

# CAROL DAY



**DAVID WRIGHT**

*The late KEITH MACKENZIE, who was for many years the Art Editor of the London Daily Mail, and a frequent contributor to our magazine, wrote this interesting story about CAROL DAY, the beautiful heroine of the famous British strip, and about its creator, DAVID WRIGHT.*

## By KEITH MACKENZIE

The Nineteen Fifties when Carol Day was born in the Daily Mail was an era when pin-ups and cover girls were chaste. In the days before magazines were to be flooded by a pornographic full-frontal attack of nudity, girls like David Wright's pin-ups could be naughty but they were always nice. A sense of propriety prevailed.

Carol had a touch of class. She was upper class and didn't have to worry too much about money. Although born an orphan she was brought up by her



*On this, and on the following two pages, you see a sequence showing David Wright's fine sense of atmosphere and almost 'filmic' mastery of cutting frames to create the maximum effect.*





father-figure, Uncle Max.

Her adventures were those of a girl in her twenties, her love-life somewhat frustrated by never being able to marry. Some of her suitors let her down, some went off and joined the Foreign Legion and one was killed. Sexual passion in a non-permissive society tended to be implied rather than stated.

Carol also had extra-sensory perception. In one of the best episodes the ghostly apparition of a facial impression of an incarcerated and chained-up monster appeared in the sand. David Wright was a master at implying sinister or supernatural happenings in his drawings.

Anyone looking at the output of Carol Day drawings by David Wright would suppose that the artist had made use of every moment of his working day, so great was the attention to detail and the care with which the figures and backgrounds were delineated in addition to the elaborately plotted storyline. Enormous though his output was, it was far from occupying his entire attention. Apart from the creation of six full days strips (some 18 panels per week) David Wright was a widely read man, a keen student of the English countryside and animal kingdom, was an expert in entomology. His hatred of cruelty to animals led him, in company with his wife, on nightly forays into the Welsh countryside to destroy rabbit traps with an axe.

David Wright was born in December 1912 at Forest Hill. Both his parents were artists. His father died when he was quite young, so that formal education was scanty and he had to work. He left school at 13 and worked as an apprentice in a London studio, joining Gilbert Wright's studio as assistant artist at the age of 17.

At the start of the War, he took some of his drawings of aeroplanes and American automobiles to Rogers & Co., the agents who were to represent him for the rest of his career. Rogers said that aeroplanes and cars, although beautifully painted, were not eminently saleable. What they really wanted were beautiful, leggy girls and he dutifully went away to try to fulfill the demand. The change of direction was successful and 'David Wright Pin-Ups' from the centre page pull-out of the glossy magazine "The Sketch" were soon to adorn



many a Nissen hut and barrack room wall throughout the War. One Sketch centre-fold (a pin-up painting of his wife, Esme) signed by all the members of a battalion thereafter occupied a privileged place on the walls of David's studio.

David Wright had joined up in 1940, volunteering for the RAF. Due to his lack of formal education he was accepted by the Army instead. He was assigned to Information Room duties and driving instruction. His senior officers allowed him the privilege of doing his Sketch work and many a centre-fold pin-up was dashed off in the operations room at Rogers' urgent request.

After the War he extended his field of activities to the USA and was commissioned through Rogers to draw a series of covers for the Hearst group of magazines. When this outlet eventually dried up David Wright did much advertising work for British firms, notably the seductive upper class girls in the Schweppes ads and pin-ups for "Men Only". In 1950 he created a strip cartoon "Jo" for the Sunday Empire News. After the demise of the Empire News, Wright devised a girly strip for Tit-bits entitled "Judy". It was the first true blueprint forerunner of Carol Day.

Carol Day herself was produced in 1956 and a legend was born. The story goes that when Jack Wall of Rogers was on his way to the Daily Express with the strip, it was spotted by the eagle eye of Julian Phipps, then Art Editor of Associated Newspapers, who promptly hi-jacked it for the Daily Mail, where it was to stay for 11 years. Safely launched in the Mail, it enjoyed a phenomenal success, being eventually syndicated to 23 countries and continuing with increasing success until David Wright's sudden and untimely death on 25th May, 1967.

He was 53 years old and there was a stockpile of three weeks supply of the

JENNIFER FLEES  
IN TERROR FROM  
THE RUIN IN  
WHICH SHE  
SOUGHT SHELTER...



I'M SURE SOMEONE HORRIBLE  
WAS HIDING THERE!  
I MUST GET BACK  
TO THE STREET!



THAT CHILD!  
LOOK OUT!





I SUPPOSE I WAS A  
FOOL NOT TO DISTRUST  
CLIVE FROM THE START, BUT...  
OH WELL, I SHAN'T SEE  
HIM AGAIN — HALLO,  
THAT MUST BE JOHN  
AT THE DOOR



strip in hand.

His son Nicholas had described David Wright's working day. He would sit in a small room in his home in Whitehill in Hampshire, piled high with records and reference volumes, crouched over the drawing board and smoking his way through 50 Woodbines a day. The sideboard was always covered with Airfix models of aircraft which he would modify down to their last correct detail culled from the reference books. His monthly intake of 20 magazines was cut and filed in numbered boxes reaching almost to the ceiling.

Apart from a break for lunch and a

walk to exercise the dog, work continued until the evening. As darkness fell, he would switch on the neon light of his moth trap projecting a dazzling beam hundreds of feet into the air. Moths in their thousands would spiral down into this trap. Next morning David would make the inspection of this trap, his first task. It was typical of him that when he found that the birds were wanting to gobble up the moths in the morning (he always released all but the rarest species) he would postpone their release until dark in order to give the liberated moths a fair chance.

