



# Guard Tales



Yorkton Courier

## xx. GUARD NEWSPAPER STRIPS

by

Iver Pen

### GUARD LIFE BY by Banff

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It's forgotten these days that The Guard character started life in a black and white newspaper strip, called **Guard Life**. The series was railway themed. (An example of Guard Life was printed in the 2017 Autumn Special). It featured not only the Guard, but some of the supporting characters who continue to appear in the Guard comic today such as the porters, **Eustace Gruffy** and **Frank**. Gruffy, as his name suggests was a permanently cross railway porter, while Frank, another porter was an easy come, easy go type of character always looking to dodge out of work.

The strip began life in the Saturday edition of the *Yorkton Courier*. The new editor of the Courier wanted some light relief for the Saturday edition to help boost sales. The readers response initially to the strip was not good. But as the weeks went by it's popularity grew until it was also being published every weekday. The strip was published continuously from Feb. 1928 until the creative team were called up for military service in the Great War (1930-1935). Both men sadly lost their lives when the ship they were travelling on was torpedoed and sunk. The British comics scene that day lost two creative talents, who if they had survived and continued in comics, would certainly have become creative giants in their field.

With war declared, minds were occupied with other more urgent problems, than finding a creative replacement team for the strip. The strip passed into memory.

It was not until twenty years later in the 1950's that the character was re-born as a comic by Green Lion Comics.

#### Creative Team

**Jotty Ritter**, an experienced freelance humorous writer was hired to write the strip. Ritter's background was in writing humorous articles, not only for newspapers, but also in advertising. Initially, Ritter struggled with providing guidance notes for the artist to follow. But as the months passed the two men started to iron out the wrinkles and work together in tandem, bouncing ideas off each other. It was during this period, that the characters of The Guard and others were created and developed. The Guard Life strip benefited accordingly.

'**Nibs**' **Bagby** – was a *Courier* staff cartoon artist, already very popular with readers. Bagby's artistic experience was the key factor in the early days and months of the newly formed creative team. He was responsible for the design and overall appearance of the strip and creating the settings for Ritter's jokes. Some examples of their work can be found on the following two pages.