

# GEORDIE RACER



*BBC Television for Schools  
A Look and Read book  
by Christopher Russell*



Blue  
Flash



Plod



Spuggy

Janie



Mam and Dad

Cath



Mickey  
Stone



Who are these?

# *1 Runners and fliers*



The Hiltons were out running. At least, Mam, Dad and Cath were running. Spuggy and Plod the dog were just watching.

"Howway Cath! Faster!" yelled Spuggy as Cath raced by.

"Very funny," puffed Cath.

She and Mam and Dad were training hard. Soon they would be taking part in the Great North Run.

They would be running all the way from Newcastle to South Shields. Thirteen miles. For fun!

Spuggy and Plod weren't runners. They just didn't see the point. They walked home. Back home, Spuggy switched on the television. Somebody was talking about

the Great North Run  
so he switched it off again.  
Then he switched on the radio.  
Mickey Stone of Radio Newcastle  
was telling listeners that  
running keeps you fit,  
so Spuggy switched that off  
as well. He went off to the  
allotment to feed his  
racing pigeons. Plod settled  
down for a sleep.



On his way to the allotment  
Spuggy met his friend  
Janie Chung. Janie was excited because the ship her dad  
worked on had just arrived in the River Tyne. It had  
been away a long time. Spuggy wished *his* dad still had  
a job. But at least his dad was home a lot. That was nice.

Spuggy let the racing pigeons out for their exercise  
and watched them flying over their loft. He thought  
pigeons were great. They could fly hundreds of miles in  
a few hours and always find their way home. It didn't  
matter where a race started; they always homed to their  
own loft. Nobody knew how racing pigeons did that.  
They were just special. And the best racer of all was  
Blue Flash. No pigeon could beat him.

"How can you tell which one is Blue Flash?" asked Janie as the pigeons flew down to feed. "They all look the same to me."

Spuggy picked up Blue Flash.

"I can tell because I know him," he said. "But every racing pigeon's got one of these rings."

He showed Janie a small ring on the bird's leg.

"And each ring's got a number on it. It's a bit like car number plates."

Janie read the number on Blue Flash's ring: TN 1487.



Spuggy had to go to the market to buy more feed for the pigeons. Janie went with him. They both loved the market. It was a great place just to walk around.



Another pigeon fancier, Baz Bailey, was in the pet shop as Spuggy walked in.

"Is Blue Flash in good fettle for the race on Saturday?"<sup>5</sup> asked Baz. "I hope he doesn't mind coming second."

"Blue Flash never comes second," said Spuggy.

"He will!" grinned Baz. "He'll not beat my Perfect Lady."

"We'll see about that," smiled Spuggy.

"Aye, man," laughed Baz. "We will!"

Janie went to buy some stotties while she waited for Spuggy. When he came out of the pet shop they walked down towards the river to eat them. They found a good spot by some rubbish but just as they settled down a truck roared up. A man in blue overalls got out and ran towards them.

"Haddaway!" he shouted angrily. "I've come to pick that stuff up!"

Spuggy and Janie scrambled out of the way, then watched in surprise. The man didn't take all the rubbish. Just one bag, hidden behind the rest.

The man threw the bag on the back of the truck and the truck drove off. Fast!



# *2 Down in the cellars*



There was great excitement at the Hiltons' home next morning. Three Great North Runners' packs arrived. Cath nearly tripped over Plod as she hurried to get them. Each pack had in it a number to be worn on the big day and a book about the Run. In the book was a map of the course.

Spuggy felt a bit left out so he finished Cath's toast.

Then Mickey Stone came on Radio Newcastle and everybody listened. A lot of runners in the Great North Run would be sponsored to raise money for charity.



Mickey Stone said some of them could come to Radio Newcastle and talk about it on his show. He would announce the lucky names that afternoon. Mam, Dad and Cath hoped they would be lucky.

"I'm raising money for charity too, y'know," said Spuggy.

The others looked at him in surprise.



"I'm asking people to sponsor Blue Flash in the pigeon race on Saturday. And I've written to Mickey Stone about it."

Cath frowned.

"Who's eaten my toast?" she said.

Spuggy and Plod left the room.

As they went the news came on the radio. There had been a big burglary in Newcastle the day before.

Later that morning Baz Bailey came to the allotment. Dad let him hold Blue Flash for a minute.

"He's a bonny bird, I'll say that," said Baz.

Dad grinned.

