

Shadows of Centralis Monthly Magazine: Issue #23 (March 2024)

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Book front cover artwork: O John Blanche



Issue: #23 (March 2024)

Cover by John Blanche

Welcome once more to Shadows of Centralis Monthly Magazine! This month's issue, again adorned with wonderful cover artwork by the legendary John Blanche, has Shadows of Centralis Faction Focus articles for Hag Elves (Knights of N'kish) and Lords (Foot Soldiers).

With his extensive volume of work surpassing the likes of H.P. Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard, Seabury Quinn was the most prolific contributor to the classic Weird Tales magazine. However, over the years, while his contemporaries have remained popular figures within the genre, Seabury Quinn has become the forgotten man of weird fiction. It is with great pleasure that we shine a light on the wonderful Seabury Quinn in this month's Horror Fiends article.

Recently released, available worldwide via Amazon, the official and authorised biography of John Blanche, Blanche: The Rise of Grimdark, is out now. Though the contributions of many of John's friends and colleagues feature in this book, it was not possible to include everyone. With the pages of Shadows of Centralis Monthly Magazine serving as a platform for such pieces, kindly sparing us some of his time, the Writer of Wrongs himself, Dan Abnett spoke to us about his appreciation for John Blanche.

John Wombat

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Contents



"Beware the Shadows..."

| • | Faction Focus: Hag Elves - Knights of N'kish |
|---|--|
| • | Faction Focus: Lords – Foot Soldiers |
| • | Official Shadows of Centralis Miniatures |
| • | Official Seas of the Orb Model Range by Bob Naismith |
| • | Horror Fiends: Seabury Quinn 4 |
| • | Talking John Blanche: Dan Abnett |
| • | Blanche: The Rise of Grimdark |
| • | Horror Fiends: Volume I |
| • | Shadows of Centralis: Website |
| • | Model Manufacturers 109 |
| | |





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"Revel in the carnage and delight in the destruction.

Massacre without mercy and throw laughter to death. Colour your blades crimson and dance upon the fallen. Drink upon their suffering and feast upon their





HAG ELVES – KNIGHTS OF N'KISH

In recent times, tainted by the dark gods N'kish and Taranix, as well as a swathe of vile demigods, there has been a breakout of evil cults within the elven race. Known as hag elves, such is the dark nature and intense drug focus of these cults, the elves within them have become corrupted in body and mind. Rejecting the virtuous teachings of Dagnr, hag elves are fuelled with an unquenchable thirst for the spilling of blood. Debauched, murderous pleasure-seekers who revel in bloody carnage, hag elves are the antithesis of their once noble roots.

Physically, hag elves resemble their Dagnr-following cousins. In mindset, though, they are polar opposites, something which is made evident in their skull-adorned armour and in their wicked, hooked blades. Delighting in slaughter, and eager to display their grisly trophies of war, hag elves often attach decapitated enemy heads to their belts. Meanwhile, their bodies of lily-white skin are often tattooed with all manner of evil prayers and arcane symbols.

Much like the forces of elves, hag elves are extremely proficient close combat and missile-focussed fighters. However, martial discipline is not something typically associated with hag elves. Such is their enthusiasm for bloodshed, hag elf soldiers can often rush into conflict without caution or consideration of the consequences. A savvy hag elf general will try to curb his warriors' behaviours through the use of various drugs.



An army of Hag Elves has access to some of the Orb's finest fighters. When it comes to Foot Troops options, a player of Hag Elves has four different units to consider; Hag Elf Spearmen, Hag Elf Archers, Hag Elf Crossbowmen, and Knights of N'kish. Each of these units have their own strengths and weaknesses, with Knights of N'kish, the troops' ferocity in close combat and fearsome reputation as psychotic killers sees them excel in melee.

Such is their fighting prowess, though only available in blocks of 5 or 10, Knights of N'kish can decimate enemy units. Each Knight of N'kish has 2 Hand-to-Hand Combat Attacks (A), while the unit has an impressive Hand-to-Hand Combat (H-t-H) value of 5+. The unit's *Confidence Enhancers* special rule means it always passes D10 *Confidence Tests*. Meanwhile, should an enemy unit wish to *Charge* Knights of N'kish, it must first pass a D10 *Confidence Test* as Knights of N'kish also have the *Fear* special rule.

Though units of Knights of N'kish have a less than solid Durability (D) value of 7+, each warrior does have a Wounds (W) value of 2, allowing some staying power when in close combat with more challenging opponents.



Knights of N'kish units are available in blocks of 5 and 10.

Knights of N'kish

| | М | Α | H-t-H | S | Mg | С | W | D | VP |
|---------------|---|----------|-------|----|----|----|-------|----|----|
| Knights of | 6 | 2/ - per | 5+ | 5+ | - | 6+ | 2 per | 7+ | 40 |
| N'kish – unit | | model | | | | | model | | |
| of 5 | | | | | | | | | |

Equipment: Wearing heavy armour, each Knight of N'kish is armed with a great sword or great axe. **Special Rules:** Knights of N'kish have the *Confidence Enhancers* and *Fear* special rules.

| | М | Α | H-t-H | S | Mg | С | W | D | VP |
|---------------|---|----------|-------|----|----|----|-------|----|----|
| Knights of | 6 | 2/ - per | 5+ | 5+ | - | 6+ | 2 per | 7+ | 80 |
| N'kish – unit | | model | | | | | model | | |
| of 10 | | | | | | | | | |

Equipment: Wearing heavy armour, each Knight of N'kish is armed with a great sword or great axe. **Special Rules:** Knights of N'kish have the *Confidence Enhancers* and *Fear* special rules.

Great Sword: Wielded by only the mightiest of warriors, a great sword, like a great axe, is a two-handed weapon which prevents the bearer from carrying a shield. An enemy model that receives a *Hit* from a great sword suffers a -2 modifier to its *D10 Durability Test* roll.

Great Axe: Larger and deadlier than a standard axe, a great axe is a two-handed weapon which prevents the bearer from carrying a shield. An enemy model that receives a *Hit* from a great axe suffers a - 2 modifier to its D10 *Durability Test* toll.

Confidence Enhancers: Drugs such as lepidone and phalosis fill the user with such confidence they often enter into situations they would usually avoid. A unit with the *Confidence Enhancers* special rule automatically passes D10 *Confidence Tests*. A unit with the *Confidence Enhancers* special rule can only *Brace for Impact* as a reaction to being *Charged*, it cannot *Shoot* or *Flee*.

Fear: Some creatures and weapons possess such menace or disturbing features that they strike fear into the heart of the enemy. Before *Charing* a unit with the *Fear* special rule, a D10 *Confidence Test* must first be passed. If the test is passed then the unit can *Charge* as normal, if failed then the unit cannot *Charge* but remains stationary.



LORDS - FOOT SOLDIERS

A nightmarish reality, the towns and cities of the Lords' domain are like no other on the Orb. The air is chokingly thick with the pungent aroma of noxious fumes and the constant drawling sound of heavy industrial machinery. Meanwhile, manufacturing plants and experimental laboratories sit side by side, next to cramped, crudely built shanties. Obsidian black, blocking out all natural weather conditions and serving as a solid barrier to invaders, encasing the whole realm is a massive metallic dome. Mounted to the inner side of the dome are thousands of amplifiers which ring with the constant readings of The Scriptures of Berossus. More macabre, hanging from the expansive ceiling are living sacrifices to Berossus; crucified into place, sacrificial deaths are painfully drawn out. With no natural light source, streets are illuminated by various means; sometimes gas filled glass orbs mounted on tripods, sometimes neon spotlights.

Igniting the fuses of their lightweight fire lances, as the rampaging Orcs army, led by the elite Blades of Sus units, powered towards them under a cloud of fury, calmly and carefully, the Foot Soldiers took aim. Then, amidst a crescendo of gunpowder explosions and orange-tinged smoke, a volley of scrap shot was directed towards the snarling and snorting horde of Orcs. Hitting the unit with shattering force, piercing through thick hides with ease, taking out eyes and puncturing windpipes, littering the orcs with a vicious assault of shrapnel, the shot ripped into the porcine-featured beasts.

With their number now halved, the Blades of Sus, apoplectic with rage, tore forward, keen to satiate their bloodlust, as well as avenge the fallen. The orcs bellowed praises to their god Sus, while raising their mighty man-sized swords and axes. Just as the orc warriors were about to bring down their awesome weapons and crash into the unit of Foot Soldiers, each of the Lords' troops dropped to one knee and thrust their fire lances upwards as they looked to skewer the bellowing beasts. Before they were able to bloody their weapons, the charging Blades of Sus, carried forward by their frenzied momentum, launched themselves into a wall a gleaming spearheads.

Foot Soldiers units are available in blocks of 5, 10 and 15.

Foot Soldiers

| | М | Α | H-t-H | S | Mg | С | W | D | VP |
|------------|---|-------|-------|----|----|----|-------|----|----|
| Foot | 5 | 1/1 | 8+ | 8+ | - | 6+ | 1 | 7+ | 10 |
| Soldiers – | | per | | | | | per | | |
| unit of 5 | | model | | | | | model | | |

Equipment: Wearing light armour, and carrying a shield, each Foot Soldier is armed with a fire lance. **Special Rules:** Foot Soldiers have the *Confidence Enhancers* and *Chicoi Stimulants* special rules.

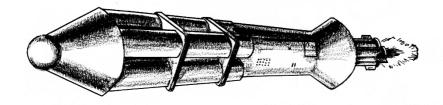
| | М | Α | H-t-H | S | Mg | С | W | D | VP |
|------------|---|-------|-------|----|----|----|-------|----|----|
| Foot | 5 | 1/1 | 8+ | 8+ | - | 6+ | 1 | 7+ | 20 |
| Soldiers – | | per | | | | | per | | |
| unit of 10 | | model | | | | | model | | |

Equipment: Wearing light armour, and carrying a shield, each Foot Soldier is armed with a fire lance. **Special Rules:** Foot Soldiers have the *Confidence Enhancers* and *Chicoi Stimulants* special rules.

| | М | Α | H-t-H | S | Mg | С | W | D | VP |
|------------|---|-------|-------|----|----|----|-------|----|----|
| Foot | 5 | 1/1 | 8+ | 8+ | - | 6+ | 1 | 7+ | 30 |
| Soldiers – | | per | | | | | per | | |
| unit of 15 | | model | | | | | model | | |

Equipment: Wearing light armour, and carrying a shield, each Foot Soldier is armed with a fire lance. **Special Rules:** Foot Soldiers have the *Confidence Enhancers* and *Chicoi Stimulants* special rules.

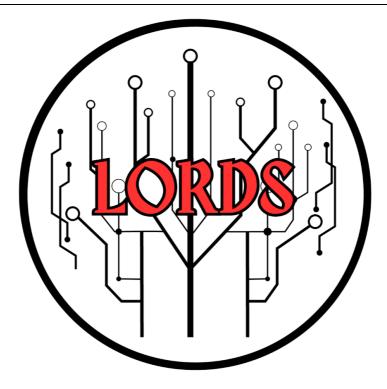
With 1 Attack (A) in both Hand-to-Hand Combat and Shooting, armed with multi-use fire lances, Foot Soldiers offer a player of the Lords different tactical options. Though respective Hand-to-Hand Combat (H-t-H) and Shooting (S) values for the unit are both a rather unimpressive 8+, should the unit land some successful missile fire then those *Hit* do suffer a -2 modifier to D10 *Durability Test* rolls. Giving them some extra staying power in Hand-to-Hand Combat, fire lances work the same as spears; when Foot Soldiers receive a *Charge*, they gain a +1 modifier to D10 Hand-to-Hand Combat rolls (though this modifier does not apply to ongoing Hand-to-Hand Combat).