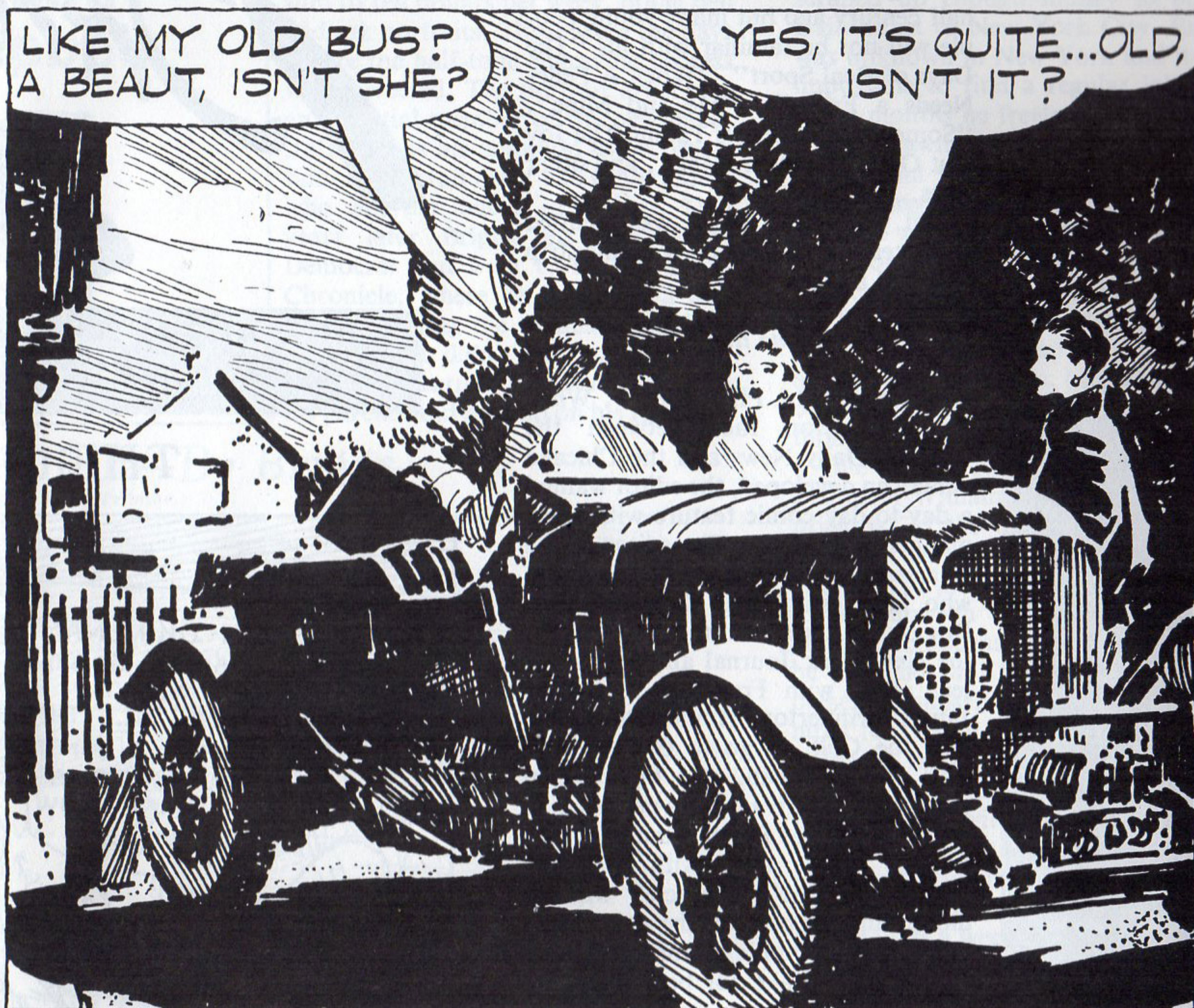
His long-suffering but loyal wife,

Esme, recounts how she had to tolerate a kitchen pillage of cabbage leaves earmarked as mothfood. The nettled in the drive was also sacred and un-touchable, and no gardener would dare to cut it down without bringing down upon his head a stream of four-letter invective from the studio window.

David Wright's work as an entomologist has been attested by such experts as Dr. Goodson of the British Museum Natural History Department at Tring and Dr. Kettlewell, Senior Research Officer of the Oxford Department of Zoology. David Wright contributed to various entomological literature and in



David Wright was an expert on vintage automobiles which he excelled at drawing, and often introduced into the 'CAROL DAY' strip.



1955 a new species of Lepidoptera *Arctia Caja* ('The Garden Tiger') was named after him. Dr. Kettlewell says "David Wright was without doubt a most astute and observant collector of lepidoptera and this can be seen in the meticulous records he kept for the district in which he lived, Borden, Hampshire. These have been presented to the Biological Records Department of Monks Wood Experimental Station at Huntingdon, which is run by the Nature Conservancy".

David Wright rarely left the neighbourhood of his house in Whitehill and always liked to get home for the night after a jaunt to town to hear a jazz concert. He liked nothing better than to sit in his living room surrounded by his family (always a closely-knit community) and argue about almost any subject

imaginable. A born debater, he would tackle any expert (whether it be a Catholic Priest or a U.S. Air Force Colonel) and would proceed to argue them into the ground on their own subject. Wright had an irreplaceable collection of Jazz records including all the records of Jelly Roll Morton (more complete than the BBC libraries) and was a voracious reader, particularly of the novels of Scott Fitzgerald, Evelyn Waugh and Somerset Maugham.

The strip, *Carol Day*, was carried on bravely and at short notice after David Wright's death by Kenneth Inns but could not ultimately survive the loss of David's immensely individual skill. Its perception and brilliance of technique will always make his drawings a model of their kind. ●