"What will you take for him?" asked Baz. "Howway now, name your price."

"No way," said Spuggy, taking Blue Flash from him. Baz just laughed.

As he went to his car Baz turned to Dad.

"Have you found a new job yet, Ray?" he asked.

Dad shook his head.

"No," he said. "But I keep trying."

"I need another truck driver," said Baz. "Only part time, but let us know if you've a mind."

Dad and Spuggy watched Baz get into his car and drive away.

"What does Baz do?" asked Spuggy.

Dad didn't really know.

Then Cath came jogging onto the allotment. She and her friends were going for a run to Seaton Delaval.

"Howway Plod," said Spuggy. "We'll race them."

A bus pulled up outside Seaton Delaval Hall.

Spuggy, Janie and Plod got off.

"Howway Cath! Faster!" yelled Spuggy when he saw Cath and her friends running along the road towards them.

"Very funny," puffed Cath.



Cath's friends ran on but she jogged up the drive towards the Hall.

"Shall we have a look round while we're here?" she said to Spuggy.

But the Hall wasn't open yet. And dogs couldn't come in, even on a lead. The attendant said they could go into the gardens if they liked. He pointed the way.

Cath said it was Spuggy who took the wrong turning. Spuggy said it was Janie. They found themselves in some dark cellars. Great!



Then they heard somebody moving about in the darkness. Cath thought it must be the attendant but it wasn't! A man was there! Suddenly, the lights came on!

Cath, Spuggy and Janie ran down the passage, up and out into the gardens. Even Plod was in a hurry!

Then they saw the man again. He was carrying a bag and running away towards a lane. He was wearing blue overalls. And in the lane was a truck.

# 3 Pigeon post

As Spuggy, Janie, Cath and Plod came out into the lane, the truck roared off.



"Did you see the number plate?" asked Spuggy.

"C963 WHT," said Janie. She looked at Spuggy.

"The same truck as before," she said.

Spuggy frowned. More rubbish?

"Howway! Here comes the bus!" called Cath.

They all got on it and went back to Newcastle.

When Spuggy went to the allotment that afternoon he took the radio with him. Dad was talking to Baz Bailey but Spuggy wanted to listen to the Mickey Stone Show on Radio Newcastle.

Suddenly Spuggy turned the radio up loud,

"First on tomorrow's show,"

said Mickey Stone, "is a young lad

who's got nothing to do with

the Great North Run. But he has got

a really *great* fund-raising idea.

His name is Richard Hilton.

'Spuggy' to his friends . . . ."

Spuggy gave a shout.



"Well I hope you'll be back in time," grinned Dad. Spuggy looked blank.

"Have you forgotten, man?" said Dad.

"It's transportation day tomorrow. The birds are off to Folkestone for the race."

Spuggy hadn't really forgotten, of course. Pigeons came first. He got on with cleaning out the loft.

"You'll have to take a look at my loft sometime, Spuggy," said Baz. "The best in Newcastle."

As Baz left the loft Spuggy heard Mickey Stone reading a news flash.

". . . and news coming in of another burglary," said Mickey. "This time in Gosforth. Among the things stolen is a gold pendant said to have been worn by Mary, Queen of Scots . . . ."

Dad turned the radio down.

"You should take a look at Baz's loft, y'know," said Dad. "He's a canny pigeon man."

So that evening Spuggy went to Baz's place. When he arrived a truck was outside. Spuggy noticed the number plate. A man in blue overalls was putting pigeon baskets on the back of the truck. He stopped and stared at Spuggy. Spuggy stared back. Then Baz came out.



"Now then, Spuggy lad," he grinned. "I see you've met Victor."

Victor just looked at Spuggy.

"He's taking a few of my birds out for a training toss,' said Baz. "Howway up to the loft."

Baz showed Spuggy his best pigeon, Perfect Lady. Then another pigeon flew into the loft with something attached to its leg. Spuggy noticed.

"What's that," he asked. "A message?"

"Aye," said Baz. "I hope so."

Baz picked up the bird and took the slip of paper from the ring on its leg. He read the message:

Gosforth. Light of St Mary. 4.30 Saturday.

He showed it to Spuggy and laughed.

"It's a tip," he said. "From a friend who knows about horse racing. He always sends me tips by pigeon.

Keeps the birds in fettle. Anyhow, that's the horse to bet on, tell your dad."

"Dad never bets on the horses," said Spuggy. "He says it's daft."