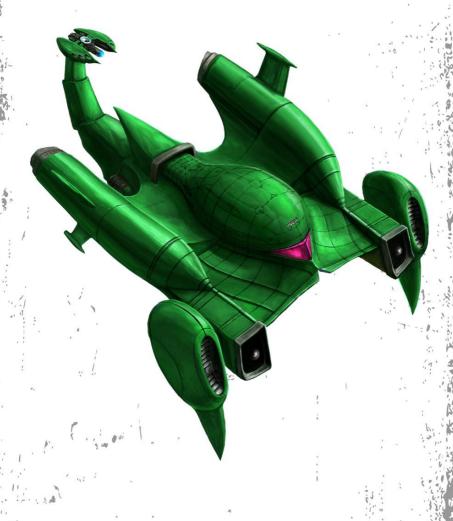
Fire Lance: With a pyrotechnic or gunpowder device secured to the pointed end of a spear, fire lances offer short-range firepower as well as hand-to-hand fighting capabilities. In Hand-to-Hand Combat, the fire lance serves as a spear. In the Shooting phase, a model that received a *Hit* from a fire lance suffers a -2 modifier to its D10 *Durability Test* roll.

Confidence Enhancers: Drugs such as lepidone and phalosis fill the user with such confidence they often enter into situations they would usually avoid. A unit with the *Confidence Enhancers* special rule automatically passes D10 *Confidence Tests*. A unit with the *Confidence Enhancers* special rule can only *Brace for Impact* as a reaction to being *Charged*, it cannot *Shoot* or *Flee*.

Chicoi Stimulants: Sprouting hairy toothed leaves and translucent disk-like seedpods, the chicoi plant is a biennial of the family Brassicaceae. Known for its adrenalin heightening properties, the roots of chicoi are often used in the production of stimulants. A model with the *Chicoi Stimulants* special rule re-rolls failed D10 Hand-to-Hand Combat rolls.



"Blessed is the future of which our Lord leads us."



Prayer of the Lords.

Official Shadows of Centralis Miniatures via RPE Miniatures & Games

Regular readers of Shadows of Centralis Monthly Magazine will know how much we value RPE Miniatures & Games; as well as providing fantastic figures, ranging from dwarfs to elves, orcs to trolls, and with so much in between, the company also offer wonderful and highly knowledgeable customer service. In addition to selling models, the guys behind the scenes at RPE Miniatures & Games are all avid collectors and gamers themselves.

For those yet to visit the RPE Miniatures & Games website, you won't be disappointed. Headed by Paul Reid, the Liverpool-based model manufacturer boasts thousands of superbly detailed metal miniatures which, in addition to being wonderfully crisp castings (white metal, tin-rich, with a small trace of lead, ensuring a superior casting finish), are also highly competitively priced.



Trolls, models by RPE Miniatures & Games.



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Giants, models by RPE Miniatures & Games.



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With its hairy toothed, lime-green leaves and translucent disk-like seedpods, the chicoi plant is a biennial of the family Brassicaceae. Known for its adrenalin heightening properties, the roots of chicoi are often used in the production of stimulants. Though considered with caution by many of the Orb's inhabitants, races such as hag elves and goblins delight in the feelings of agitated, nervous excitement which stem from the effects of ingesting the prepared roots of the chicoi plant.

Lut, often referred to as the Star Treader, a mercurial goblin shaman who was gifted with kaleidoscopic visions, was a habitual user of chicoi. As much as Lut absorbed himself in the effects of chicoi, he also used the plant in conjunction with strong wines and psilocybin enriched punches. These intoxicants, coupled with his mastery of magic, served as a vehicle to communicating with the Goblin God. Puck. Traversing the arcs of time, transcending dimensions and realities, Lut was a frequent guest of Puck; his second-self revelled in the mania of the god's lavish masquerade balls. Such was his close connection with goblin overseer, Lut, the great Star Treader, himself was almost deified in goblin society.

As his deep-yellow eyes became pale and glazed, before rolling back in his head, the shaman offered himself to the transformative effects of his heady, mind-expanding spiritual cocktail, as well as the esoteric power of magic. First experiencing a feeling of indescribable euphoria, his body aglow with intense delight, Lut then descended into a maelstrom of agonising pain. His body, shaken with icy chills, ached, while, dry mouthed, he frantically gasped for breath....

Clawing at the sickening visions of loathsome and pestiferous horror which entered into his view, his eyes pinned open with invasive optical vices which needled into his skull, as he slipped between realities, Lut suffered torments of endless depths as a multitude of snarling demons and cruel demigods delighted in toying with the mind and soul of the goblin shaman.

Lut witnessed monstrous abominations contorting in fits of ecstatic joy, convulsed in manically laughter, as they ripped crusted, crimson scabs from their diseased hides, and each time they did so, he felt a searing pain as strips of his own flesh were supernaturally torn from his body. Other creatures, oddly bodied fusions of man and beast, hungrily ate dismembered limbs from enormous obsidian cups. As these gruesome fiends, lost in a frenzy of gory greed, satiated their repugnant cravings, each bloody mouthful tore at the soul of Lut.

Gradually, Lut's visions of horror began to fade, the intense mental, physical, and spiritual anguish which had crippled him slowly eased, his body relaxed, and, with the skull-penetrating vices which had forced him into a permanent state of seeing now gone, he found he could blink his eyes, Looking about himself, Lut found his body was unharmed, there were no injuries or markings, no evidence at all of the agonies he had suffered. As a warm tranquillity began to wash over his mind, like a sea settling after a torrential storm, within himself, Lut felt a sense of calmness beginning to grow, as well as a heighted feeling of awareness, and increased knowledge. Meanwhile, a new addition to his person, around Lut's neck, fixed to a corroded silver chain, hung a small obsidian charm which held at its centre the eye of an owl, while in the deep pockets of his tattered robes rested many different molluscs and crustaceans.

No longer the plaything of demons and dark demigods, Lut found himself within a mystical realm bestrewn with abstract and amorphous architecture, ornate, skyreaching temples, and wild, overgrown vegetation. Though Lut had travelled many cosmic paths before, though he had encountered many strange locations, some terrifying, some idyllic, others simply bizarre, he had never before come across anything such as this. With the structures around him defying reason, adorned with unusual, perplexing cuneiform markings unlike anything he had seen before, decorated in mesmerising symphonies of obsidian statues, it was in a state of wonder and awe in which Lut considered his otherworldly surroundings.

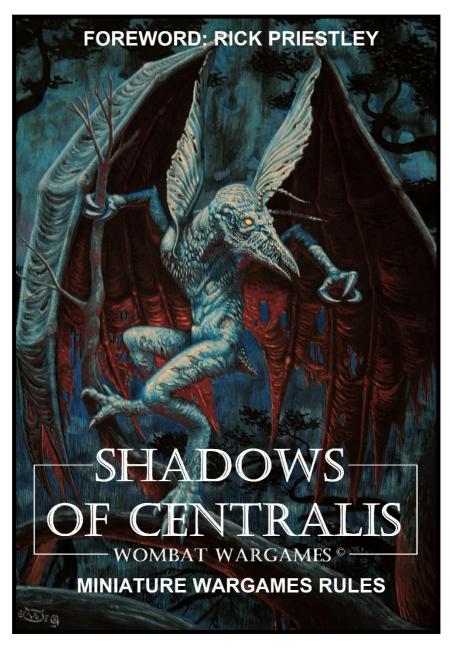
Soon after entering into one of the realm's many imposing and elaborately decorated temples. Lut happened upon a cloaked figure swinging an aromatic censer of opiate odours as it walked the dimly lit passages of the dank, labyrinthine structure. With a heavy hood concealing its features, the figure spoke in whispering voice, though its lips did not move, "Welcome, traveller, to the shadows of sanctuary. Abandon your sense of self, surrender your desires, and reject your god, Puck. Do this, and to you a life of eternal peace is yours. If not given of your own accord, this place will take your soul, and you will suffer an endless cycle of death, rebirth, and torture." The figure then slowly removed its heavy hood to reveal to Lut a face which mirrored his own, though its eyes, sunkendeep in its head and fitted with ocular vices, gleamed with an intense duplicity.

Returning to stalk the shadows of the temple, Lut's doppelganger faded into the distance of the passageway, leaving behind him a trail of benzoin-tainted air mingled with tones of chicoi. With a second sight, Lut's strange double spoke softly to the walls around him, "He is yours, Centralis. Take him and take his god. Take their souls and crush their spirits. Let them become toilers of the forgotten sea as albatrosses feed on their cycle of suffering."

As Lut breathed deeply the censer's evaporating aroma, he bellowed after the disappearing figure, "Praise be to Puck, the Jester King! Blessed is buffoonery and lunacy delight. Eat, drink, laugh, and fight!" Devout in his belief, filled with a burning faith in Puck, the shaman then turned and climbed the marble steps of a nearby staircase.

As he climbed the stairs, so too he descended, colours melted and the air become thick with the smell of gunpowder, while around him a noise of screaming baboons filled the air. Becoming almost hypnotic, screams became mixed with barks of delight, music and merriment. The sounds around Lut reached a crescendo as the polished steps beneath his feet morphed into the mosaiced courtyard of Pucks's celestial dwelling. The dark, stone walls of the staircase gave way to images of jubilant, mask-wearing goblin revellers, cavorting and jostling with wild abandon as they breathed the excitement of Puck's crazed masquerade ball

For all the dancing, music, fireworks and more, forming the centrepiece of Puck's ball, surrounded by guffawing goblin guests, was a huge, multi-tiered banqueting table which groaned under the weight of food and drink placed upon it. Trays of mixed pickles garnished with pepper and saffron, bowls of cabbage chowder and plates of haddock in creamed mushrooms sat next to heaped piles of dates, fermented figs, and glazed apples, while tobacco coated roasted meats were crammed next to huge platters of cakes and rich, alcohol-based puddings. As much food as the straining table held, though, places were prioritised for enormous troughs of psilocybin enriched punches, bottles of chicoi-laced wines, and huge ceramic jugs of heady mead, all of which never seemed to run dry as guests lost themselves to intoxicated merrymaking.



"Beware the Shadows and their corrupt genesis. Consumers of souls and usurpers of hope, Centralis' Shadows are the spawn of darkness. Instead, know of the Others, know them by their many names, the Maidens of Light, the World of Light, the First Creation, the Greater Beings..."



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A Damned Troll Barge powers through the waves.



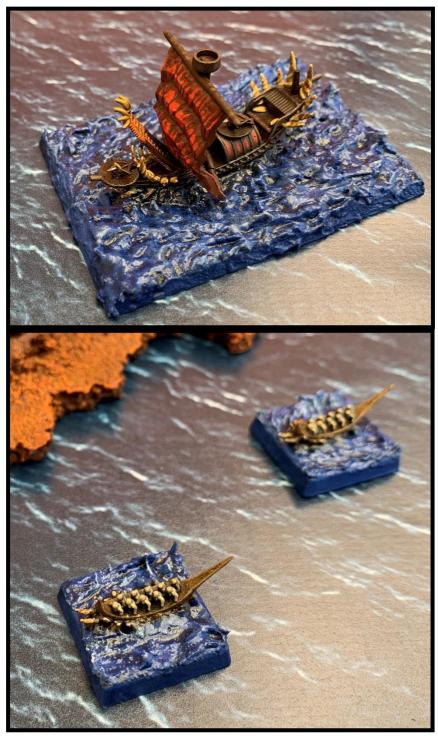
Carrying hulking trolls, Damned Troll Barges are hard-hitting units.



