?

Eventually one of them regained their wits enough to call the police. And then I was out of the storage unit. There was a barrage of questions, some quite rude, accusing me of setting this up. Only getting them to speak to Lorilyn persuaded them otherwise, but that was after a few hours sat in a cell in the police station. Despite my being friends with the Sheriff for years. Again, difficult not to be when you live in the same town for so long and you're not part of the criminal fraternity. They took over with the clearing out of the storage unit, everything being carted away and catalogued and the whole place being processed as a crime scene. There was too much for them to store at the station, and they ended up using a couple of the other units at Lok 'n' Store for all the boxes.

Rumours bounced around town as to the identity of the mummified remains, but it was weeks before they were confirmed. Lorilyn rang me to tell me the news. It was her mother. She hadn't left town because she had gotten tired of Old Man Jenkins' junk. She had been bludgeoned with something and then encased within the junk, probably because she had hated it so much, her husband had not taken the criticism kindly and decided to put an end to it. Although with him being dead they couldn't say for certain, but they believed he left the false trail of her leaving, which no one had bothered to question, they were all surprised she had stayed with him for so long.

By my reckoning, there must have been hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of items in the boxes in that storage unit, more probably if the right buyers could be found, but Lorilyn, with her siblings agreement, just wanted to get rid of it and it was given away to various charities and thrift shops for them to sell on. At a fraction of what it could have made. But to them it was tainted. It had been the mausoleum for their mother, one they didn't want to remember.



## Chapter and Verse

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

### The Talisman – Chapter 5

Hodson had been born in the far north of the Empire in a small village called Kokkoping, or at least that's what the villagers called it, its official name was Dunstead, it was renamed when the Empire had annexed the South Koping Kingdom during a war over fifty years ago, and the Emperor Malimi VI had imposed Malimiland style names on the villages and towns it had taken into the Empire.

During the early years, a garrison of soldiers had been set up in a newly built town of Malimiville. Skirmishes with troops from Koping occurred on a regular basis with parcels of farmland changing hands on an almost weekly basis, it went on that way until a concerted effort to drive the invaders out of their land by the Koping forces. That hadn't ended well for them, their forces weren't as well equipped or as battle hardened as the Malimiland soldiers, and most of the Koping forces were slaughtered and their bodies fed to the pigs and boars of the local farmers. The annexation became a permanent transfer of land, and the Malimiland Empire grew. The main reason preventing the Malimis from trying to push further north to take over the whole of Koping was the geography, in specific the vast series of lakes that formed the boundary between North and South Koping. Covering most of the central strip, there were only five passages through, all with wide rivers to cross, and narrow passes, making it virtually impossible to send armies through from Malimi.

Whilst Malimi VI was emperor he turned a blind eye to the locals still using their traditional place names, unfortunately his son Malimi VII and Grandson Dunini II weren't as lenient, anyone found using the traditional names were punished at will, with the local militia that had been installed at Malimiville quite regularly being overly heavy handed, beatings turned out to be killings, it was soon the case that the original inhabitants only used the original names when they were certain their audience only had friendly ears.

Hodson could only remember having Dunini II as the Emperor, with his father Malimi VII having been killed by his prize stallion when Hodson was only two years old. His earliest memories recall his father saying good riddance to bad rubbish several times, blaming the old Emperor for the death of his wife, Hodson's mother. However as the reign of Dunini II became longer, his father's grumbles changed tack. He was horrified at what had been happening through the Empire, especially in the regions that had been conquered recently, both at their home in the North, and also the large swathes of the former Republic of Almac to the East, that Malimiland had completely taken over and absorbed into their Empire.

Whole families had disappeared from their homes throughout the regions, with new families from the central and southern areas of the Empire appearing almost as quickly to replace them. There didn't appear to be any rhyme or reason as to who had been picked to be removed. On the whole the newcomers seemed less than impressed with their new abodes, and several clashes occurred between the old and new inhabitants.

It was one such clash that had changed Hodson's life forever. His father had got into an altercation with a family who had appeared in a house along their street in the village. They had accused his father of stealing from them, something they had no proof of, and when the dust had settled later it turned out there was no proof of. His father being a proud man had objected strongly to being called a thief, and had responded with insults of his own, aimed at the newcomers, calling them home stealing spies. The argument had turned violent, and Hodson's father had held his own against three men from the other family until the militia had arrived. Not liking the odds of three against one, they jumped in and made it eight against one, five of them armed with clubs and pikes. In what seemed like an eternity to Hodson, but in reality, was less than a minute, they beat his father to the ground with clubs and then perforated his broken body with their pikes until there were more holes than skin.

The other family searched his father's body, and then along with the militia ransacked his home, looking for whatever the item was that his father was supposed to have stolen from them, but they didn't find it. The mother of the family had the good grace to look guilty about the whole affair, but the men didn't, furthermore, by then it was too late for his father anyway. As it turned out it was also too late for him, with no other family in Dunstead, he was alone, and certainly not able to stay in a house in the village by himself, he was carted off to Malimiville to join the other poor unfortunates that had lost their parents one way or another over the years.

His family home was given to the survivors of the family that had in effect killed his father, as they found themselves homeless the very next day. Once the militia had left with him the previous evening, the remaining local villagers had taken it on themselves to burn down their house during the night. Only four of the nine people who were living there managed to get out alive. The militia didn't go back to seek out those responsible, they cut their losses and left it as it was. For that small fact, Hodson was grateful; there had been far too many unnecessary deaths as it was.

## **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 and earn me a couple of cents. <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 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](mailto:kev@onetruekev.co.uk)

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