Spuggy was on his way downstairs when he heard Victor speaking angrily.

"What did you show him that for? D'you want to give the game away?"

Maybe the message wasn't a racing tip after all.



# 4 "This is Radio Newcastle"

Janie called early next morning and Spuggy told her about the message. He had written it down in his pigeon book:

Gosforth. Light of St. Mary. 4.30. Saturday

"Dad," said Spuggy, "is there any horse racing at Gosforth tomorrow?"

Dad gave him a look.

"Why do you want to know that?" he asked. "It's not a sport for young lads."

Spuggy shrugged.

"Well there's not," said Dad and he went back to his newspaper.

On the front page was a report of the Gosforth burglary and a picture of the gold pendant itself.

Dad looked up again.

"And I hope you're not planning to wear those old trousers this afternoon," he said.

"It's a radio show, Dad" replied Spuggy.



"Nobody'll see them."

"I will," said Mam.

So when Spuggy and Mam arrived at Radio Newcastle, Spuggy had his best trousers on.

When Spuggy and Mam went into Mickey Stone's studio they could hear music. Spuggy was nervous. He sat in front of a microphone and waited until the music stopped.

"Would you like to say hello to your dad and sister?" asked Mickey.

"Hello Dad, hello Cath," shouted Spuggy into the microphone. Mickey put his hands to his head.

Too loud! Then he grinned.

"Right, Spuggy, tell us about your fund-raising idea."

So Spuggy told the listeners about Blue Flash and next day's Inland National pigeon race.

He told them that the race started in Folkestone, three hundred miles away to the south, and that more than twenty thousand pigeons would be flying. Mickey asked Spuggy if the first pigeon home would be the winner.



"No," said Spuggy. "Some lofts are nearer to the start than others so that wouldn't be right. The winner's the pigeon that gets home to its own loft at the fastest *speed*. You have to work out how many yards they've flown every minute."



"And what speed can Blue Flash do?" asked Mickey. "Nearly fifteen hundred yards a minute," said Spuggy. "Really?" laughed Mickey. "That's about fifty miles an hour, isn't it? He's as fast as my car!" Spuggy laughed. He wasn't so nervous now.

"And the faster he flies," went on Mickey, "the more your sponsors pay to charity. Is that the idea?" Spuggy said it was.

"So how many sponsors have you got so far?" asked Mickey. There was a pause.

"Just one," said Spuggy. "My friend Janie Chung." A lot of fanciers at the pigeon club had heard Spuggy on the radio. When he and Dad arrived at the club that evening they all wanted to sponsor Blue Flash.



The club was the race centre for the Inland National Race. Fanciers had to bring their pigeons there so that they could be transported to Folkestone. When the last pigeon had been loaded, the huge transporter moved off down the road. Baz clapped Spuggy on the back as they watched it go.

"Well, man," he laughed, "I hope you're a good loser." Then he turned to Dad.

"What about that driving job, Ray? Starting tomorrow. Will you take it?"

"Aye," said Dad, "I will."

And he and Baz shook hands.

# *5 Race day*



Early morning at Folkestone. A long line of transporters was drawn up in a quiet field. A man walked along the line, looking at his watch.

"Get ready," he called. ". . . . .Cut!"

At the word "Cut!" every basket on every transporter was opened and twenty thousand pigeons took flight. Twenty thousand pigeons, fluttering and flapping up into the sky in a huge mass. Somewhere among them were Blue Flash and Perfect Lady. Slowly the pigeons broke away into flocks and flew north for home.

Three hundred miles away in Newcastle the Hiltons were setting off too. Mam, Dad and Cath were going on a training run.

Spuggy and Plod were going to the allotment to wait for Blue Flash. They would have to wait a long time. Even the fastest pigeons would take six hours to fly so far.

This was the biggest race Blue Flash had ever flown but Spuggy was sure he would win.



When Spuggy had finished his work he got out his pigeon book and looked at the message again:

A photograph of a handwritten message on a piece of paper. The text is written in cursive and reads: "Gosforth. Light of St. Mary. 4.30. Saturday".

Gosforth. Light of St. Mary. 4.30. Saturday

What did it mean? Was Baz up to something? Spuggy puzzled over it. He wanted to find out more.

He looked up with a start as a small flock of pigeons flew over. Spuggy stood up excitedly but no bird dropped towards the loft. Blue Flash wasn't with them.