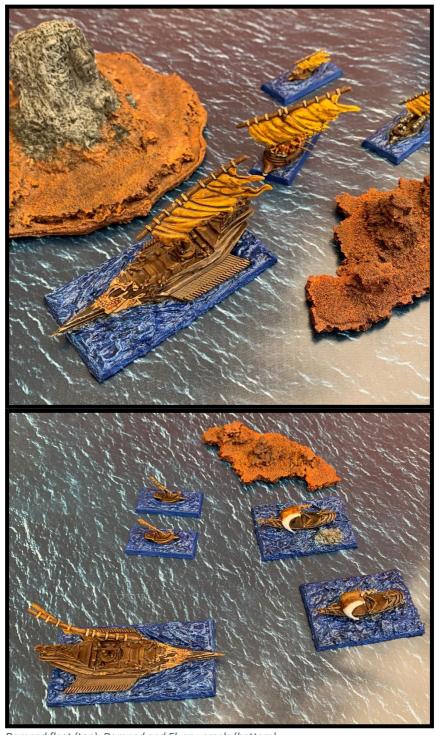
The might of the Dwarfs: Submarine (top) and Ornithopter (bottom) units.



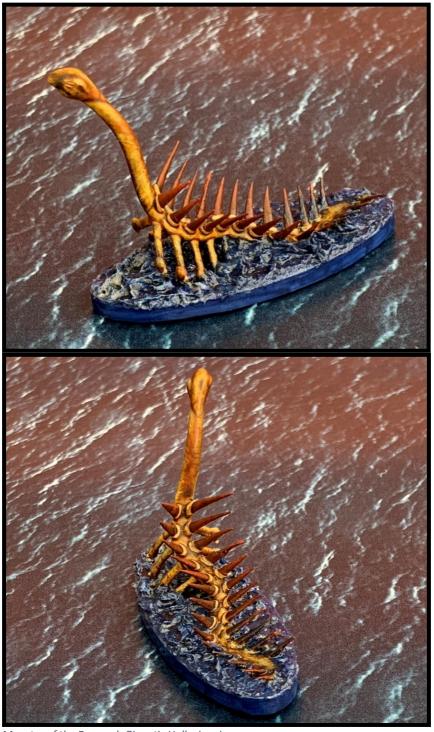
Naval power of the Elves: Tiamat (top) and Leviathan (bottom) units.



The Fiends: Khainag (top) and War Canoe (bottom) units.



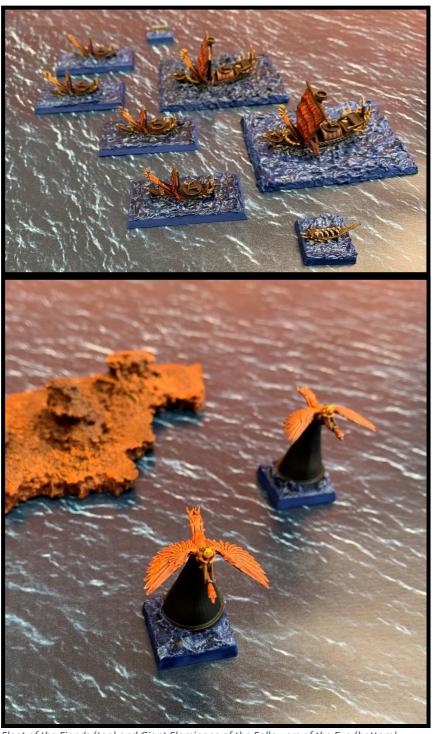
Damned fleet (top), Damned and Elven vessels (bottom).



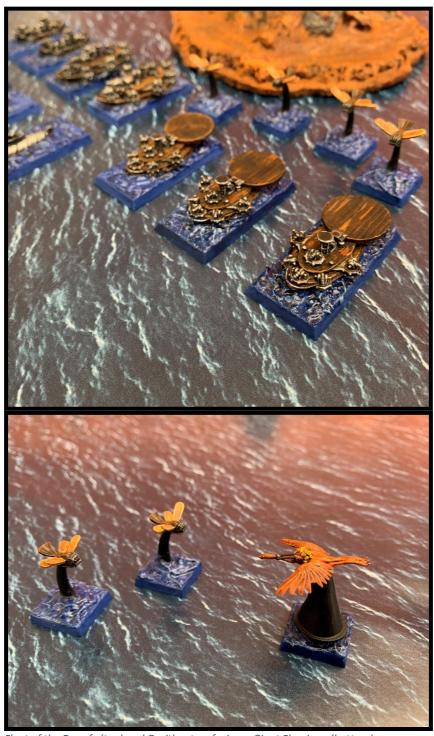
Monster of the Damned: Gigantic Hallucigenia.



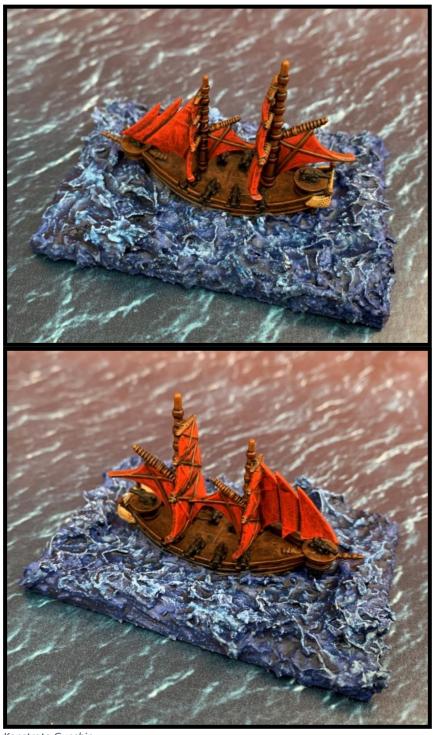
Dwarfs: Ornithopter Carrier (top) and Ornithopter Carrier with Ornithopter (bottom).



Fleet of the Fiends (top) and Giant Flamingos of the Followers of the Eye (bottom).



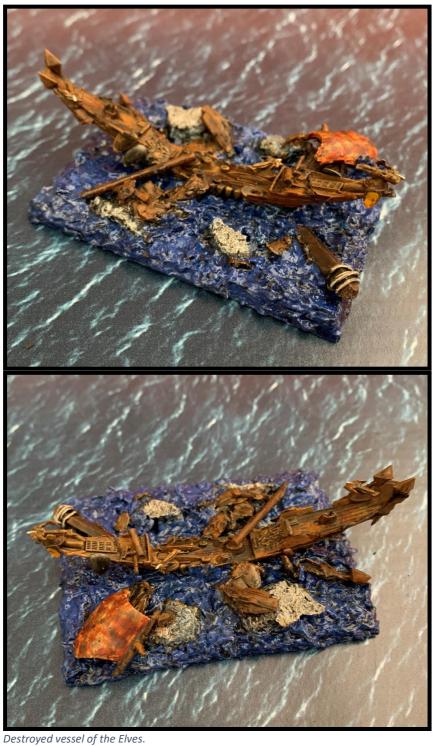
Fleet of the Dwarfs (top) and Ornithopters facing a Giant Flamingo (bottom).

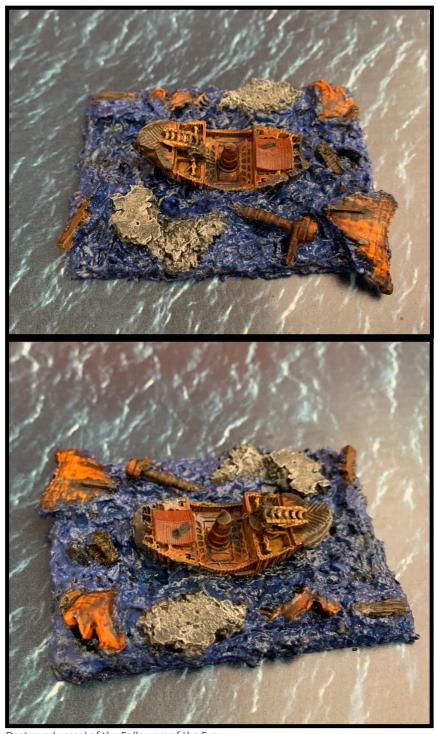


Konstrato Gunship.



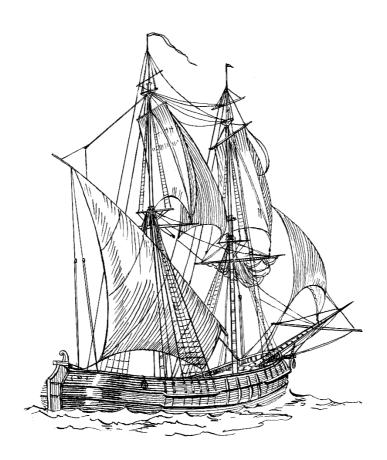
Goblins: Swimming Giant (top) and Goblin Warship (bottom).





Destroyed vessel of the Followers of the Eye.

"The seas of this cursed Orb are like the restless gods who taunts us, fickle and capricious, murderous and chiding..."



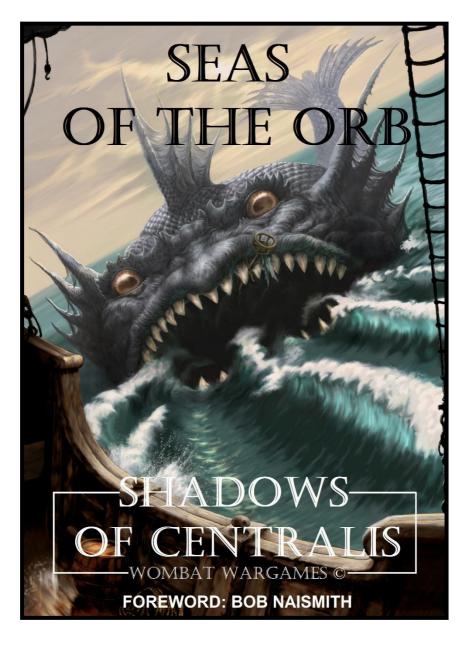
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SEABURY QUINN

In addition to his career as a successful lawyer (of which he specialised in mortuary jurisprudence), as well as respected journalist, Seabury Quinn was a prolific writer of horror and weird fiction. Such was his creative zeal, in addition to his tales appearing in pulp publications such as 'Golden Fleece', 'Short Stories' and 'Detective Story Magazine', among others, Quinn was the most featured writer of the classic 'Weird Tales', being a firm favourite of the magazine's editor Farnsworth Wright. Beginning with the short story 'The Horror on the Links', spanning a twenty six year period, it was through the pages of 'Weird Tales' that Quinn's most popular character, the occult detective Professor Jules de Grandin, featured.

A 'New Year child', born in Washington D.C. on January 1, 1889, Seabury Grandin Quinn, a studious and well-read individual with eclectic tastes in literature, graduated from the law school of the National University in 1910, he was then admitted to the District of Columbia Bar.

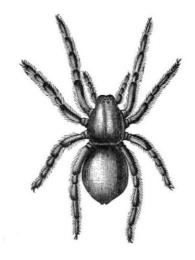
With conflict in Europe interrupting his career, as he looked to support the Allied cause, during World War I, Quinn served in the U.S. Army. Following this time, he became editor of a group of trade papers in New York, he also taught medical jurisprudence, wrote technical papers, and began penning tales for various pulp magazines of the day. A keen researcher, Quinn's fictional pieces often centred around historical fact, serving to provide richly textured tales.

