



Worrals of W.A.A.F. Worrals Carries On Worrals Flies Again

**By W. E. Johns, the creator of the legendary Biggles
Three new HB editions, £12 each, published by Indie Books on 19 July**

It is seventy years since Flight-Officer Joan Worrals first wowed children with her smart wit and audacious aerial adventures, but as a courageous, independent female role model, she still has much to offer today's young readers. The creation of W. E. Johns of 'Biggles' fame, she's a timeless heroine, well-deserving of resurrection.

Captain W E Johns was a pilot in the First World War, who went on to edit the aerial magazine 'Popular Flying', and pen the famous 'Biggles' stories about a young pilot and adventurer. The popularity of Biggles proved to be such a good recruiting medium that in 1940, Johns was asked by the Air Ministry to create a female counterpart to show the work of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force. Some believe that the intention was to distract attention away from what some of the WAAF were actually doing – helping to crack enemy codes at Bletchley Park. The result was 'Worrals of the WAAF' and the eleven novels that followed between 1941 and 1950.

Despite the prejudices that restricted women in the 1940s, Flight-Officer Joan Worrals is a feisty character who frequently gives her male colleagues a run for their money. She plunges in to deal with nests of spies, pulls guns on Nazi agents and is cool under fire, though she can also use her traditional feminine wiles to free a fellow pilot from the clutches of the Gestapo or nail-file her way through the bars of her own cell. Her loyal side-kick Frecks is less eager to seek out danger, and spends more time thinking about film stars and chocolate... but can still fly a plane, fix an engine or pull a gun on an enemy.

The exploits of Worrals and her side-kick Frecks are not that far from reality. Though members of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force were not supposed to serve in combat, or as pilots; in fact over a hundred women were wartime pilots in the Air Transport Auxiliary, ferrying new and repaired planes to RAF bases, and fifteen were killed doing so. Many members of the WAAF operated behind enemy lines with the Special Operations Executive, mainly as radio operators and couriers, sharing the same dangers with their male counterparts.

These new editions of the first three books in the series have been repackaged with brand new cover artwork and illustrations by award-winning graphic novelist Matt Kindt, to breathe new life into these classic children's stories. Alex Rider, Sally Lockhart, Katniss Everdeen, Lyra Silvertongue – look out, there's an old girl back in town...

**To discuss feature ideas or request review copies, please contact Helen Barnes on
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