Then Dad jogged onto the allotment.

"Divvin' panic man," he said. "He'll come."

Dad was cheerful because his new job started today.

But Blue Flash didn't come. An hour later Spuggy was still staring up at the sky.



Baz Bailey had much better luck. Perfect Lady was in the leading flock of pigeons and homed quickly into her loft. Baz caught her and put her race ring into his timing clock.

"You canny lass!" he said and he gave Perfect Lady a little cuddle.

Spuggy and Dad were still on the allotment when Baz's car drew up. Baz was taking his timing clock to the race centre to be opened. He wanted to see if Blue Flash was home too. Dad shook his head.

"You've got us beat this time," he said.

"You'd never know my lass had been in a race," said Baz to Spuggy. "She looks that bonny. Gan round and see for yourself if you like." Spuggy said nothing.

When Janie came by, Dad told Spuggy to go home for a while.

Janie could see Spuggy was upset about Blue Flash. She tried to take his mind off the race.

"I've been thinking about that message," she said.

"So have I," said Spuggy as they walked. "And I'm sure Baz is up to something . . . ."

Then he stopped walking and looked at Janie.

"He said I should gan round to his loft and see Perfect Lady, so why don't we? We'd mebbies find out more."

Baz's loft was open.

Spuggy and Janie started to look around.

Then a pigeon fluttered down into the loft. Spuggy looked at it. The pigeon had a slip of paper attached to its leg.

Spuggy carefully caught the bird and removed the slip of paper.

It was another message!

Quickly he wrote it down in his pigeon book:



Seasmond. Cellar Man. 12.00. Monday

While he was writing, Janie saw Baz's car.

"Baz is coming back!"



# 6 *Light of St Mary*



Spuggy quickly dropped the slip of paper in a nesting box. Baz didn't see.

"Welcome to the winning loft!" laughed Baz.

He was very cheerful. Perfect Lady's race time had been very fast.

"But I heard bad news at the club," he said.

"There was a bit of a storm on the line of flight.

Seems like some of the leading birds were smashed down by it. Mebbies Blue Flash was among them. Bad luck."

And he meant it.

Then Baz saw the slip of paper in the nesting box.

"Daft bird," he said. "What d'you pull that off for?"

When Spuggy and Janie left Baz's place Spuggy felt mixed up. He was still upset about Blue Flash but excited about the second message. He and Janie looked at it. Then as they went by a newspaper shop, Janie noticed a sign:



### JESMOND PAINTINGS STOLEN

Janie got a copy of the newspaper. A report on the front page said that valuable paintings had been stolen from a house in Jesmond. Janie and Spuggy looked at each other.



Could the message

Jesmond. Cellar Man. 12.00. Monday

have something to do with it? There had been a burglary at Gosforth and now one at Jesmond. And both those names were in the messages. But if Jesmond and Gosforth both stood for burglaries, what did Cellar Man mean? . . . . And Light of St. Mary?

Back home Spuggy found a stottie to help him think. Something else was puzzling him.

"I can see why a gold pendant's so valuable," he said to Janie, "but what's so special about those paintings?"

"They're old," said Janie.

"Well," replied Spuggy, "that picture on the wall's old. I painted it last year."

Janie shook her head.

"That's not valuable," she said.

"What is it anyhow?"

"A space ship?"

"What is it?" said Spuggy.

"It's a lighthouse.

The one at St Mary's."



A pause, then Janie cried out.

"St Mary's Lighthouse! St Mary's Lighthouse, Light of St Mary. It's not a horse, it's a place!"

Quickly they looked again at the Gosforth message:

**'4.30 Saturday'** . . . . Today was Saturday.

"Howway," said Spuggy, "let's gan out there and see what we can see!"

They travelled on the Metro as far as they could, then walked the rest of the way to St Mary's.

The lighthouse was on a small island, attached to the land by a causeway. The tide was coming in but Spuggy wouldn't wait. They went across to the island and started to look around.



After a while Spuggy came across some junk in a shed.

Only it wasn't all junk . . . .

"Janie! Come and look!"

Janie stared. Spuggy had found the Gosforth pendant!

"We'd better tell somebody," said Janie.



But as they turned to leave the island they found they had been cut off by the tide. There was nothing they could do but wait. And wait . . . .

They talked about the second message:

'**Cellar Man**' . . . . Was it about a hiding place too?

This time it was Spuggy who had an idea.