His first published work was The Law of the Movies, which appeared in the December 1917 issue of The Motion Picture Magazine. Following the success of The Law of the Movies, another of Quinn's early published stories was Demons of the Night, which first appeared

in the March 19, 1918 issue of Detective Story Magazine. Quickly gaining a writing momentum, among other his other works, Quinn's short story Was She Mad? was published in the March 25, 1918 issue of Detective Story Magazine. Produced by the New York publisher Street & Smith, initially edited by Harold Hersey, The Thrill Book was a pulp magazine which saw issues released over the course of 1919, before the publication folded. One of the writers whose work featured in The Thrill Book was Seabury Quinn; his short story The Stone Image was published in the May 1, 1919 issue of the short-lived magazine. Quinn was establishing a growing fanbase.

"Beneath a brow as shallow as an ape's, and as sloping as a mansard roof, the creature's agate eyes stared forth from above its bloated cheeks with a look of unutterable hate and fury. To right and left of its knoblike nose great tusks of shining ivory protruded from the painted lips, which writhed and twisted in a snarl of rage, and the talon hands it brandished above its head were armed with claws like those of some giant vulture. It was like a vision from a nightmare, a fiend from Dante's Inferno and a dijn from some Eastern horror tale rolled into one..." Taken from 'The Stone Image' by Seabury Quinn.

Going on to become the most prolific writer to be featured within the pages of Weird Tales magazine, even surpassing pulp heavyweights such as H.P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard and Clark Ashton Smith, Quinn's debut appearance in the classic pulp publication came via the magazine's October 1923 issue; his short story The Phantom Farm House, as well as the first in his Weird Crimes articles, featured.

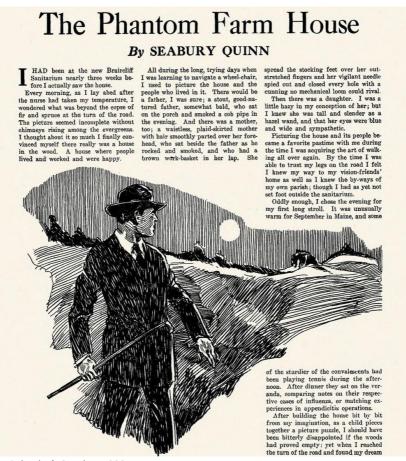


Seabury Quinn's 'The Phantom Farm House' tells the story of Mr. Weatherby, a clergyman convalescing at Briarcliff Sanitarium, and his strange encounters with a mysterious family whose farmhouse home rests in nearby woods.

Published in the October 1923 issue of 'Weird Tales', the subject of Quinn's first 'Weird Crimes' articles was Gilles de Laval, Sire de Retz, Marshal of France, chamberlain to the French king and cousin to the Duke of Brittany, otherwise known as Bluebeard; the killer of a score of innocent children.

"A Vivid series of Fact Articles," Weird Tales.

Describing the cases of several notorious historical crimes, featuring within the issues of 'Weird Tales', Quinn's 'Weird Crimes' series included (1.) 'Bluebeard', (2.) 'The Graverobbers', (3.) 'The Magic Mirror Murders', (4.) 'Swiatek, the Beggar', (5.) 'Mary Blandy', (6.) 'The Werewolf of St. Bonnot', and (7.) 'The Human Hyena'.



'Weird Tales', October 1923.

'Servants of Satan'

Part of a six-part series, entitled 'Servants of Satan', with part 1 appearing in the March 1925 issue of 'Weird Tales', Quinn penned several pieces which detailed tales of suspected witchcraft in Puritan America.

""Most writers, commenting on the Salem delusion," Quinn writes in a letter to the editor, "are inclined to find excuses for it in the superstitious state of the public mind, but I'm inclined to think that if there were any devil in Salem Village, it was the Rev. Mr. Parris. Queer thing about that Salem business: an ancestor of mine, one John Alden - not the character in Longfellow's poem – was arrested in that same time and accused of being in league with the devil, but emulated the example of three Tyrian brethren and made his escape."

Mr. Quinn, in his "Servants of Satan" series, has been fair to all parties to that dark business – even to the Rev. Mr. Parris." Taken from 'Weird Tales', February 1925.

"Let us push back the hands of the clock two and a half centuries: Salem Village, small, but even now prosperous, clings to the rocky promontory jutting Europeward into the Atlantic Ocean, a few substantial houses of clapboard, fewer mansions of brick, brought as ballast in ships from England, and a foursquare, white-doored church."

Taken from 'Servants of Satan #1. The Salem Horror' by Seabury Quinn. This short story first appeared in the March 1925 issue of 'Weird Tales'.

"The bleak March wind rushed pell-mell through the narrow, unpaved roadways of Salem Village. It tore at the tradesmen's signboards with a bellow, it rapped with frozen fingers at the dwellings' tight-barred shutters, then fled with a whoop of maniacal laughter past Salem Village Church to scream and howl round the Putnam homestead like a chained wolf straining at his leash."

Taken from 'Servants of Satan #2. Giles and Martha Corey' by Seabury Quinn. This short story first appeared in the April 1925 issue of 'Weird Tales'.

"The devil was loose. Everywhere he added to the number of his servants: soon the entire settlement would lie beneath his dreadful domination."

Taken from 'Servants of Satan #3. Rebecca Nurse, Saint of Salem' by Seabury Quinn. This short story first appeared in the May 1925 issue of 'Weird Tales'.



Servants of Satan'

"Absolute power was lodged in the hands of this group of hysterical girls by the credulous public officials. No juvenile despot of antiquity – not even the Queen in Alice in Wonderland, with her customary order, "Off with her head!" – ever exercised greater authority over the lives and liberties of a community than this company of young women, the oldest of whom was twenty years of age."

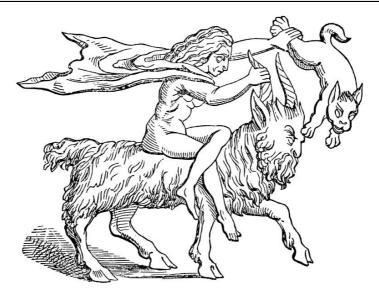
Taken from 'Servants of Satan #4. George Burroughs, Martyr' by Seabury Quinn. This short story was first published in the June 1925 issue of 'Weird Tales'.

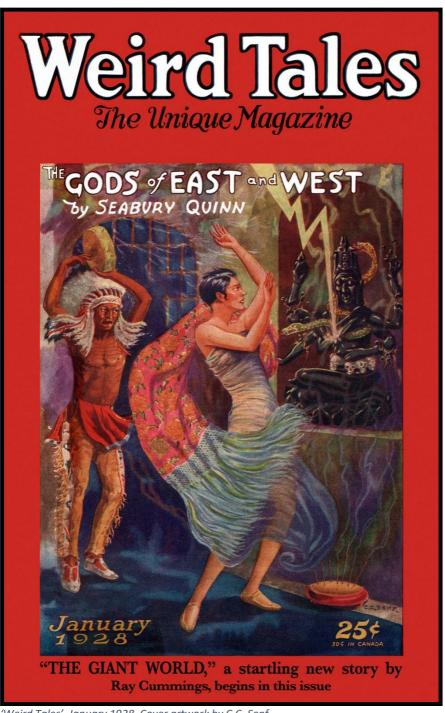
"And once a person stood accused by these pitiless little wretches, his doom was sealed."

Taken from 'Servants of Satan #5. The End of the Horror' by Seabury Quinn. This short story was first published in the July 1925 issue of 'Weird Tales'.

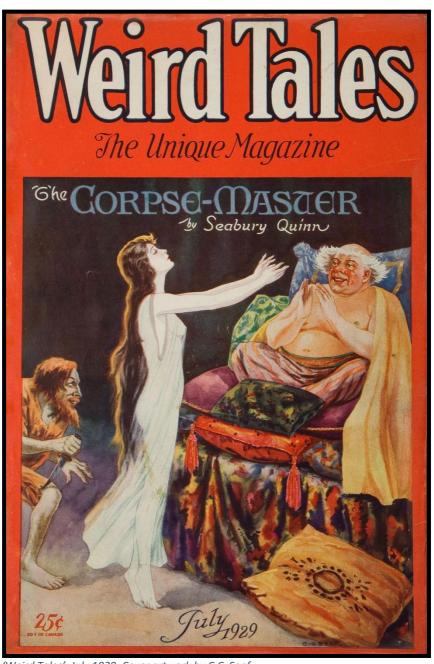
"By the light of the torches fastened in wall-links he showed her the ladder on which stubborn persons were bound while the thumbscrews were fastened to their hands or the boots fitted to their legs, the rack by which a suspect's limbs were stretched until they dislocated at the hip and shoulder, a table with an oblong opening in its top through which a spiked roller rose to rasp the flesh from the prisoner's bones as horseradish is grated from the root."

Taken from 'Servants of Satan #6 Maria Schweidler' by Seabury Quinn. This short story was first published in the August 1925 issue of 'Weird Tales'.





'Weird Tales', January 1928. Cover artwork by C.C. Senf.

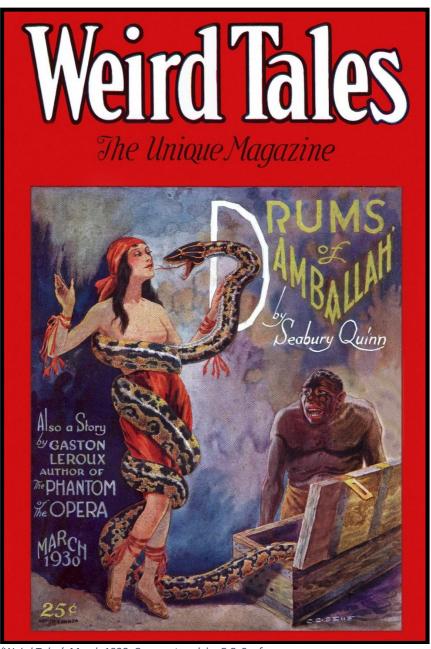


'Weird Tales', July 1929. Cover artwork by C.C. Senf.



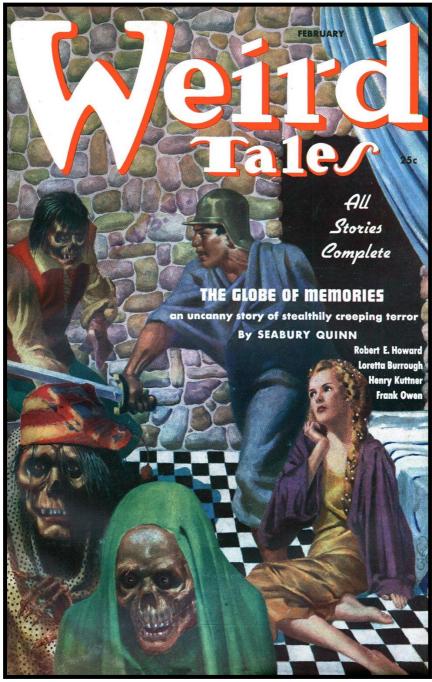


'Weird Tales', January 1930. Cover artwork by C.C. Senf.



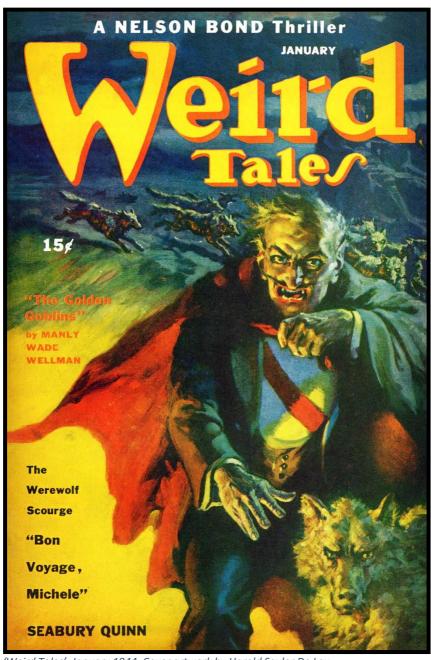
'Weird Tales', March 1930. Cover artwork by C.C. Senf.





'Weird Tales', February 1937. Cover artwork by Virgil Finlay.





'Weird Tales', January 1944. Cover artwork by Harold Saylor De Lay.

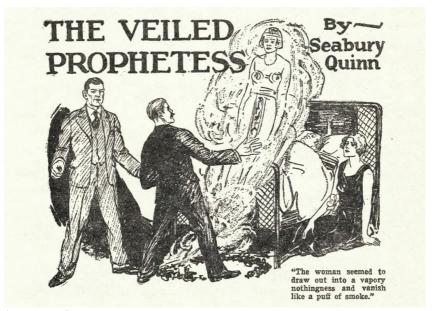


'Jules de Grandin' series

"De Grandin fidgeted nervously, fussing with the lock of his gun, ejecting and reinserting cartridges, playing a devil's tattoo on the barrel with his long, tapering fingers."

Taken from 'The Horror on the Links' by Seabury Quinn. This short story first appeared in the October 1925 issue of 'Weird Tales'.

Utilising his own middle name as part of the creative process, occult detective Professor Jules de Grandin became Quinn's most popular character. Assisted by Dr. Trowbridge, across the lands of New Jersey, Jules de Grandin, once of the French Sûreté, an expert in anatomy and criminology, and keen martial artist, investigated a myriad of mysteries; in total, running from 1925 – 1951, ninety three such short stories were published via Weird Tales magazine. The first of these tales, The Horror on the Links, appeared in the October 1925 issue of Weird Tales. The magazine's editor at the time, Farnsworth Wright, held great appreciation for the work of Seabury Quinn, and for his Jules de Grandin character especially. Indeed, Wright was one of the key motivators for Quinn to develop Jules de Grandin as a centre character in a series of stories.



'Weird Tales', May 1927.

With Quinn penning a special introduction, as well as making some slight revisions, 'The Phantom Fighter' is a collection of ten short stories from Quinn's 'Jules de Grandin' series, published by Mycroft & Moran, an imprint of Arkham House, in 1966.

Writers, editors, publishers, artists, and more, Quinn held many friendships with those in the pulp world. One such friend, indeed a close acquaintance, was the wonderful H.P. Lovecraft. Upon his untimely death in 1937, aged just forty six years old, in a letter to Weird Tales (June 1937 issue), Quinn wrote, "Lovecraft, whom I had the pleasure of knowing personally, was both a scholar and a gentleman, and his writings disclosed both his scholarship and his gentility, as well as a genius which has not been observable since the death of Poe and Hawthorne. We who knew him personally shall miss his quiet humour and always-interesting conversation; thousands who had never met the man will join us in deploring the loss of his contributions to a field of literature which he had made peculiarly his own. God rest his soul."

The publishing house's first illustrated book, and Quinn's first standalone novel, Roads, was published by Arkham House in 1948. Illustrated by classic pulp artist Virgil Finlay, comprising three parts (The Road to Bethlehem, The Road to Calvary, and The Long, Long Road), Roads is a yuletide tale which details the beginning of the legendary Santa Claus.

In addition to his pulp writings, linking to his legal work, Quinn saw the publication of the books A Syllabus of Mortuary Jurisprudence and An Encyclopedic Law Glossary For Funeral Directors and Embalmers, which both featured his contributions. He also edited the trade journal for the American Undertakers' Association, Casket and Sunnyside.

Though in his seventies, still active in mind and body, continuing to write, Quinn's creative momentum was abruptly interrupted as he suffered a stroke in 1964; this greatly weakened him, impacting his mobility and vision. Over the following years, the writer's health continued to decline, resulting in him suffering another stroke in 1969; aged eighty years old, Seabury Quinn died on Christmas Eve of that year.

Talking John Blanche: Dan Abnett

Recently released, available worldwide via Amazon, the official and authorised biography of John Blanche, Blanche: The Rise of Grimdark, is out now. Though the contributions of many of John's friends and colleagues feature in this book, it was not possible to include everyone. With the pages of Shadows of Centralis Monthly Magazine serving as a platform for such pieces, kindly sparing us some of his time, the Writer of Wrongs himself, Dan Abnett spoke to us about his appreciation for John Blanche.

Dan Abnett: I was born and raised near Rochester in Kent, and later lived variously in Oxford, London and Derbyshire before returning to Kent. I now live in Maidstone, not far from my point of origin. I always had a fevered imagination, and grew up reading... and I mean reading everything, but that included fantasy and SF, for which I developed a great enthusiasm. As a kid, I liked to write and draw, and eventually started writing and drawing my own comics, as it was a way of combining my two favourite pastimes. Eventually, and indirectly, by way of a degree in English, I ended up working in comics, at Marvel UK in the late-1980's. I worked editorially, but we all did freelance gigs, and my thing was writing, so I did a lot of stories for things like Thundercats, Doctor Who, The Real Ghostbusters and so on. I guess you could say I learned my trade doing that. After a few years, I went freelance, and I've been writing fulltime ever since. In the comic industry, I've worked for Marvel, DC, 2000 AD... well, pretty much everyone. I suppose you might say my biggest 'hit' was Guardians of the Galaxy for Marvel, which I gently re-invented, and which led to the movie version.

I'm not sure of the point in time exactly, but John Blanche's work had a profound effect when I saw it. Along with comics, and reading and drawing, my other big hobby when I was a kid and a teenager

was role playing games, mainly D&D, Runequest, Traveller and Call of Cthulhu. Naturally, this brought me in contact with the early version of Games Workshop, which was the only way of getting hold of those kind of games over here, and also the early incarnation of White Dwarf, when it was a more general RPG magazine. I probably saw John's work first there. It was so unique, exotic and strange... a cliché to say gothic or 'grim'. It was macabre and beautiful, and I always associated it with the tone, mood and flavour of Games Workshop, that particularly British and delirious vision that marked GW's stuff out from any of the imported RPGs (though I hasten to add that I think John's work is much more than just his GW stuff, epic though that is). That "view" and style that John was so influential in establishing was to me one of the two touchstones of British visual imagination - that Grimdark Warhammer vision, and 2000AD, both of which are like nothing the US or anywhere else could conceive. Both massively influential, and it's been my privilege to be part of both legacies. They are like twin strands of imaginative DNA.

Dan Abnett's comic book portfolio includes Marvel Comics, 2000AD, DC Comics, Dark Horse Comics, and more. Further to this, he worked on many Warhammer and Warhammer 40,000 comic book pieces, as well as short story features, before penning a plethora of Black Library novels.

I'd been a comic writer, freelance, for over a decade, working mainly for the US (Marvel and DC), when GW/Black Library approached me. It was when BL was just starting out, and they were looking for comic writers. I'd recently done some Conan stories for Marvel, so someone suggested me. The 'audition' really was less about an ability to write (we were all professionals with good CVs), and more about an ability to 'get the mood right'. I wasn't deeply familiar with 40K or Warhammer, because both had arrived later for me, when university was eclipsing my RPG hobby. But I knew the tone, immediately, intuitively, because of John's work, and my years of reading early White Dwarf. So I was hired. You might say, without exaggeration, that it was my love of John's work, and my effort to try and channel that vibe in words, that began my association with BL. And here we are, nearly thirty years and sixty novels later. Originally, BL was looking for comic writers (which is why I'd been

approached), but they were planning on prose fiction too. I'd always wanted to write prose, a novel or two, but I'd never had the time to try because of my comic writing work. BL gave me the chance to write short fiction, and then novels. It was an amazing opportunity. I didn't stop writing comics (I still haven't), but now I had a second 'hat' to wear. I've tried my best over the years to bring that vibe, that tone, to the prose... and help explore and develop the 40K universe with ideas and concepts. I hope I've made a decent contribution, but it was built on the vision that already existed.

Created by Dan Abnett and David Millgate, first appearing in a 1995 Winter special issue, Sinister Dexter is a longstanding feature of the 2000AD comic book. Between 1995 – 2013, the created characters of 'Finny' Sinister and 'Ray' Dexter, along with a swathe of associates and villains, entertained readers in a variety of law-criminal escapades in the city of Downlode.

It was during my initial association with Games Workshop that I first met John Blanche. I've only met John a few times, never as often as I'd have liked. But every time we've met we've had a great, inspiring chat (for me, anyway!). We had a project together planned at one point, but the moment was never right. It's always been a pleasure to talk with him and throw ideas around. I think it's really hard to describe why he's so good. It's too easy to use the cliched terms like 'gothic and 'grimdark'. They're not wrong, and they sum it up quickly, but his images are so much more than that. I often think they are less simply 'pictures', as other, very talented artists might produce, and more like visual documents, that contain notions and unfathomable meanings, like esoteric ideas which happen to be presented in visual form.

Dan Abnett's work for Marvel Comics includes Doctor Who, Guardians of the Galaxy, The Real Ghostbusters, and much more.

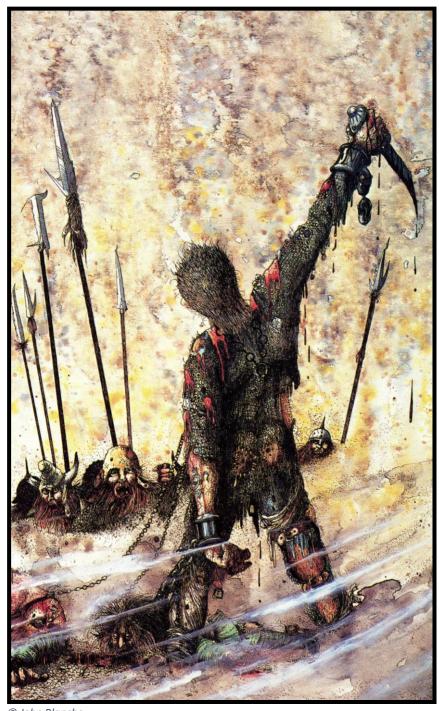
I have so many favourite John Blanche pieces. Too many. I often dip into his work, either classic older work or brilliant new things like Voodoo Forest, to 'recharge' my sense of that grimdark wonder. I've recently finished The End And The Death, a huge novel (so big it's had to be published in three volumes) that marks the end of the Horus Heresy novel sequence we started almost twenty years ago. I was looking at 40K art in general and his work in particular almost

every day during the writing period, just to keep my eye on the ball so I could maintain that gothic tone that 40K and the Heresy required. I guess that his classic image of the Golden Throne is the one I came back to most. I wanted the prose to have that flavour. It was never going to, because John is John, and prose is prose, but I gave it my best shot.

John is both fantasy and science fiction, often simultaneously. I think his work generally defies both genre labels, even when he is specifically working for a universe that has a clear 'label'. I also think John is fundamentally influential, both within the obvious Warhammer hobby and beyond. There are some very famous genre artists around, but few have made the impression on others. You can trace the legacy of his work in all sorts of places. Some artists might be imitators or be paying homage, but many have simply seen his uninhibited creative process and tried to follow suit in their own way.

Unless John's illustrated a particular canonical moment (such as the Imperial Throne Room, mentioned earlier), where the reference is direct, I don't write about what he's drawn. I write about the 40K Universe, or the Warhammer World, in the spirit and tone of his work. It's not a literal prose rendition of an image. It's trying to follow a similar path, using the same flavours, but entirely different tools. In terms of 40K and Warhammer Fantasy, John is, I suppose, a map-maker, showing us the way, and what things might look like en route and when we get there. He's a source of inspiration, not to copy what he's done or go where he's gone, but learn, from his example, to push our own imaginations to our own strange places.





© John Blanche.