"What about the cellars at Seaton Delaval Hall?

We saw that man there. Mebbies he was picking stuff up?" Janie looked at him.

"So he could be there again on Monday," she said.

Suddenly they heard a truck. It was coming across the causeway!

Spuggy and Janie scrambled out of sight and watched as the driver went into the shed and loaded the junk.

Last to be brought out was the box with the Gosforth pendant in it. Then Spuggy saw who the driver was.

It was Dad!

# 7 *Lost bird*

Spuggy didn't sleep at all that night. His dad couldn't be mixed up in crime, could he? But he had *seen* him moving the stolen things. Spuggy knew he should tell the police everything he and Janie had found out. But would he be telling on his own dad?



Spuggy was silent at breakfast.

"What happened to you last night?" asked Dad.

"You should've come back to the allotment before I went to work."

Spuggy ran out of the house, slamming the door behind him.

"Poor lad," sighed Mam. "He loved that Blue Flash. Dad shrugged.

"Aye," he said, "but you canna be a pigeon man if you canna take your losses."

A truck pulled up outside Baz's place and Victor got out. He took a pigeon basket from the back of the truck and went upstairs. Baz was in his office.

"Special.... for you," said Victor, putting the basket on Baz's desk.

Baz opened the basket. There was just one pigeon in it.

"One of the lads found it a few miles out," said Victor.

"Been smashed in a storm he thought."

Baz carefully lifted the bird out of the basket.

"D'you know who this is?" he asked.

"This one *is* special."

Victor looked blank.

"It's Blue Flash, man," said Baz. "The Hiltons' young racer! And he's okay!"

Baz had always wanted Blue Flash and now he was going to keep him.

"Now I've got the two bonniest pigeons in Newcastle, Perfect Lady and Blue Flash."



"Never mind pigeons," said Victor. "What about the Gosforth stuff? Ray got it, I hope?"

"Aye," said Baz. "And he never suspected a thing, poor lad."

"Let's hope he doesn't suspect about the map as well then," said Victor.

Baz smiled.

"Leave Ray to me."

Mickey Stone was surprised to find Spuggy waiting for him when he came out of the studio.

"Did you win?" he asked.

"No," said Spuggy. "Blue Flash never came back."



He's lost. I came to ask if you'd say something about him on your show."

"A lost pigeon spot?" smiled Mickey. "Sure."

"Thanks," said Spuggy, but he didn't move.

Mickey frowned.

"Anything else on your mind?"

Spuggy shook his head.

"Well," said Mickey, "I'm always ready to listen.

Anytime you like."

As Spuggy arrived home  
Dad was on his way to work.

"Dad!" cried Spuggy.

"Please! Don't go!"

But Dad would not stop.

He thought Spuggy was still  
upset about Blue Flash.



Baz slammed down his telephone as Dad came into  
the office.

"What's up?" asked Dad.

"We're supposed to be doing a job at the Recreation  
Centre, moving some stuff," sighed Baz. "But all they  
can think about is this Great North Run. Nobody's got  
time to speak to me. Nobody's sent me a plan. What am  
I supposed to do without that? We'll just get lost in  
that place."

"I know," laughed Dad. "I worked there for a while."  
Baz looked up at him.

"Did you, Ray?" he said. "Wor luck's in! Mebbies you could draw us a little map, so we know where we're gannin'?"

Dad shrugged.

"Aye, right," he said.

And he started to draw on a piece of paper. Baz and Victor smiled at each other over his head.



# 8 *"Have you gone daft, man?"*

On Monday, Spuggy and Janie went to Seaton Delaval Hall again. They wanted to be sure they were right about the messages. But would the Jesmond paintings be there?

Spuggy and Janie slipped into the cellars. Yes! In the darkest part of all they found a bag. And in the bag were the paintings. Janie took a flash photograph of them.



Then she and Spuggy went outside and hid. Would anybody come? Spuggy hoped it wouldn't be his dad.



But it wasn't. It was Victor. When he came out of the cellars with the bag, Janie took a photograph of him as well.

"Well," said Janie, "this shows we were right about the messages. You *must* speak to your dad now, Spuggy.

Spuggy found Dad on the allotment. He seemed very happy. Spuggy wasn't.

"I saw you at the lighthouse the other day, Dad."  
Dad looked at him.

"And I know what you were doing there," said Spuggy.  
"How d'you mean?" said Dad. "I was picking up some junk for Baz."