CHAPTER 1 OF BLANCHE: THE RISE OF GRIMDARK

Located in the South West of England, the neighbouring counties of Cornwall and Devon hold longstanding associations with each other. Named after the Dumnonii tribe, comprising Cornwall, Devon, and parts of Somerset and Dorset, Dumnonia was a kingdom of the Ancient Britons which existed prior to the arrival of the Emperor Claudius' Romans in AD 43. Though Dumnonia was an area of Britain least impacted by the expansion of the Roman Empire, the lands were not left untouched. Going on to become the new capital of Dumnonia, the Roman fortress of Isca Dumnoniorum (modern-day Exeter, Devon) was established in around AD 55; serving as a base for some five thousand soldiers of the Second Augustan Legion for the next twenty years.

Unable to fully conquer Britain, following the frustrated efforts of numerous Roman Emperors, by the time of the early-400's, Roman military occupation within Britain was on the decline. Romans were ultimately replaced by the appearance of Saxons and Anglo-Saxons. Having continued to exist during the Roman-Britain period, over time, Dumnonia fractured and faded away.

Named after St Austol, growing from a small village, St Austell is one of Cornwall's largest towns. Moving into more recent times, having prospered from the nearby mining of tin, followed by clay, by the time of the 18th century St Austell had expanded considerably. The china clay industry became a key component of the town's financial structure. A consequence of china clay quarries, numerous chalkwhite coloured spoil heaps, combining with the natural landscape, resulted in the surrounding area playing host to what are often referred to as the 'Cornish Alps'. Meanwhile, established by Walter Hicks, St Austell became the home of the St Austell Brewery (originally called Walter Hicks & Co: brewers and wine merchants) in 1851.

Over the years since its founding, the St Austell Brewery company flourished under the direction of Walter Hicks' daughter, Hester. Meanwhile, the china clay trade, championed by English Quaker minister, pharmacist and technological pioneer, William Cookworthy, went from strength to strength. Moving forward, further strengthening the local economy, St Austell, with its nearby beaches

and numerous sightseer attractions, such as the Eden Project, Tregrehan Garden, and the Lost Gardens of Heligan, benefitted from popular tourism.

Pearl May Savage was originally from Paignton, historically a small fishing and farming village of Devon. Due to its location, growing affluence, and charming seaside location on the coast of Tor Bay, Paignton became part of what is often referred to as the 'English Riviera'. It was during her early childhood that Pearl and her parents relocated to the neighbouring county of Cornwall. Having had Pearl out of wedlock, unable to marry in a Church of England, the reason for the one hundred-mile family move linked to Pearl's parents Florence Annie Veitch and Thomas Savage choosing instead to marry at a small and obscure Methodist chapel in Grampound, Cornwall. The relocation also worked well as it suited the demands of Thomas' Navy career.

Originally from Edmonton, London, having fled to sea following a mysterious accident involving a baby and a fire, Thomas had joined the Navy aged fifteen. Meanwhile, also holding a nautical link, of sorts, Pearl's maternal grandmother had been a cook in the service of James Veitch, whose father, James R Veitch, was an admiral, once stationed at Greenwich, London.

So, Pearl, followed in time by the arrival of her younger sister Patricia, grew up in the rural, coastal landscape of Cornwall, a part of the South West Peninsula which holds steep cliffs and beautiful beaches, sands lapped by waters from the Atlantic Ocean and English Channel, respectively, while bordering Devon, its old ancestral ally.

It was her father that Pearl felt inspired to follow with regards to her career. However, instead of the Navy, Pearl looked to the Army. Formed in 1938, typically referred to as the ATS, the Auxiliary Territorial Service was the female arm of the British Army; later merging with the Women's Royal Army Corps. Notably, future Queen Elizabeth II, then Princess Elizabeth, served in the ATS. Following a time working as a popular, in-demand seamstress, operating around Cornwall's St Austell area, Pearl joined the ATS around 1943. Enjoying the physical and mental challenges placed upon her, Pearl also appreciated the opportunities for travel which her time with the ATS

afforded her. It was during this time, towards the end of World War II, while stationed in Germany, that Pearl met her future husband, Ivor (Stan) Blanche.

Though Ivor Blanche was born in Chesterfield, he grew up in Cromford, Derbyshire, a small village some twenty miles or so to the north of Derby, a place noted for its role in the historic Industrial Revolution, particularly through the works of inventor Richard Arkwright. Growing up with his parents Horace and Elizabeth, along with his older brother Guy, as soon as Ivor could, he joined the Army. While Pearl had been inspired to take up military service through observing her father's career, Ivor was keen to emulate his brother Guy; a little older than Ivor, Guy had enlisted in the Army aged eighteen, going on to becoming a military policeman.



Pearl Savage, 1943. © from the personal collection of John Blanche.

Initially courting in Germany, Pearl and Ivor continued their relationship following Pearl's demobbing and subsequent return to Cornwall, which was followed in due course by Ivor's departure from the military. Not all parties were supportive of the relationship between Pearl and Ivor, though. Having previously lined up her choice of bride for her son, Ivor's mother condemned his relationship with Pearl, later refusing to attend the couple's wedding, while also

banning other members of the family from attending. Unperturbed by the position of Ivor's mother, with St Austell their home, Pearl and Ivor were married at St Austell's Holy Trinity Church in 1947, with Pearl's friends serving as witnesses to the union.

The year following their wedding, on October 26, 1948, Pearl and Ivor had a son, whom they christened Laurence John Blanche. Though christened with the first name of Laurence (a name favoured by his mother), through his father's insistence, Laurence was always referred to as John (after his paternal grandfather, Horace John Blanche). With the conclusion of World War II still a recent memory, with the Allies achieving victory over the Axis powers in 1945, rationing, first introduced into Britain in 1940, continued until 1954. So, John's early years combined austere living restrictions with idyllic surroundings.

From the time of his birth through to the age of four years old, John lived with his parents in Cornwall, in a modest semi-detached Victorian house on Ranleigh Road in Mount Charles, St Austell. Like many houses at the time, John's home was one without electricity or indoor bathroom, as he recalled, "I grew up in a Victorian semi-detached town house. There was no electricity at all, no bathroom; I remember going up to bed with a candle, while the toilet was outside. Nobody noticed these things, it was normal, everyone lived like this." Another aspect of his childhood, which John dismissed as nothing unusual of the time, was the corporal punishment administered by his father. Though, taking after his mother, John was a quiet child, extremely reserved, and one to steer away from misbehaving, his father struck him daily, as John remembered,

"I would just be sitting there, then my father would come along and hit me around the back of the head. I had never done anything wrong but he would say, "That's for when you do misbehave." At the time, I just accepted this and got on with things, but now, looking back, I just think how *cruel* he was, to hit a child for no reason. You just don't do that."

"Curiosity and timidity fought a long battle in his heart."

Taken from 'New Arabian Nights' by Robert Louis Stevenson.

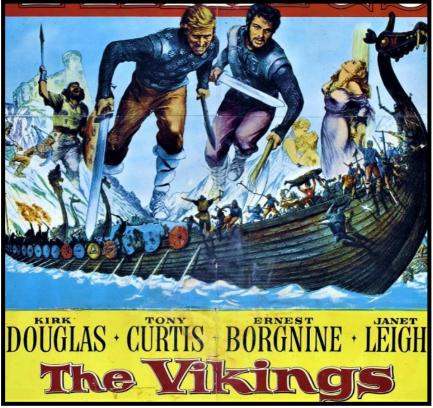
Though John's father typically kept any personal struggles to himself; a possible explanation for the more difficult aspects of his character might be found in his traumatic experiences of World War II. Having followed in the footsteps of his older brother Guy, John's father had joined the Army six months ahead of his eighteenth birthday, and he soon experienced the full horrors of war firsthand. In later years, John's father did expand a little on some of his wartime experiences, as John recalled,

"I do have a great respect for the other side of my father. He served in World War II and was wounded twice. He served in the Army as part of the Cameronians, the Scottish Rifles; he was part of the Normandy landings, he was also part of Operation Market Garden in Holland.

As my father was a fast runner, he'd often be tasked with taking messages. On one occasion, in France, the Captain of the regiment told my father to take a message to H.Q. He jumped out of the bunker and at that very same time a mortar shell hit the bunker, killing every friend he'd got instantly. He was wounded as shrapnel flew into his knee. So, he was shipped back to the U.K., to Glasgow, given a quick fix, then six weeks later he was in Holland.

During his time in Holland, there was an occasion when my father became separated from the rest of his platoon, while pinned down by Tiger tanks crewed by these young S.S. soldiers dressed in their jet-black uniforms with skull and crossbones insignia. I think that whole experience sent him a bit loopy. So, there were some terrifying times which he endured.

He was also at Belsen, the liberation of Belsen, I don't think that did him any good, seeing the horrors there, all the piles of bodies, the prisoners starved, it was just awful. Then, later on, I think having shot enemy soldiers played on his mind. I think all of these things prompted a lot of his anger towards the world. Plus, back then, there was no support for those who'd suffered mentally during the war, you had to just get on with it."



Promotional material for The Vikings, 1958. Production companies: Brynaprod, Curtleigh Productions. Distributor: United Artists.

"As I looked there came, I thought a change - he seemed to swell - his face became suddenly black and the features seemed to melt and alter..."

Taken from 'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde' by Robert Louis Stevenson.

Prompting further disapproval from his father, and to a lesser extent his mother, John held no interest in sports or any sort of physical activities, instead preferring to spend his time in his own company, immersed in a world of imagination and creativity. Having been interested in drawing almost since he could hold a pencil, John was a prolifically creative child, knowing from a very early age that he wanted to become an artist. Reflecting back to these early years, John explained,

"I was *always* drawing. I never stopped. My first memories of drawing are of when I was three years old. I just drew what I

knew about, like things from films. My mother and babysitter used to take me to the local cinema, I particularly remember The Vikings, staring Kirk Douglas. So, a lot of my drawings seemed to comprise of Vikings fighting Romans, with the odd dinosaur thrown in. Because everyone was poor in those days, I didn't have any proper paper to draw on, instead I used spare rolls of wallpaper, leftovers from my parents' decorating. For hours I would do these huge panoramas with thousands of Vikings fighting, looking like the Bayeux Tapestry. That's how I started, really. I really liked the Bayeux Tapestry, I still do. I would do modern takes on it, done in a primitive style, predating comic books. Strangely enough, I've never been a comic book fan.

I remember, I must have been three or four years old, someone asked me what I wanted to be and I immediately said, "an artist." I had a vision in my head, a very clear vision, of a chap in a smock and a black beret, standing next to an easel. I have no idea where I got that image from, there were no T.V.'s in those days, but that picture was in my head. I just *knew* what I wanted to be. Even before I began school, all I ever did was draw, and it's remained the only thing for me."

"This grove, that was now so peaceful, must then have rung with cries, I thought; and even with the thought I could believe I heard it ringing still."

Taken from 'Treasure Island' by Robert Louis Stevenson.

With no siblings, close friends, or even a childhood pet for company, John continued to fill his hours quietly drawing, creating worlds, while his mother busied herself around the house, and the radio provided a comforting backdrop, with shows such as Hancock's Half Hour. A point to note with regards to pets is that John's father later brought home a puppy, claiming it was a present for his son, but actually took the animal as his own, something which he always made clear, as John recalled,

"I never had any pets. My grandfather in Cornwall kept ducks, that's about the closest I got. One time, my father brought home a puppy, "Here's a present for you," but is was never mine. My father made it clear that the dog was his, so it was for the rest of its life. It was a real bruiser of a dog, really vicious, though not with me, but it didn't like other dogs, or many people. I think that put me off dogs, prompting me to see them as dangerous and smelly. I've always preferred cats."

With a prolific imagination, fashioning unique versions of his own Bayeux Tapestry, John spent hours of each day quietly drawing, adorning his rolls of leftover wallpaper with storytelling details of history and fantasy fuelled plots. Though quiet and unassuming, one to steer away from trouble or conflict, John still drew the ire of his father, as he remembered,

"I was never naughty, not once. I was always quiet, very reserved, very shy, but my father *still* hit me every day. He was always a threatening character during my childhood, always hitting me, while my mother sat in a corner, knitting. She couldn't speak up against him, that's not how things were back then. Plus, I didn't know any different, so it didn't really matter. I don't know if I really considered it at the time, but I think that drawing held an aspect of escapism for me, at least on a subconscious level.

Everything terrified me as a kid. I could never ask questions. Children should be "seen and not heard," that's how it was. Then, everything I didn't understand scared me, there were so many things. Even things like the Black Rocks, the crags near to my father's parents' home in Cromford, they would scare me. Everything was so unknown to me and nobody explained anything."

"He was thinking what a long and wide thing time is, to have so many happenings in it."

Taken from 'Soonchild' by Russell Hoban.



The Savage family (left – right): Patrica, Thomas, Annie, Pearl, 1939. © from the personal collection of John Blanche.



Winner of Matlock's 'Best Baby' competition, John with his mother Pearl, 1949. © from the personal collection of John Blanche.



Ivor Blanche, circa 1962. © from the personal collection of John Blanche.



Horace John Blanche, circa 1946. © from the personal collection of John Blanche.



John Blanche, circa 1957. © from the personal collection of John Blanche.

With an abusive father and, linking to the typical conformity of the time, a mother who accepted the situation around her, observing without comment the physical punishment administered to her son, over the years that followed the relationship between John and his parents became strained. Rather than expressing any opposition, typically internalising more challenging aspects of his life, which at the time he often considered the norm, John remained a placid and quiet boy. Elucidating on this, John reflected,

"I never get depressed, I just get on with things. I've always been that way. I've seen others with depression, and it's just awful, they suffer so much. But I'm just not like that whatsoever. I think I'm, typically, emotionally detached. The only time I feel sadness is when I lose a cat. Since leaving home, I've always had cats, and it's only when one of them passes that I get sad. I do think this stems from childhood. It was just me and my mum with a radio. I hardly ever saw my father, when I did he was horrible. My father was this bombastic character, completely overbearing, just a really difficult extrovert. He didn't judge me for what I was, he judged me for what he thought I should be. I take after my mum, who was more reserved, good with needlework, she had a creative side. My father was never interested in anything I did, he had no interest in my artwork whatsoever. He remained horrible, even when I was older. I think my parents' marriage was of its time, the idea of splitting up just wasn't a consideration back then, you never talked about your problems, you just got on with things."

Aged around four years old, leaving behind the coastal splendour of Cornwall, as his father sought employment, John and his parents moved to Nottingham; an East Midlands city famed for its association with the legendary character of Robin Hood, along with its strong links to the textile industry. Switching from their house on Ranleigh Road, John and his parents spent the next couple of years hopping between houses, renting rooms. Then, when John was around eight years old, with his father working as a waiter, his parents secured a council house on Blenheim Road. Remembering this time, John commented,

"When we moved to Nottingham, we just rented rooms off people until I was about eight, that's when we got a council house. It was real luxury! To have your own house, your own room, and your own garden. And electricity! It was a posh council house, it even had parquet flooring. Can you imagine? You wouldn't get that in council houses these days."

Though his new home benefitted from the conveniences of electricity and indoor plumbing, the housing estate in which John lived was not one in which he felt entirely safe, something which did little to lift him out of his shyness and timidity. With many of the neighbouring children indulging in criminal activity, often including vandalism and general violence, fuelled by boredom and poverty, it wasn't unusual for the estate to draw attention from the police.

Growing up in Nottingham in the 1950's, as Britain slowly regrouped following the conclusion of World War II, John found his surroundings grey and uninspiring. Though still pressed with financial hardship, living in Cornwall, with its sea air, stretching beaches, charming countryside, and sound of plentiful gulls, had provided John with easier access to colour and more immediate escapism of imagination. Now settled in Nottingham, far away from the sights, smells and drama of the sea, John found his new environment to be one of stifling, uninspiring boredom. Meanwhile, visits to his paternal grandparents were often sullen affairs. John reflected,

"Being brought up in Nottingham in the 1950's, everything was just grey. I remember factory sirens going off at seven o'clock in the morning to call people into work. It was a hard, working-class life. Nobody had anything. There were no phones, no computers, no televisions. We just had a radio, that was it. There was no colour to life.

Having moved to Nottingham, we were closer to my father's parents. We'd often visit. My paternal grandmother, Elizabeth, was a formidable lady, she wore fur coats and was angry at everybody. You never disagreed with her, otherwise you'd be hit with an umbrella. I do remember that she kept Pekingese dogs, which, when I was younger, I had thought were cats."

Though his father was a keen football fan and general enthusiast of sports, John was completely unmoved by such pastimes. Rather than respecting the difference of character in his son, still failing to acknowledge his interests in art and general creativity, John's father continually pushed the importance of physical activity. Led by his father, at his parents' insistence, John joined the local Sea Scouts,

"My parents insisted that I join the Sea Scouts. They wanted me to get that kind of naval discipline. This was in the middle of Nottingham, a place perhaps *furthest* away from the sea as possible. We used to go up and down the Trent in these big rowing boats. I hated it. It was all based on sports and physical games, which just wasn't me. I was the guy who sat on his own in the corner and drew pictures, but my parents wanted me to be all sporty. My father, especially, thought that's what boys did, they ran around, did sports and physical activities, they didn't sit around and draw pictures."

When John was thirteen years old, following the death of his paternal grandparents, he and his parents moved again. This time, the family settled in a small village called Attenborough, just outside of Nottingham; John's father had received a little money from his parents' wills, allowing him to secure a mortgage. It was around the time of this move, through books and toy soldiers, that the wonderful world of colour fully entered into John's life, completely transforming it, as he remembered,

"Suddenly, I had access to magazines, encyclopaedias in full colour, and Britain's model soldiers in *colour!* I remember, this stuff just absolutely *fascinated* me. Then, there was plastic, again, in so many colours, all these blues and purples. In was incredibly exciting. To come out of the greyness of the 1950's into all this colourful stuff, it was just fantastic!"

This is a special excerpt from Blanche: The Rise of Grimdark, which is available for purchase worldwide via Amazon.

The official, authorised biography of renowned fantasy and science fiction artist and illustrator, John Blanche.

Contributors include: John Blanche, Lin Blanche, Alan Merrett, Tim Pollard, Rick Priestley, Tuomas Pirinen, Tammy Nicholls, Ian Miller, Adam Wier, Eric Wier, Gregory Wier, Trish Carden, Tim Molloy, Alasdair Farrell, Jes Goodwin, Jon Flindall, Victoria Hayward, Lincoln Barnwell, Julian Barnwell, Tom Evans, Paul Bonner.



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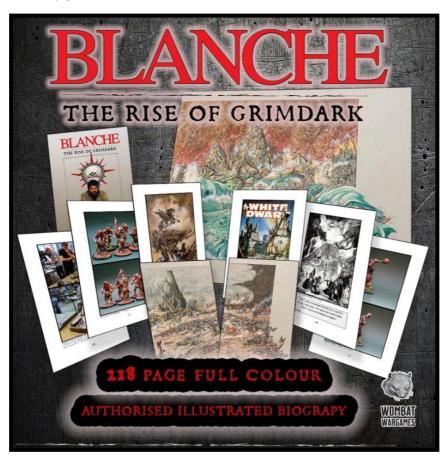
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John's Blanche's career, which includes an unprecedented forty-year collaboration with Games Workshop, spans five decades. During this time, his work has adorned a plethora of book covers and interiors, record covers, postcards and posters, while also serving as concepts for a swathe of wargaming miniatures, often inspiring whole new ranges of figures. John Blanche is one of the most remarkable and prolific fantasy and science fiction illustrators of his, or any other, generation. This book, his official and authorised biography, tells the story of the master of grimdark himself, the visionary that is John Blanche.

This book has been written with the intention of offering an insight into John, the person. So, in addition to copies of many of his wonderful illustrations, some previously unpublished, there are pictures of some of his models too, as well as an extensive selection of John's personal photographs, which document both John and his family.

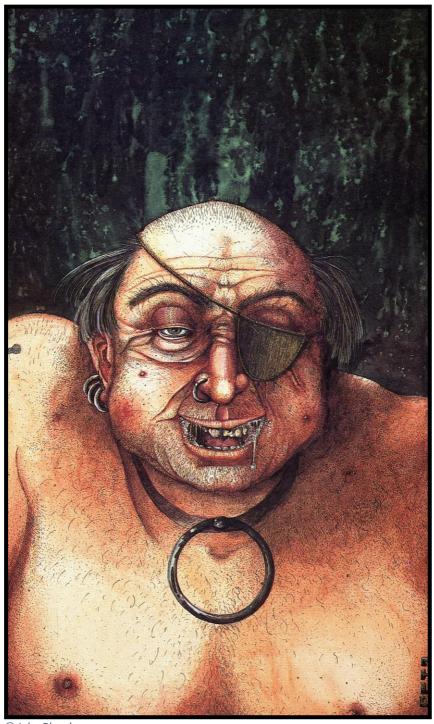
"Speaking for both myself and Ruth Moreira (co-author), it has been a great privilege to work side-by-side with John Blanche in writing and producing his official, authorised biography; an illustrated document of the life of one of the most important fantasy and science fiction artists of his, or any other, generation. Such is John Blanche's reputation, he could have chosen to work with any number of high-profile publishers, for him to have chosen us, drawn to our punk-style independence and joyfully unorthodox approach to things, has been a wonderful honour.

Such was the close collaboration between parties, everything from the book's cover, which holds great personal significance to him, through to general book layout and ratio of pictures to text, John Blanche has approved all aspects of this title... All hail the architect of grimdark, a visionary gentleman!" John Wombat.





Model painted by John Blanche. © Tom Evans.



© John Blanche.



"By the pricking of my thumbs, Something wicked this way comes."

Taken from 'Macbeth' by William Shakespeare.

"I had never before thought about a biography of myself. Then, when John Wombat approached me with the idea, I saw it as a chance to chronicle my life, from birth to maturity, as well as detailing how all the different aspects of my art were influenced by the times I created them in. Also, to be honest, I wanted to do the book out of sheer ego.

I chose to work with John Wombat and Ruth Moreira as I wanted an honest, hobby-friendly book to thank hobbyists. They're punky and have written different punk biographies, which appealed to me also. I didn't want a coffee table tome. The style of the book, the reproduction of the illustrations, reminds me of issues of old White Dwarf magazines, which I really like. Things don't have to be super slick. This book is authentic, written by two couples, myself and Lin, and John and Ruth, often while I was in hospital.

I get embarrassed by looking at my own work, it just makes me want to redo them, but I could look at old photos for such a long time - I'm so eager to start drawing my grimdark family tree, a project for which I'll again be working with John and Ruth. Meanwhile, for my biography's book cover, that picture is very personal, it represents a time of freedom, as well as meeting my wife Lin... Art, bikes and love." John Blanche.



"This wonderfully non-pretentious book is really well put together. Congratulations to its creators and contributors. It's stuffed to the brim with gorgeous art, much of which many of us (people who have enjoyed John's art) have never seen. As far as the written content goes, I found it riveting, particularly the details of John's family history, his formative years and his early steps into science fiction and fantasy art. The tributes from his colleagues and friends are really touching and give you a great sense of the man behind all the glorious art. They contain wonderful anecdotes and tales of John's adventures. The gold star, in terms of tributes, definitely goes to John's wife, Lin. I'm not ashamed to admit I got a bit misty eyed reading her beautiful tribute to her soul mate. I highly recommend this book." Ronan Duggan (verified Amazon purchase).