"It wasn't junk!" cried Spuggy. "You know it wasn't! He was angry and upset. "It was the stuff stolen at Gosforth. The gold pendant!"

Dad stared at Spuggy.

"Have you gone daft, man?" he said.

"You're working for crooks, Dad!"

Spuggy showed Dad the photographs he and Janie had taken at Seaton Delaval Hall. He told him about the messages.

"Burglars steal the stuff and hide it. Then they send a message by pigeon to Baz telling him where it is.

That pendant was hid at St. Mary's and you picked it up for Baz!"

"And you thought I *knew*?" asked Dad. It was his turn to be upset now. "I needed a job. I wanted to work. Aye, I drove Baz's truck, but I'm no crook, man!"





Baz was in his office with Victor when Dad came in. Dad threw the photographs on the desk in front of them. "Seems I'm mixed up with a lot of crooks!" he said. Baz didn't panic. He looked at the photographs and then at Dad.

"Mixed up is right," he smiled. "You've given us a nice bit of cash for my holiday."

Dad didn't understand.

Baz held up a piece of paper in front of Dad.

"We're gonna help ourselves to the takings at the Recreation Centre," he said. "Thanks to this bonny little map you drew for us."

"I never knew that's what you wanted it for!" shouted Dad.

Baz shook his head.



"Nobody's gonna understand that, are they, Ray?  
The best thing you can do is say nowt."

Dad didn't know what to do. But by the time he got home he had made up his mind. He *must* go to the police. Then the front door flew open and Cath came running out.

"Dad!" she cried.

"Mam's had a fall.

She's tripped over Plod and  
I think she's broken her leg!"



# 9 *"If only we knew when..."*



Mam was sitting with her leg in plaster. Cath and Spuggy were sitting by her. Plod was keeping out of the way.

Dad had gone to the police and Spuggy was afraid they would lock him up. But just then he walked in. "What did the police say, Dad?" cried Spuggy. Dad smiled. "They said 'thanks'."

A few days later the police still hadn't locked up Baz and Victor. Spuggy couldn't understand why. Dad was fed up with telling him.



"Look," he said, "the police want to catch them red-handed, but I divvin' know what day the raid's planned for. And the police canna watch the Recreation Centre for ever. They've got too much else to do."

And Dad went off with Cath on a last training jog. Tomorrow was the day of the Great North Run!

Cath was first up next morning. The Run was timed to start at 10.30 so she and Dad had to eat their breakfast early.

"Are you coming to watch?" Cath asked Spuggy.

"Mebbies later on," said Spuggy. "I've got to see to the pigeons first."

And off he went to the allotment.

"It's always the pigeons *first*," said Cath.

"So it should be," grinned Dad.

Mam gave them both a kiss and wished them good luck.

After they had all left Mickey Stone arrived at the front door. He had come to interview Mam for his show.

"I hope you don't mind," he said. "It's a real hard luck story."

Mam didn't mind at all.

"Only I was just away out," she said. "I canna sit still here. I was going to take the radio and listen to the Run down the allotment." So Mickey gave her a lift.

On the allotment Spuggy was telling Janie what Dad had said about the police and the raid on the Recreation Centre.

"If only we knew when . . . .," he sighed.

Janie had to go to her dad's ship with some shopping. The ship was leaving today. As she left, Spuggy saw a car coming. It was Mickey Stone, Mam and Plod.

"You must be the only two people in Newcastle who aren't going to the Run," said Mickey. "You should see the crowds. The police have got a hard day today."

Then he turned to Spuggy.

"I've just found out what was on your mind the other day," he said. "You did right to speak to your dad."

Then Mickey looked up at the pigeons as they exercised.

"Any news of Blue Flash?" he asked.

Spuggy shook his head. He was trying not to think about that anymore.

Down at the river Janie had gone on to the ship and given her dad his shopping.

But as she was leaving she saw Baz and Victor.

Victor was wearing a tracksuit and carrying some luggage.



Baz was carrying a pigeon basket. The two men came on to the ship. Janie quickly moved out of sight.

She followed them down below and along a passage to Baz's cabin. She could hear Baz talking to Victor.

"You can look after the rest while I'm away/" he said.

"This one's special!"

Baz and Victor put the luggage and the pigeon basket in the cabin and came out again.

"Right," said Baz. "I'll see you in an hour at the Metro exit. Have a good time at the Centre!"

And the two men laughed and started to walk down the passage. Janie followed. Then Baz stopped and turned. Janie had to dodge into Baz's cabin.

"Better lock the door," smiled Baz. "Mebbies there's burglars about."

Janie found herself locked in!

And the raid was on!



# 10 Run!

Janie tried hard to open the locked door. Then she noticed the pigeon basket. Quickly she opened it and lifted out the bird. She looked at the ring on its leg.

TN 1487. Was it Blue Flash?

Janie wrote a message and attached it to the pigeon's leg.

"If you *are* Blue Flash, fly home!" she cried.

And she tossed the bird out of the porthole.



Bang ! The crowd cheered and twenty-seven thousand runners started off on the Great North Run.

Somewhere in the mass were Dad and Cath.

All the training was over.

This was it!

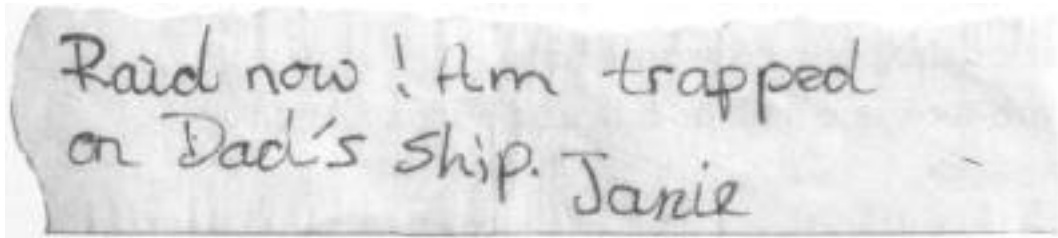
There was no cheering crowd outside the Recreation Centre. Inside, just three men in tracksuits, one of them carrying a sports bag.

"Right, lads," said Victor. "In we gan ....."

On the allotment Mam and Mickey were finishing their interview. But Spuggy wasn't listening. He was staring at the sky.

"Blue Flash!" he cried.

A pigeon dived into the loft. Spuggy dived in after it  
Then he saw the message on the bird's leg.



Raid now! Am trapped  
on Dad's ship. Janie

"We should've known it'd be today!" cried Spuggy.  
"Because of the Run! Howway Mickey! Please!"  
And they ran towards Mickey's car.

As they drove along they saw a police car.

"I'll tell them about the raid," said Mickey. "You go to  
the ship. Find Janie's dad and help *her*!"

Mickey stopped to let Spuggy out and drove off after  
the police car. Then suddenly Spuggy saw Victor going  
into a Metro station with a sports bag. Spuggy  
followed him.

Victor travelled across the river. Baz was waiting at the  
Metro exit. Spuggy had only a second to think as Victor  
handed Baz the bag. He dodged between them and  
grabbed it!

"Get him!" yelled Baz.

Spuggy dodged again and was away with Victor after  
him. There was only one way to go. Across the road  
full of Great North Runners!

Spuggy dived in among the runners as Victor tried to grab him. Just in time he saw his sister.

"Cath, run!" yelled Spuggy. And he tossed the bag to her as she puffed towards him.

Cath took one look at Baz and Victor. And ran!



Down towards the river! Faster than she'd ever run before! But as she ran on to the Swing Bridge she slipped and fell. The crooks closed in on her. She was trapped!

Cath stood up holding the bag. Then she pulled it open and tipped it upside down. Thousands of banknotes fell out!



As Baz and his men dived for the money, Cath ran off. "Look out!" cried Victor suddenly. "The bridge is opening!"

But there was no way out for the crooks, with or without the money. The bridge was swinging open and they were trapped on it!

Mickey Stone was back at the allotment that evening for another interview. This time with all the Hiltons.

And Janie too. And Blue Flash. All the Run sponsors were happy to pay Cath and Dad even though they hadn't finished the course. And Blue Flash had some special feed. And Mam? She started a "sponsored sign".

How many names can you fit on a plaster cast?

"And you," she said to Plod, "can go first!"





### Geordie words

howway/haddaway  
divvin'  
gan, ganna, gannin  
aye  
spuggy  
stotty/ie  
fettle  
mebbies  
bonny  
canny  
wor  
nowt

come on/get away  
don't  
go/going/going  
yes  
sparrow  
a large flat bun (see recipe)  
condition  
maybe, may or might  
beautiful  
careful, clever  
our  
nothing

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LOOK AND READ

**100P**

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