"Like so many others, I grew up loving John Blanche's artwork, never considering the person that imagined and produced it. This book does a considerable job of telling his story from the perspective of his considerably talented peers; all of whose work, I have likewise grown up loving.

My copy was delivered right before leaving for a trip and it has made the time spent waiting in the airport and on the plane fly by. I wish the print was half the size so I could carry it more easily in my pocket, and about four times larger so I could see all the details on all the art plates." Amory Burgess (verified Amazon purchase).

Great in all regards! Hultenius (verified Amazon purchase).

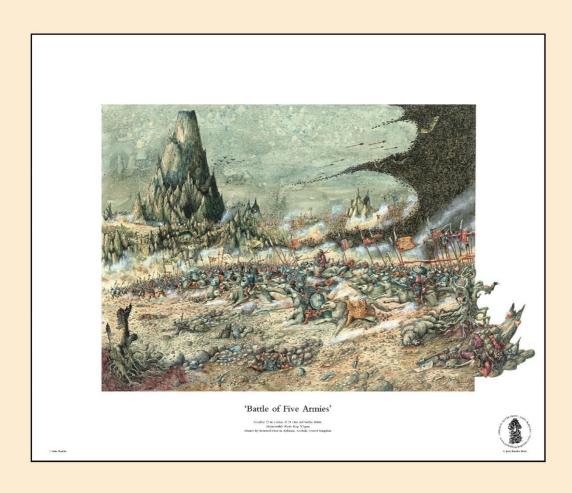


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VOLUME I

Originally published in issues of Shadows of Centralis Monthly Magazine, featuring some of the greatest characters from the classic age of horror, Horror Fiends: Volume I is a compilation of Horror Fiend articles. Featured in this book: H.P. Lovecraft, Edgar Allan Poe, Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee, Algernon Blackwood, Boris Karloff, Hieronymus Bosch, Arthur Machen, Clark Ashton Smith, Frank Belknap Long, Robert Bloch, Vincent Price.

Comprising 114 pages, adorned with cover artwork by renowned fantasy and horror illustrator Tony Hough, this premium paperback is the first in a series of special compilation titles from Wombat Wargames.



H.P. Lovecraft (August 20, 1890 – March 15, 1937): Using insular landscapes and often exploiting one's fear of the unknown, in addition to pointing to the relative fragility of mankind both physically and mentally, Lovecraft's writings tend to be viscerally textured and cultivate feelings of dread. To read Lovecraft is to enter a world in which horror is far more nuanced and blended with a growing sense of menace.

Edgar Allan Poe (January 19, 1809 – October 7, 1849): An American writer whose dark and brooding stories of suspense, terror, and gothic horror have influenced a swathe of other writers, and later filmmakers, such as H.P. Lovecraft and Alfred Hitchcock, as well as a plethora of others, Edgar Allan Poe is a master of the macabre.

Peter Cushing (May 26, 1913 – August 11, 1994): Along with his close friend and colleague Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing is a name synonymous with the films and works of 'Hammer Horror'.

Christopher Lee (May 27, 1922 – June 7, 2015): Appearing in numerous films together, for many, the pairing of Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee is synonymous with British horror films of the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's.

Algernon Blackwood (March 14, 1869 – December 10, 1951):
Algernon Blackwood is one of the chief architects of supernatural horror and weird fiction. Such was his appetite for the paranormal and knowledge of the occult, Blackwood spent time in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and was also a member of The Ghost Club.

Boris Karloff (November 23, 1887 – February 2, 1969): Following his appearance as Frankenstein's monster in Universal Pictures' Frankenstein in 1931, followed by Bride of Frankenstein (1935) and Son of Frankenstein (1939), Boris Karloff was an icon of early horror movies.

Hieronymus Bosch (circa 1450 – 1516): With his artworks typically considered part of the Flemish Primitives school, Bosch was a deeply creative visionary whose paintings are often viewed as an insight into the human condition, with an emphasis on desire and death.

Arthur Machen (March 3, 1863 – December 15, 1947): Born in Monmouthshire, Wales in the 1860's, the son of a clergyman, Arthur Machen was a prolific writer who channelled his interests in spiritualism, occultism, mysticism, medievalism, and intense love of his homeland into a number of short stories, novels, articles and more.

Clark Ashton Smith (January 13, 1893 – August 14, 1961): Later coming to be referred to as part of Weird Tales' 'illustrious triumvirate', with his name placed alongside H.P. Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith was a prolific writer of poetry and weird fiction.

Frank Belknap Long (April 27, 1901 – January 3, 1994): Over the course of the 1920's – 1960's, establishing himself as a prolific contributor to such pulp magazines as Weird Tales, Astounding Stories of Super-Science, Unknown, and Satellite Science Fiction, Long wrote a plethora of fantasy, horror, and science fiction tales.

Robert Bloch (April 5, 1917 – September 23, 1994): Robert Bloch was a prolific writer of crime, fantasy, science fiction, and horror stories; elevating him from his early cult-pulp status, many of his tales were later adapted for film and television, as well as radio.

Vincent Price (May 27, 1911 – October 25, 1993): Encompassing the stage, film, television and radio, Price's acting career boasted more than five decades, while he also featured in several audiobooks. Drawing on his interest in animals, cookery and art, Price penned several books. And so it is that, across a swathe of creative platforms, Price lives on; a multi-faceted individual, consummate gentleman, and one of the original icons of the classic age of horror.





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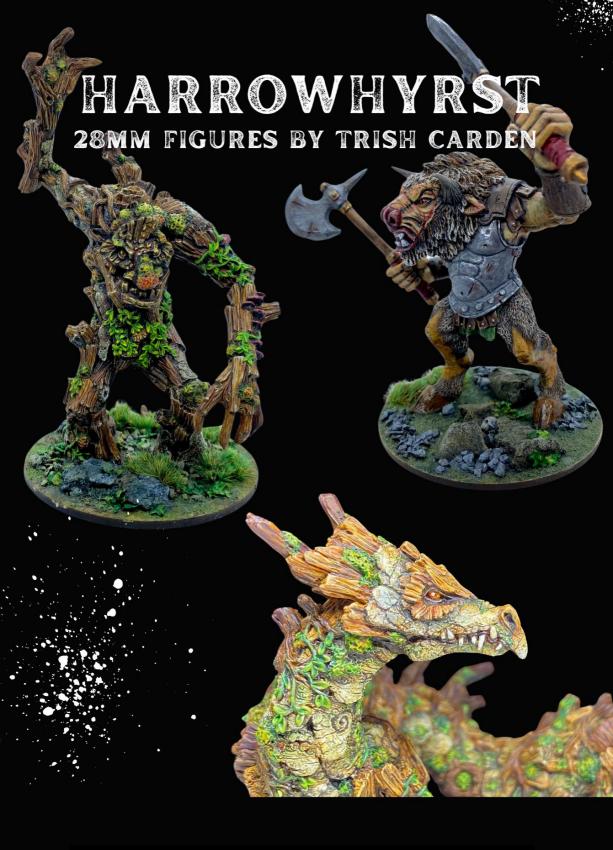


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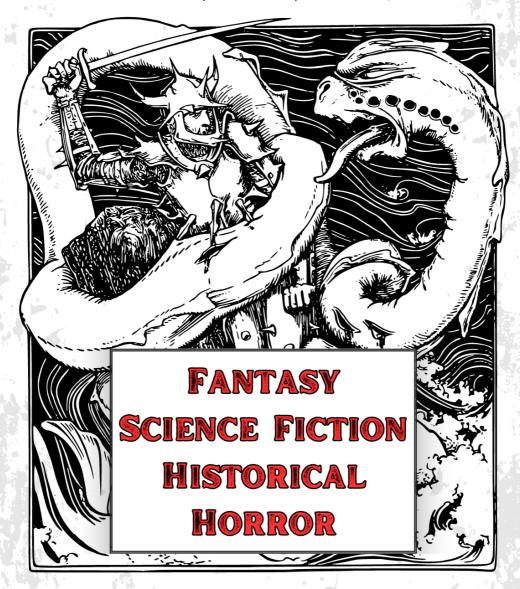




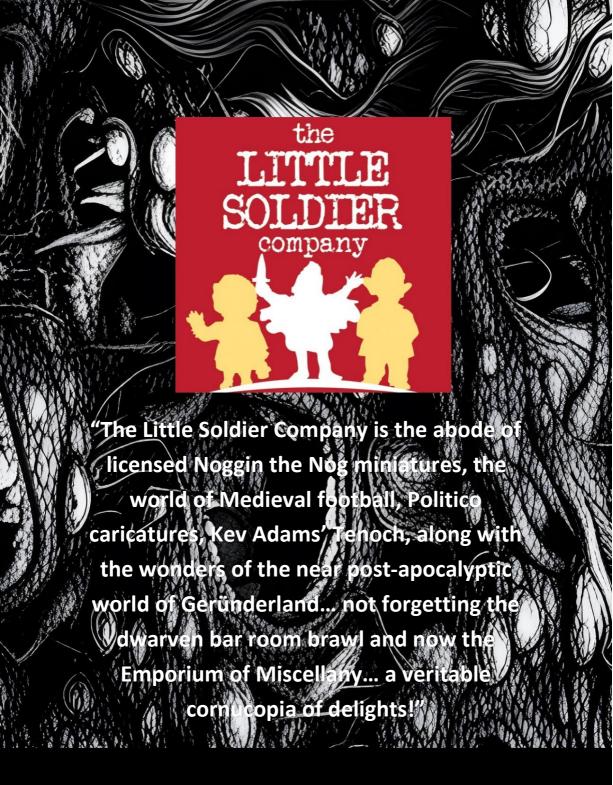
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With 'The Broken Diary', Miller takes us on a labyrinthine journey through 'almost familiar' places, meeting with disturbing often hilarious characters - all intercut with entries from the author's diary, in such a way that the everyday melts into the phantastic.

Ian Miller: Artist, Illustrator & Writer www.ianmiller.studio

TONY HOUGH

"I create strong figurative art and illustrations of odd and fantastic things: Warped reality, myth and fable, future visions and imagined horrors, in a variety of media for private collectors, games and publications; album covers, posters and backdrops for bands and nightclubs; murals and community art, concept designs for film and TV projects."

Tony Hough.

www.tonyhough.co.uk

Fragments: The Fantasy Art of Tony Hough

With such an extensive body of work behind him, and being an artist still very much in demand, it is perhaps not surprising that Tony should have his own book of artwork out. Available via Blurb, Fragments: The Fantasy Art of Tony Hough is a 54-page book which offers stunning examples of the artist's fantasy illustrations. Drawn from various years of his illustrious career, this book boasts many of Tony's evocative illustrations of dragons, faeries, robots, and more.



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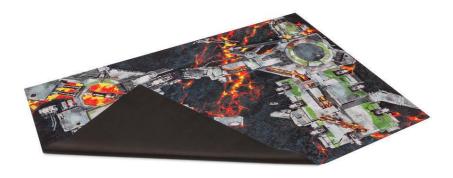
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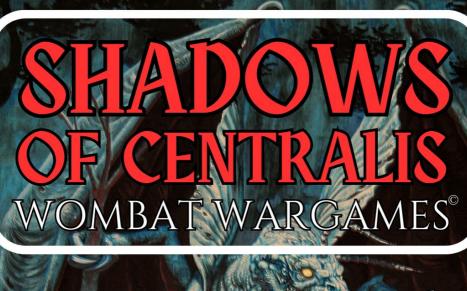
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